

Paul's Defense – A Model for Ministry

I Thessalonians 2:9-12

Introduction

1. The apostle Paul wrote I Thessalonians from Corinth, at about A.D. 51.
2. Thessalonica was a large and central city in Macedonia. It was a city full of idol worship and false religions.
3. On Paul's second missionary journey, he preached and ministered in Thessalonica for 3-4 weeks (Acts 17:1-9). Some believed and the church in Thessalonica was born (Acts 17:4). Those who opposed Paul and his message ran him out of the city (Acts 17:5-9).
4. Paul wrote I Thessalonians to defend the gospel and to encourage and instruct the new believers.
5. Paul spends most of Chapter 2 defending his ministry.
6. His defense of his ministry is not for the sake of defending himself (this is the same Paul who in Phil. 1 rejoiced in prison because the gospel was going forth; in Acts 20 was willing to move toward "bonds and afflictions" in Jerusalem; in Rom. 9 wished he would be accursed in the place of his fellow Jews). Paul's ultimate concern was to defend the gospel.

We Proclaimed to You the Gospel of God – v. 9

1. They proclaimed through "labor and hardship."
2. They labored "night and day" so that they would not be a burden to the Thessalonians. Paul wanted nothing to stand in the way of their hearing the gospel.

Application 1 – Are we this gripped by the power and the goodness of the gospel . . . that it alone can save and that it is more precious to us than anything else? Are we this single-minded?

Application 2 – Do you proclaim the gospel of God? "And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?" (Rom. 10:14)

*God, make us gospel-filled gospel proclaimers!

We Behaved Toward You Believers – v. 10

1. They lived among the Thessalonians with lives that were "devout (holy), upright (righteous), and blameless." Their lives "adorned" (Titus 2:10) the gospel they preached.
2. So strong was the testimony of their lives, they called these Thessalonians and God Himself as their witnesses.

Application 1 – Ministry, by definition, is word AND works, lips AND lives (look at the ministry of Jesus, the ministry of Paul, the example of the early church in Acts, the book of James, the entire N.T.). Ministry is I Thes. 2:8.

Application 2 – Is this your view of ministry? Do you minister with your life as well as your lips?

*God, make us a people of proclamation AND incarnation!

We Were Exhorting and Encouraging and Imploring Each One of You – v. 11

1. They were urging the Thessalonians on in their faith and holiness.
2. They urged with the instruction [" . . . reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence . . ." (Acts 17:2-3)] and the holy affection of a father.

Application – Gal. 4:19, "My children, with whom I am again in labor (childbirth) until Christ is formed ("morph") in you . . ." Is this your motto for ministry?

*God, so form Christ in us that we would long and live to see Christ formed in others!

That You May Walk in a Manner Worthy – v. 12

1. This was the end for which they labored . . . that the Thessalonians would live Christ-like lives which reflected Him to this world.
2. This God before whom they lived was the same One who loved them (1:4), bought them (1:9-10), and called them into His "kingdom and glory" (2:12).
3. These would be sweet, sweet words of hope to these believers who also had experienced opposition and suffering.

Application – Where is your hope? We are citizens of His kingdom and partakers of His glory now . . . and there is more yet to come!

THOUGHTS FROM FELLOW PILGRIMS

“ . . . But why do so few Christians today open their hearts and homes to the non-Christian community? The reason is that they are fearful of being hurt by involvement with others. They do not want the trouble and the risk, the exhaustion that hospitality brings, the struggles with sloth that it requires, and all the rest of the suffering that it entails.

“But this fear of the cost of discipleship will disappear if Christian people begin to see how great is God’s love in welcoming them to His fatherly heart.” (Jack Miller)

“It is true that many Christians are involved in entirely too many meetings they feel they want to attend or maybe feel compelled to attend. We sometimes believe the illusion that many programs and a full calendar equal spiritual effectiveness and maturity. We become so busy about the work of being a Christian (along with the necessary task of providing for ourselves and our families) that there is no time left to invite friends, neighbors, or workmates for a meal or simply to have some fun together. Perhaps we need to cut out some of the activities, even go to fewer services and Bible studies, so we have time to become good friends with a few people who are not believers.” (Jerram Barrs)

“The whole of our ministry must be carried on in tender love to our people. We must let them see that nothing pleaseth us but what profiteth them; and that what doeth them good doth us good; and that nothing troubleth us more than their hurt. We must feel toward our people, as a father toward his children: yea, the tenderest love of a mother must not surpass ours. We must even travail in birth, till Christ be formed in them. They should see that we care for no outward thing, neither wealth, nor liberty, nor honour, nor life, in comparison of their salvation; but could even be content, with Moses, to have our names blotted out of the book of life, i.e. to be removed from the number of the living: rather than they should not be found in the Lamb’s book of life.” (Richard Baxter)