

The Hope of Heaven

1Thessalonians 2:1-9

- Last week we talked about how each chapter in Thessalonians ends with some mention of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and how strange that would be today, as that's one of the last topics covered in the pulpits of most Pastors sermons this morning. Yet that should be one of the primary motivations in the hearts of believers when attempting to live out our faith in a dark and deceived world. At the end of **V5** Paul alluded to his personal character and conduct while he was at Thessalonica, now he gives a more thorough review of his ministry, message and lifestyle, for as **Ch 1** introduced us to Paul the **Evangelist**, **Ch 2** introduces us to Paul the **Pastor**.

V1-9

- **V1-3** evidently people had been spreading lies about Paul in saying that he came there looking to take advantage of the people gullibility and that his real desire was to somehow profit off of the people by making them followers of him. As a pastor nothing hurts more when being falsely accused of abusing those that you're trying to help, especially from them who will hurt those who listen to their lies and deceit. So what does Paul do? He points them back to the facts.
- One of the primary ministries of the Christian is the > Ministry of Character, what we are often is far more important than anything we have to say, it's what gives credibility to our words. Jim Elliot said "in spiritual work, if nowhere else, the character of the worker decides the quality of the work" > **1Cor 9:27**- in speaking about the message of Christianity Paul said he disciplined his body so that his actions wouldn't discredit his words. These men were attacking his character in an attempt to discredit his message so Paul pointed them back to how he came to Thessalonica.
- **Acts 16:23-24, 33, 37**, Paul and his companions were beaten, bruised and battered by the time they'd arrived, their bodies still showing the effects of being abused, shackled and imprisoned. He says you know how we looked and how we were treated, the wounds on their backs were still fresh, he said when we came and spoke to you it had to be done with boldness because of the "**conflict**" its and athletic term which means to agonize over, it was in much pain and agony that they came there and spent those three weeks with them after what they had suffered.
- **V3** we see three charges that the enemy was laying against Paul and he does the same to you and I > **1st Error**- he's wrong, he's delusional, **2nd Uncleaness**- impure motives, he's in it for the money, **3rd Deceit**- he's a deceiver, a liar, guile, the same words used to describe what Satan is all about, but all three of these can be refuted by having good character. **V4-6** Paul says we've been approved by God, the word "**approved**" is associated with approving someone as being fit for public service, just as people are vetted before they were allowed to assume public office, so the missionaries were tested before they were commissioned as being fit as God's messengers.

- Paul and his companions were being accused of preaching and teaching an impure message, but one of the ways to keep the gospel pure and uncorrupted is to “**not seek to please men with the message**” > **Gal 1:10**- Paul said if he sought to please men he then could not properly serve Christ. The message of the popular preacher’s today is not one of repentance or surrender its one of achievement and happiness, that’s how you become the pastor to the stars, that’s when you get elevated to celebrity status, and the word about you being someone who’s good to listen to and not the Word begins to spread because their nothing more than a “**man-pleaser**”.
- Here’s the test as Paul speaks of three things that should never be associated with the gospel or its messenger > **1st Flattery**- anyone using compliments to gain favor or influence for selfish purposes > **Prov 26:28**- a flattering mouth destroys, **2nd Cloak of Covetousness**- using the gospel as a covering in order to get money, a following, power, **3rd Seeking Personal Glory**- never use the gospel to bring praise upon ourselves, anytime you’re taking credit for yourself you’re taking glory from God, and therefore bringing dishonor to the gospel in which were called to share.
- **V7-9** instead Paul says they were gentle as a nursing mother is toward her newborn, and were willing to give of our own comfort and even our lives if need be for your benefit. Here is the heart of a Pastor, listen to these gentle terms to describe his treatment of people that he’d only known for three weeks, and it proves that they were not in it for themselves or some selfish means. **V9** in fact says they were working night and day to make sure that no blame came upon the ministry, when your laboring around the clock for someone it’s not fun but it’s worth it.
- This goes back to **V1**, when Paul said “**that our coming to you was not in vain**” because Paul didn’t come to them as some salesman with a pitch, but with character and hope of a sinless glorious eternity to come, the message took root, even though they were only there for a short time. It reminded me of what Paul said in **1 Cor 2:2-5**- how he came to them in weakness, fear and much trembling, and his speech was not masked with persuasive words, for he’d determined to know nothing else except Jesus and Him crucified, and so his message was short and to the point, lacking in man’s wisdom but covered with God’s Spirit and in His Power.