

The Weekly Word
Aug 10-16, 2015

Welcome to Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, probably the earliest writings of Paul.
Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, August 10: 1Thessalonians 1- Is every god or higher power equal? ...

My thoughts were drawn to the final sentences of the chapter. *And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath (7-10).*

Is every god or higher power equal? Does it matter what 'faith' you follow or does a person just need to be spiritual? In the end does it matter at all if you had any spiritual faith or does everyone receive the same fate simply by virtue of being human? These and similar questions erupted as I read and re-read the 4 sentences above and particularly the last sentence.

They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

As I stare at this sentence I begin to answer the questions that erupted. No, not every 'god' or higher power is equal. Yes, it matters what faith someone follows; being spiritual (whatever that means) is not enough. Again, YES, it matters... a person's fate hangs on whether they turn from idols or 'gods' to the Living and True God, who is known through faith in Jesus Christ, who rescues those who believe in Him from the coming wrath.

What a person believes and who a person believes in, MATTERS. Paul preached the Gospel of Jesus to those in Macedonia and Achaia and the Thessalonians received it, believed it and spread it.

Will you receive, entertain and consider the Gospel message of Jesus... that He came to rescue you from your sins?

Will you believe it? Will you truly and honestly put your faith in Jesus? Will you follow Him as a disciple and live for Him because he is Lord and God of your life? This also means you have to forsake any other gods you ever believed in.

Will you live in such a way that your faith becomes known everywhere and as a result other people are drawn to faith in Jesus?

Think about it...

O, God, thank You for making Yourself known and for inviting me and others to put our faith in You... Thank You for rescuing us from the wrath we deserve through faith in Jesus. Help me, Lord, to live for You so that others see You in me and come to faith in You, Jesus. In Your name, I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, August 11: 1Thessalonians 2- Our Example...

For some reason as I was reading this chapter, I found myself musing about how people, and particularly church leaders, live their lives. It is sad when 'well known' church leaders fall. All too often it is something egregious... sex, money, lying and even power.

I don't know if it was these thoughts that prompted me to contemplate verse 10 or whether verse 10 put these thoughts in my head. Either way, here is the verse that drew me in today. *You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.*

Holy, righteous, blameless... that is how Paul described his behavior and character during his time among the Thessalonians. What an example of Christ.

If Christians, and especially Christian leaders, lived that way, then sex, money, lying and power would have no hold on them. If I live that way then sex, money, lying and power, etc. will have no hold on me.

I heard God's exclamation mark as I typed in that last sentence.

God, help me to live as Paul lived... holy, righteous, and blameless. I pray this, Lord, not so that I can earn my way to You but so that my life will not impugn You, my God, in any way.

All to You I surrender... I surrender all!!! Through Jesus, my Lord, I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, August 12: 1Thessalonians 3- As I live so I pray you live...

Remembering yesterday's devotion, I was struck by the final verse of the chapter. As Paul lived so he prayed for the Thessalonians to live.

Paul wrote that his life was marked by holiness, righteousness and blamelessness (see 2:10). Now he is praying that their lives be marked by the same qualities and characteristics. *May he [that is their God and Father] strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones (13).*

Paul truly believes that a life like this honors God, his Father, so it is quite natural that he wants the same God honoring life for his children in the faith.

This thought spoke to me. This thought spoke to me about integrity, consistency and lack of hypocrisy.

Integrity... seeking these qualities grows from a life in love with God, not for any selfish motives.

Consistency... what is good and right for Paul to do is good and right for any (every) Christ-follower to do.

Lack of hypocrisy... truth is truth, right is right, living for God is living for God; it is not a play acting game done for show or only when in public.

So my time in the word reinforces what I heard yesterday; a life of holiness, blamelessness, righteousness is a life that honors God. And that is how God would have us live.

Thank You, Lord, for reminding me again today that my life is a statement of whom I serve. Lord, help me to live for and honor You in all I do. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Thursday, August 13: 1Thessalonians 4- Pure living...

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before (3-6).

God's Word has a great deal to say about how we are to live and particularly the sexual ethic we are to follow as Christ-followers.

One word that could suffice is 'purity', but even that word needs to be set in the context of all God has spoken, regarding sexual ethic already in His Word. Avoiding sexual immorality, in the context of God's Word, means keeping sex within the marriage covenant of one man and one woman.

The world of Paul's day had a wild sexual ethic, much like the Las Vegas stereotype. What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas where anything goes. Paul's world was filled with consorts and sex-partners, hetero and homosexuality, temple prostitution (sex with religious overtones), especially for the male. It was legal and pretty much people paid 'no never-mind' about sexual activity.

God's people were to maintain a different standard. Holiness; they were to *avoid sexual immorality*, unlike non-Christians who do not have God's Word, and they should not wrong anyone sexually either. It is hard for me to imagine what that might be beyond what has already been instructed. Whether it means more than this, I do not know but it is certainly an exclamation mark on the avoiding sexual immorality phrase.

My world is changing rapidly regarding what is culturally acceptable sexually. Marriage has been legally redefined to mean any two persons whether homo or heterosexual. That may reflect law of the land, but it is not God's way. God still calls me and all of His children to live pure and holy lives, controlling our passionate urges and drives, and to never take advantage of a brother or sister.

As a follower of Jesus this remains my ethic... no matter what my world says is okay.

God help me to live for You in the sexual ethic area and in all matters. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Friday, August 14: 1Thessalonians 5- A word to live by...

A golden nugget for today and all my todays. *Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (16-18).*

Rejoice always... God is at work. Not everything that happens is good but generally somewhere in all things is a God touch. When that cannot be found, we know that God will judge all wrongs on the last day. Rejoice, it is a life posture rather than isolated events.

Pray continually... pray, talk with God, praise, thank, intercede, lament. Do all of the above. Keep the lines of communication open with the Lord continually. Don't push your relationship with the Lord into a box and close the lid. Keep communication going...

Give thanks in all circumstances... Thank God for life and breath, for the joy of living another day, for family, friends, work and play. Thank Him for knowing Jesus and being able to live with Jesus and for Jesus in this world and the next. Thank God for God's small and big blessings, for His correction and challenge, for opportunities to love Him through service to others. Thank God for the beauty of nature and the wonder of living. In ups and downs, thank God that He will never let you Go, NEVER!

Not only is this *God's will for you in Christ Jesus*; it is also a great way to live!

Two words circled in my head from the Lord, "Do it."

Will you join me?...

Lord, simple words easily understood. I pray for grace to live this way... rejoicing, praying, thanking You all my days. Amen. May I live this way and may others see my life and praise You, too. Amen.

Saturday, August 15: 2Thessalonians 1- I marveled...

To a church enduring suffering, Paul says God will make all things right when He judges the world at His return. As Paul is concluding this teaching, he makes a statement in verse 10 that caught my eye and heart.

*They [those who do not know God] will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might on the day he comes **to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.** This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you (9-10).*

When Jesus returns, which is what Paul is referring to, we, who love and follow God, will glorify and marvel at Jesus. The thought of marveling at Jesus hit me.

I try to know God. I spend time in the Word. I spend time with believers in life and in worship. I try to live for Jesus in this world. And, yet, when He comes, when I see Him face to face, I will marvel. And the same is true for all believers. We will all marvel when Jesus returns.

No matter who we are, no matter how well we get to know Jesus this side of eternity, when Jesus returns, we will marvel. We will be in awe. Jesus is so much 'bigger', more awesome and beyond what I can even imagine, that I will marvel when I see him. Jesus is fully God and will no longer be confined to the earthly body He possessed during the 33 years He tabernacle among us (John 1:14).

Even though I know, I cannot truly understand. I tried to imagine what Jesus will be like on that day He returns, when Jesus, my God and the Lord of all things, returns in all His eternal glory and splendor. Wow, what a day that will be!

What a wonderful day that will be for all who believe in Jesus. Do you believe in Jesus???

Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth thou has for me.

Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit Divine.

Yes, Lord, give me glimpses of You that will carry me faithfully through this life until I see You face to face.

Alleluia. Amen.

Sunday, August 16, 2015, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.