

Day 59, 1 Thessalonians 2

by David Servant

Paul's sermon emphasizes the importance of being motivated by love and serving as a servant, as seen in his own ministry and the Thessalonians' suffering.

Scripture: Luke 21:20, Acts 9:20, 1 Corinthians 12:28, Galatians 1:21, 1 Thessalonians 2:16, 2 Thessalonians 2:4, 2 Timothy 3:12

Topics: "Faithful Ministry", "Godly Suffering"

Description

David Servant preaches about Paul's journey from being tested and approved by God to being entrusted with the gospel, emphasizing the importance of being found faithful in ministry. Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus were tested by God to ensure their motives were pure, motivated by love for God and humanity. Despite facing persecution and suffering, Paul and his companions demonstrated genuine love and care for the believers in Thessalonica, serving them as a nursing mother and a father would their own children. Paul also forewarned about the wrath that would come upon the Jews in Judea, highlighting the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy about the desolation of Jerusalem.

Transcript

You may recall from what we've previously read in Acts and Galatians that Paul did not begin his apostolic ministry the day he was born again. He did, however, begin to preach the gospel, first in the synagogues of Damascus, then in Jerusalem, and later in Syria and Cilicia (Acts 9:20-30, 11:25-26; Gal 1:21). It wasn't until at least 12 years after his conversion that he was called as an apostle and departed on his first missionary journey. The office of apostle is the highest office to which one can be called (see 1 Cor. 12:28). All of this is to say that Paul was promoted as he was found faithful.

Paul wrote in our reading today that he, Timothy and Silvanus had been "approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel" and that God had "examined" their hearts (2:4). In the original Greek, the words approved and examined are the same words and could well be translated "tested." In other words, Paul was saying that God had tested him, along with Timothy and Silvanus, before He entrusted them with their current ministry.

More specifically, Paul indicates that God had tested their motives, because the Lord wants ministers who are motivated by love---for Him and humanity. It is likely that Paul's antagonists in Thessalonica were accusing him and his apostolic band of being motivated by something else, and so it seems Paul was intent on proving the purity of their motives. It was obvious to any who closely observed them in

Thessalonica that they weren't preaching to gain money, because they supported themselves with their own hands (2:9). It was also obvious that they weren't preaching to gain glory from people, as they came to Thessalonica running from those who hated them, and they found more of the same when they arrived. Nor could anyone rightly accuse them of any other evil motivation, as they behaved "devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly" (2:10).

Clearly, Paul and his companions were motivated by love, as they treated the new believers in Thessalonica with gentle care, like "a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children" (2:7), and "were exhorting and imploring each one...as a father would his own children" (2:11). That sounds like love expressed in genuine discipleship!

And just in case any of the Thessalonian believers might be tempted to think Paul and his companions' affections were just a temporary act, Paul reminded them that they were not absent by choice, but by circumstances beyond their control, and they were longing to be reunited. In fact, Paul had attempted to return more than once to Thessalonica, but was thwarted by Satan (2:18). To him, the Thessalonian believers were his "hope...joy...crown of exaltation" and "glory" (2:19-20). This is definitely the "love chapter" of 1 Thessalonians. How blessed are young believers who are under the loving care of those who understand that the word minister means "servant" and not "sovereign."

Paul also mentions that the Thessalonians were suffering at the hands of their countrymen just as he and his apostolic companions had suffered at the hands of the Jews in Judea. This was par for the course and was not reason to doubt. Years later, Paul would write, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12).

Finally, Paul declared that wrath had come upon the Jews in Judea "to the utmost" (2:16). We don't know exactly how that wrath fell. We do know, however, that about nineteen years later, Jerusalem would be besieged by Titus and the Roman Legions, and as many as one million Jews would perish in the holocaust. Jesus had forewarned of that day, saying, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled" (Luke 21:20-22). Because of that warning, no Christians perished then. Praise God!

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