



The Gospel In Suffering 1 Thessalonians 2:1-4

Review

- We imitate those who disciple us, and we imitate the Lord.
- Others then are able to imitate us.
- Wash, rinse, repeat. This is the cycle of discipleship.

The Gospel in Suffering

- Great missions (Iwo Jima, Fellowship of the Ring...) often come in great conflict. But with HUGE reward. Eternal rewards.
- Same is true with the preaching and sharing of the gospel. Paul of all people would know this.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-4 For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. 2 But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. 3 For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

Graham Stains story:

1999--Missionary Graham Stains, 58, and his sons, Philip, 10, and Timothy, 8, died after a crowd of more than 30 people doused their vehicle with kerosene and set it ablaze outside a makeshift church in the town of Manoharpur in India. Attacked the car while they were sleeping, no way of escape.

The missionary had been working among the poor and lepers since 1965; had arrived from a neighboring town, Baripada, to attend a meeting at the church. His wife and daughter had stayed in Baripada.

Police arrested five members of the Bajrang Dal, a militant group affiliated with the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP.)

In her affidavit before the Commission on the death of her husband and two sons, Gladys Staines stated:

"The Lord God is always with me to guide me and help me to try to accomplish the work of Graham, but I sometimes wonder why Graham was killed and also what made his assassins to behave in such a brutal manner on the night of 22nd/23rd January 1999. It is far from my mind to punish the persons who were responsible for the death of my husband Graham and my two children. But it is my desire and hope that they would repent and would be reformed."

Gladys went back soon to the same people, with her daughter. Later won an award, took the money and transformed the leper house into a full hospital.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. 2 But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.

- Kenos--wasn't empty, wasn't fruitless, wasn't without impact.
- Others have seen it...but YOU HAVE TOO! Lives transformed, idols cast down, marriages restored.
- You KNOW this! Stand on the things you KNOW. Quit being wishy-washy.

Luke 15:10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

- Never tire of seeing the miracle of salvation, of new birth, of repentance and restoration.
- Suffering and shamefully treated in Phillipi. Acts 16. 2 different things.
- Paul, Timothy, Silas and Luke traveled to Phillipi, leading city of Macedonia.
- Lydia hears them preaching...and, "The Lord **opened her heart** to pay attention to what was said by Paul." As we spoke 2 weeks ago, God moves first.
- As they are going to her house, they cast out a spirit in a young girl who was making money for her owners by fortune-telling.
- Paul and Silas put in prison. Beaten, dragged, put in stocks.
- They worship!
- Jailer is converted, **baptized at once!** Paul appeals, "You know this story."

Conflict never deterred Paul from the burden (and joy) of sharing the Gospel!

- "Boldness in our God." That's where our confidence is.

Our "labor of love"...Gospel work...even in the midst of great conflict, is never in vain!

Examples:

- **NT:** Acts, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 2 Timothy, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter
- **Early Church:** Steven, others boiled in oil, crucified, lit on fire...
- **Modern:** ISIS beheading 21 Christians on the beach, rape, murder.
- Voice of the Martyrs. Persecution.com
- The seed of the church is built on the blood of the martyrs.

Philippians 1:29 For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.

- Church--suffering for the gospel is not abnormal, or rare.

1 Thessalonians 2:3-4 For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

- Paul is kicked out...people come in behind to discredit him. This is Paul defending his ministry and the gospel.
 - Paul, and I, and you, have been ENTRUSTED with the pearl of great price, the greatest gift EVER.
 - It is an appeal. We beg...we beseech...we warn.
 - What is sharing the gospel? How is it done?
 - **Message. No error.** Doctrine matters. Even in the midst of conflict. Especially in the midst of conflict.
 - Conflict did NOT cause Paul to alter the message.
 - **Motivation. No impurity.** Integrity. No poor quality physically or morally. Excellence and clarity in the gospel.
 - **Method. No deception.**
- 1 Corinthians 1:17** ...(Paul sent) to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.
- When we try to be clever, cute with the gospel--we in fact empty the cross of its power! Please, Lord, let that never happen here!
- So we speak not to please man.
 - We don't cater to men and women, so they might think we are "reasonable" or inoffensive.
 - We also don't seek to please wow people in our skills, wisdom.

- We don't protect our lives, to avoid suffering, even death, at the expense of sharing the gospel.
- **We speak to please GOD! An audience of one.**

1 Corinthians 2:1-4 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Summary

- For Thessalonica, and the early church, the gospel was preached and received in much conflict and suffering.
- Same is true for much of the church TODAY.
- Why do we discuss this stuff?

Hebrews 13:3 Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

- We remember and pray!
- In clearly understanding suffering and shameful treatment, we are prepared if it happens. We stand.
- We march forward, understanding the treasure of the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.