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A Study in 1st Thessalonians (Lesson 4)

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” Edmund Burk

1 Thessalonians 1:3, “We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul noted 3 important traits of Christians here.

1. **Christians are inspired by faith to do good works due to their faith in God.**

Not that good works will get us to heaven, yet because of what Christ Jesus has done for us to save us from ourselves and the ways of the world, we rejoice in doing all that we can for others to bring glory to God.

Ephesians 2:10: “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

2. **Christians’ labor is prompted by love.**

Barclay says, “Work done for love always has a glory.”

At home, when no one is watching, consider why you are doing what it is you are doing? Why are you doing it? Is there joy in your heart for what you are doing?

We received a precious card this week which we will treasure as a part of our legacy. Someone had to take time to purchase the card, write it, seal it, stamp it, and mail it. What joy it brought to our hearts! What glorious memories of a wonderful time shared together with a host of friends that prompted him to express thanks! The card tucked inside a folder to be pulled out 10-20 years from now and reread by family members will continue to bring glory to God.

3. **Christians’ endurance is inspired by hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.**

We as Christians **know the word of God will come to pass.**

Jesus will call us up to be with Him in heaven for 7 years; He will return with all of the saints to rule and reign on earth for a 1000 years; then we will be in heaven with Him for all eternity.

Paul reminds us that we are his fellow brothers and sisters who are loved by God.

Verse 4: *“For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you.”*

Paul knew without a doubt when he was knocked off his high horse on his way to Damascus to persecute the early Church that Jesus had singled him out – that he was chosen! He also knew these precious fellow believers were also loved by God, chosen by Him.

We are here today because the Holy Spirit drew us; because we have a family of brothers and sisters here at Harvest Assembly of God, and we are blessed.

Why? *Because of what the Word says, “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:10:*

This is not only for the Church at Thessalonica, but for us here at our local church and for the Body of Christ all around the world.

In verse 8, Paul says, “The Lord’s message rang out from you... because of your faith in God...”. May we let it be known that we are about bringing glory and honor to God our Father through our faith in Jesus Christ.

Kanye West, who has been gloriously saved, has lit up Time Square with “Jesus is King”. He spoke last weekend in Joel Osteen’s church in Houston.

May he remain true to the faith when times of persecution come.

May we pray that his faith would fail not when Satan comes to sift him as wheat, as Peter was warned about by Christ.

“The Best Offense is a Good Defense”...Tom Landry

PAUL defended himself and the gospel in which he and his partners in the gospel had been preaching, teaching, and living. (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12)

2:1-12, *“You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results.*

² *We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition.*

³ *For the appeal we make does not spring from delusion or impure motives, nor are we trying to deceive you.* ⁴ *On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts.* ⁵ *You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness.* ⁶ *We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority.* ⁷ *Instead,*

we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children,⁸ so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.⁹ Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.¹⁰ You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.¹¹ For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children,¹² encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.”

There were Paul’s opponents in the church who attached various slanders to Paul and his companions. Those slanderous acts were that:

- ***Paul was a criminal with a Police Record...on the run from justice.***

“Nobody should listen to a criminal.” A really malignant mind will twist anything into a slander. Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2:2 refers to the imprisonment and abuse that he had received at Philippi (Acts 16:16-40)...Paul came to them to escape such lies and distortion of the truth.

- ***1 Thessalonians 2:3 has behind it no fewer than three charges against Paul and his preaching.***

1. Paul's preaching came from sheer delusion.

A common speaking (literal speaking) man will run the risk of being called mad.

- a) Festus thought that Paul was mad in later days (Acts 26:24).
- b) There was a time when Jesus' friends and family came and tried to take him home because they thought that he was mad (Mark 3:21).
- c) The Christian standards can be so different from the standards of the world that he who follows them with a single mind and a burning enthusiasm can appear to other men to be “out of his mind” and needs to be committed or taken out of the way.

2. ***Paul's preaching sprang from impure motives.*** The word used for impurity often has to do with sexual impurity. There was one Christian custom which the heathen often and deliberately misinterpreted; that was the kiss of peace (1 Thessalonians 5:26). When the Christians spoke of the Love Feast and the kiss of peace, it was not difficult for an evil mind to read into these phrases what was never there. The trouble often is that a nasty mind will see nastiness everywhere.

3. **Paul's preaching was aimed at deceiving others.** The propagandists of Hitler Germany discovered that if a lie is repeated often enough and loudly enough it will in the end be accepted as the truth. (Saul Salinsky had a similar precept for control).

These false charges were leveled at Paul. We see this in schools, in personal lives, political lives, and against preachers today.

Paul was accused of seeking to please men rather than to please God, 1 Thessalonians 2:4.

- ✓ ***This rose from the fact that he preached the liberty of the gospel and the freedom of grace in lieu of the slavery of legalism.*** There are always people who do not think that they are being religious unless they are being unhappy; and any man who preaches a gospel of joy will find his slanderers, which is exactly what happened to Jesus.

There were those who said that Paul was in this business of preaching the gospel for what he could get out of it (1 Thessalonians 2:5, 9.

- ✓ ***There were those who did attempt to cash in on their Christianity*** (Still happens today).
- ✓ ***Paul was accused of seeking personal prestige.*** 1 Thessalonians 2:6. It was Paul's message that he was presenting...not seeking personal benefits or praise from others. In every instance he brought the gospel; not for personal attention, but for "the sake of the message of Christ."
- ✓ ***Paul was charged with being something of a dictator,*** 1 Thessalonians 2:7. His gentleness was that of a wise father, with a mother's attitude of giving nourishment to the new babes in Christ.

His was the love which knew how to be firm. He knew that men needed discipline, not for their punishment but for the good of their souls.

Although there were Jewish leaders and "church people" putting Paul down for his message of truth, God was supplying every need according to his riches in glory.

Throughout history, Satan has tried to "kill God's messengers."

What he is guilty of...he tries to point the finger at others.

In the end, Good always overcomes evil!