

The Model Servant of God

Text: I Thessalonians 2:1-20

Introduction:

- The word “Salvation” could be written over the first chapter like a large banner. Many today are religious, but lost. The Thessalonians were genuinely converted because they simply placed their trust in Christ. Who are you trusting this morning?
- The word that can be written across chapter 2 is “Service!”
- V. 2- not in vain- I Thessalonians 2 is a glowing success story! Paul and Silas arrived at a major, thriving, pagan city and declared the first Gospel message. He went into a Jewish synagogue and declared Jesus as the Messiah and King. And in just a short time, this simple church of new believers became an example of faith in its generation and for the past 2000 years
- His coming was not empty or hollow, as if he were a mere salesman or marketer.
- There has probably never been such a mixture of religious cults and philosophic systems as in Paul’s day. All types of religions, philosophies, cults jostled and clamoured for attention! Yet Paul’s message was able to take root through all of these weeds. We ought to desire that same effectiveness in our service!
- Paul’s ministry was as a preacher, but we can make the application to all of us as servants! All believers are to be servants!
- I am thankful for all the many workers we have here at our church. Every ministry needs faithful servants!

I. THE SERVANT’S REASON (MOTIVE OR AIM) v. 1-8

a. Paul’s boldness- v. 2

i. Acts 16- Pauls’ experience of suffering at Philippi

1. When Paul arrived in Thessalonica, the wounds on his back from Philippi were still fresh.

2. "Acts 16:23-24 records that the suffering included a public flogging and having their feet in stocks while confined in the city's inner prison. Such a Roman flogging was no light matter; it was an experience not soon forgotten." (Hiebert)
 3. However, Paul was called to preach! So he continued even in the midst of "contention." He did not throw the towel in and give up!
 4. Illustr- The Early Church- Acts 4:29-31
 5. It takes courage to continually serve the Lord!
- b. Paul had the highest motive- why he preached- v.3-6
- i. Paul's preaching was pure in its intent- v.4-6
 1. His goal was not to please men, but to please God
 2. V. 3- nor in guile- he did not use wrong methods; lower his standards to appeal to sinful flesh. He was not an ear-tickler!
 3. Truthfully, the ministry is about God. It should ALWAYS be God-focused- v. 4
 - a. This avoids the danger of pragmatism and man pleasing- v. 5. We must use pure methods! Flattering words implies self-interest- i.e. higher offerings
 - b. Pragmatism is the main philosophy behind the Contemporary Christian Movement. "God's work, done God's way never lacks God's supply!"- Hudson Taylor
 - c. V. 6- Nor of men sought we glory- Some people are far more afraid of having an empty church than they are of offending a Holy God!
 - ii. The question for the preacher, Sunday school teacher, soul-winner, any servant- Is it pleasing to God? This is what energized Paul!
 - iii. Paul's preaching was pure in its content- v. 3
 1. I mentioned ear-ticklers earlier- II Tim 4:1-3=The Preacher's job is to make plain God's message

2. Preaching or Bible teaching is a divine work done through weak flesh and blood. So, the Bible teacher must be careful to limit his influence, and highlight God's message in the actual text, and not their own opinions- "no deceit, uncleanness or guile". The best method is through expository preaching. There is a difference between preaching about God's word, and actually preaching God's word.
3. Application: This speaks to doing our best for the Lord!

II. THE SERVANTS RESOLVE v. 7-18

- a. Paul was a hard-worker, and a compassionate worker
 - i. V. 7- It has been said that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.
 - ii. As a nurse/mother- "A man's work is from sun to sun, but a woman's work (or a mother's) is never done."
 1. There is no "clocking out" in the ministry- v. 9
 2. Who said this life would be easy, anyway?
- b. Persecution because of the gospel- v. 14-16
 - i. V. 14-For you also suffered the same things...of your own countrymen: When the Thessalonians responded to the Gospel, they became the targets of persecution. Paul comforted these suffering Christians with the assurance that they were not the first to suffer this way. The Lord Jesus faced persecution, and the Christians in Judea faced it first. Additionally, Paul and his associates were also persecuted.
 - ii. In Gospel ministry we realize very quickly that the world does not want a Savior who was crucified for their sins. They do not want a gospel that ignores human merit, exposes human pride, and calls sinners to trust in Christ alone for salvation and forgiveness. We should expect opposition!

- iii. Illustr- Jonathan Edwards of the Great Awakening was fired from his church!
- iv. Satanic opposition- v. 17-18
 - 1. Satan hindered us: Hindered- breaking up a road to make it impassable. Paul, in all his apostolic ministry and authority, could still be blocked by Satan. II Cor. 12:7-9
 - 2. But Paul did not give up because of this Satanic hindrance!
 - 3. Since Paul was unable to travel back to Thessalonica he wrote two letters which we cherish in our Bibles! We can see that God used even the opposition of Satan to accomplish His own good purposes.
 - 4. Eventually, Paul did make it back- Acts 20:1-5

III. THE SERVANTS REWARD v. 19-20

- a. V. 13- their reception of the Paul's preaching.
- b. The crown of rejoicing
 - i. Reward of a true witness for Christ- v. 19-20 (Some call this the Soul-winner's Crown)
 - ii. Paul was saying that he didn't need a crown in heaven because these precious ones were his crown of victory. Those whom we bring to Jesus and disciple are a crown of victory for us.
 - iii. The only things you can take to Heaven with you are people!
- c. The Lord's Coming
 - i. The triumphant theme of this epistle is the coming of the Lord! Oh, the joy that will be ours when Christ comes back!
 - ii. Paul was picturing the rapture of the church, after which believers will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive rewards. We may not be recognized down here, but our Savior one day will say those two precious words: "Well done!"

Conclusion:

It will be worth it all

when we see Jesus!

Life's trials will seem so small

when we see Christ.

One glimpse of his dear face,

all sorrow will erase.

So, bravely run the race

till we see Christ.