

11/19/99

Always Faithful
2Thess. 1:3-5

Semper-Fi, if you are a Marine you know what that means, “always faithful”.

There are many group that have this type of commitment, police , firemen and others but when push come to shub, faithfulness always comes down to the last letter of “Fi”, “I”

Only “in Christ and through Christ” can we be faithful always.

Paul begins his letter by a prayer of thanksgiving for the incredible Christian witness the Thessalonian church had exhibited from the beginning.

But not a mere witness of Christ but unto Christ. Oswald Chambers in his devotional “My Utmost For His Highest’ for February 4th was on “For the love of Christ constraineth me.” 2Cor. 5:14 And he states, “Paul says he is overruled, overmastered, held as in a vice by the love of Christ. Very few of us know what it means to be held in a grip by the love of God; we are held by the constraint of our experience only...When we are born again of the Spirit of God, the note of testimony is on what

God has done for us, and rightly so. But the baptism of the Holy Spirit obliterates that forever, and we begin to realize what Jesus meant when He said, “Ye shall be witnesses unto me.” Not witnesses unto to what Jesus can do, that is an elementary witness, but “witness unto Me”, We will take everything that happens as happening to Him (Jesus), whether it be praise or blame, persecution or commendation.”

Such was the witness of the Thessalonians for which Paul is in awe!

Paul begins with thanksgiving for their faithful witness through persecution and then moves on to encourage them by reminding them of God’s judgment of the evil man who persecutes the godly, in one long sentence vs. 3-10 (customary of Paul’s sentences)

1. The thanksgiving. vs. 3-5
2. The encouragement. vs. 6-10

Then he finishes the chapter by praying that they continue being witnesses unto Him. vs. 11-12

We want to look at Paul’s thanksgiving prayer which expresses three things.

- L Paul’s admiration of the Thessalonians. vs. 3**
- II. Paul’s commendation of the Thessalonians. vs. 4**

III. Paul's declaration to the Thessalonians. vs. 5

I. Paul's admiration of the Thessalonians. vs. 3

A. Paul thanked God for their salvation. vs. 3a-

c

* The divine side!

1. He acknowledged his thanks as a debt to God.
 - a. The inclination of thanks was not of the goodness of heart or kindness but of debt.
 - 1) The personal pronoun "we" includes Silvanus and Timothy.
 - 2) The word bound "ophilo" has the idea of owing.
 - 3) The word was used for paying a debt or obligation.
 - b. Paul knew that it was God alone who saved the Thessalonians, not his own preaching or the knowledge he possessed.
 - 1) He told the Corinthians, "Some plant, some water, but God gives the increase". 1Cor. 3.6-7
 - 2) This word of being "bound" or owing God thanks appears twice, again in the exact context of their salvation. 2:13

2. He acknowledged their thanks as the proper thing to do.
 - a. Paul was addressing those who had been born into the family of God.
 - 1) The word brethren "adelphus" meaning of the same womb.
 - 2) The term is found nine times in the letter and nineteen in the first. 1:2, 2:1, 13, 15, 3:1, 6, 13, 15
 - b. Paul understands that it was deserving.
 - 1) The word fitting "axios" means deserving suitable, appropriate, and right.
 - 2) The proper understanding and relation between a person's change of life is due to God's intervention in their lives.
 - 3) The same word but in a different form is translated "worthy". 1:11
 - 4) God alone is worthy to receive all glory and honor. Rom. 11:32-36
 - c. The qualifying adjective eliminate any exception, "always" due to God.
 - 1) Always "pantate" has the idea of at all times, whenever they prayed!
 - 2) At no time is man to thank man for the salvation of man.
 - 3) All and every aspect of salvation is God's doing.

B. Paul thanked God for their growth. vs. 3d

* The human side.

1. He declares their personal faith was growing exceedingly. vs. 3-d
 - a. The present tense indicates an ongoing process.
 - b. The reference to faith is personal.
 - c. The word for faith “pistis” is used of God, Christ and spiritual things.
 - 1) It speaks of their belief and trust depending on God beyond salvation to every area of life.
 - 2) It is related to what God has revealed in the Scriptures, Biblical faith, not religious faith that is based on blind hope!
 - d. Their faith was growing, in fact exceedingly.
 - 1) The word exceedingly “huperauxano” means beyond measure and vigorously.

* This is the only appearance in this form in the New Testament.
 - 2) The nature of spiritual faith is to grow, develop and mature.
 - 3) Remember Paul had sent Timothy to know the condition of their faith and was praying exceedingly that they might return and perfect what was lacking in their faith. 1Thess. 3:5, 10

4) But now Paul in admiration says they had moved beyond their initial witness. 1Thess. 1:8-10

2. He declares their personal yielding in their love for each other had abounded towards each other. vs. 3e
 - a. They were yielding to God’s agape love that went beyond feelings, emotions and the physical appeal.
 - 1) The love that is based on sexual gratification “eros” is short lived and self-centered, in and of itself!
 - 2) The love that is based on emotions “phileo” is easily manipulated and abused!
 - 3) The love of God “agape” is selfless, sacrificial and sufficient for every situation and blossoms the other two, if we yield to it!
 - b. Paul had prayed for them to grow and abound in their love, not only for the believer but for all. 1Thess. 3:12
 - 1) The word abound is the same as in our verse!
 - 2) The Thessalonians were the answer to Paul’s prayer!
 - c. Paul knew the nature of the Old Man and he didn’t want them to become complacent, so he had exhorted them in the first letter about growing in their love. 1Thess. 4.9-10

- 1) What avails before God is faith working through love. Gal. 5:6
- 2) Agape love is the distinctive mark of a disciple of Jesus and maturity. Jn. 13:35.1 In 4:17-19

Illustration

Letter from a sister.

Looking back at 1991 I give thanks to God for what He is perfecting in my life. He hasn't chosen to heal me, but His refining process, I am certain, will bring forth what He wants in my life

As my unsaved sister observes the love toward me from the body, as her unsaved daughter and son-in-law watch and listen to Claudia's accounting of my condition and how I handle it, I am confident God will use this in His determined way.

The cancer on the kidney has shown no improvement, while the cancer on the left lung is gone. I have elected to take no further chemo. Since Oct. 3 I have slowly gone down hill as far as my energy and side effects are concerned. I have presented my body as a living sacrifice as my reasonable service to an all caring God, What do I have to fear? Johnnie Vandermuller

Application

1. Any admiration of man without recognition of God as the source is idolatry instead of being the worship of God.

- a. Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes before the men at Lystra who thought they were the gods, Hermes and Zeus and said, "Why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you." Acts 14:15
 - b. Paul told the Corinthians, "Who then is Paul, and who is Appolos but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one." 1Cor. 3.5
2. Any thanksgiving to God for personal growth does not ignore the personal diligence.
- a. We are to be diligent to show ourselves approved to God, not being ashamed.
 - b. We are to know that apart from Him, we can do nothing. Jn. 15:5d
 - c. We are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God who works in us both to will and to do or His good pleasure. Phil. 2:12-13
 - b. We are to be exercising personal denial of self, the Old Man, who has been crucified with Christ. Gal. 2:20
3. Each of us are to cultivate our faith through study, meditation, prayer and being filled with the Holy Spirit.
- a. We are not to be ignorant about spiritual gifts. 1Cor. 12:1
 - b. We are to grow up to the full stature of the fullness of Christ. Eph. 4:13
 - c. We are to be continually filled with the Spirit. Eph. 5:18

- d. We are to pray without ceasing. Phil. 5:17
- e. We are to be diligent to add to our faith. 2Pet. 1:5
- f. We are to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2Pet. 3:18

This was Paul's admiration of the Thessalonians!

II. Paul's commendation of the Thessalonians.

vs. 4

- A. Paul used the Thessalonian church as an example to other churches of God. vs. 4a
 - 1. This is no contradiction to what Paul has just stated in the previous verse.
 - a. Paul has already qualified that it was due to God but through the lives of the Thessalonians.
 - b. The word boast "kaukaomai", means to glory or brag about.
 - c. A favorite word of Paul found 38 times in New Testament, of which all are found in Paul's letters, with the exception of three in James.
 - 2. The boasting was for the purpose of encouraging believers to trust in what God can do.
 - a. The sharing and boasting, regarding anything to another is never to be for the sake of provoking them to envy or

jealousy but to give them hope and faith in God.

- b. Paul was very aware that if there was going to be any boasting, it would be proper, only if it was boasting that gloried God. 1Cor. 1:9-31

* "That no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption-- that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."

- 3. The boasting was to the churches of God,
 - a. The word for churches "ekklesia" is made up of two words.
 - 1) The word "ek", meaning out.
 - 2) The work "kaleo", meaning to call.
 - 3) The compound meaning is to call out or the called out, referring to the congregations of believers.
 - b. The context describes the churches as the possession of God.
 - 1) The churches of God were the individual people and assemblies of people who had been called out by God from the world, the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Col. 1:13

- 2) The churches of God are referred to in different ways by Paul.
 - a) The churches of the saints. 1Cor. 14:33
 - b) The churches of Galatia, Macedonia. 1Cor. 16:1, 2Cor. 8:1, Gal. 1:2
 - c) The churches of Christ. 1Thess. 2:14
 - d) The church of the living God. 1Tim. 3:15

B. Paul's commendation was valuable in view of what they had experience, sufferings. vs. 4b

1. He mentions the process, patience and faith, describing how they went through these sufferings.
 - a. Patience "hupomone", means to remain under.
 - 1) But not merely uncomplaining submission but a sustaining effort to bear up, steadfast endurance.
 - 2) The same word is used for the manner in which we are to run in the spiritual race of life. Heb. 12:1
 - 3) The apostle Paul used it to identify it a the patience of Christ and prayed that God would continue to direct their hearts in it. 3:5

- b. Faith "pistis", means trust and dependency on God strength against the attack of unbelief.
 - 1) It is used for the faith in Christianity 1. 3
 - 2) It is used for their trust in God in our verse.
 - 3) It is used work directed by God. 1:11
 - 4) It is used for their trust and reliance on the word as truth. 2:13
 - 5) It is used to identify those who do not believe, trust or depend to live by Biblical faith. 3:2
2. He mentions the particular situation, in persecutions and tribulations.
 - a. Persecution "diagmos" comes from to pursue, follow after.
 - 1) Jesus used it of in association with the word of God. Matt. 13:21
 - 2) Paul used it of his own experienced in ministry. 2Cor. 12:10, 2Tim. 3:11
 - b. Tribulation "thupsis", means pressure, anguish, trouble.
 - 1) The word was used of crushing grapes.
 - 2) The Lord used it as one of the reasons for people falling away, in the parable of the Sower. Matt. 13:21

- 3) Jesus gave a promise for these crushing pressure times, He said, “In the world you shall have tribulation but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world.” Jn. 16:33
- 4) The gospel had cost them their fellowship with the world 1Thess. 2:14, 3:3-5
3. He mentions the product, you endure
- a. Endure “*anechomai*” means to hold oneself up against erect, implying resistance and victory. 1Thess. 1:6, 2:14, 3:3-5
 - b. The resistance only made them stronger Christians.
 - c. Their response to the offering to the poor saints at Jerusalem was not in bitterness or complaint but Paul declared that in spite of their great trial of affliction they had joy and pleaded with Paul not to deny them from giving a contribute out of their deep poverty. as love for the Jew. 2Cor. 8:1-2

Illustration

The French reformer, Theodore Beza, made a famous retort to King Henry of Navarre. “Sire, it is truly the lot of the Church of God, for which I speak, to endure blows and not to strike them. But

may it please you to remember that it is an anvil which has worn out many hammers.” #4318

Application

1. Jesus said to Peter, “I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it”. Matt. 16:18
- a. The ability to respond to God is by the enablement of the Trinity.
 - 1) Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the **Father** who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” Jn. 6:44
 - 2) Jesus again said, “And **I**, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself.” Jn. 12:32
 - 3) "And when He, **the Holy Spirit**, has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” Jn. 16:8
 - b. The church was purchase with precious blood of Jesus Christ, as a lamb without blemish and spot. 1Pet. 1:19
 - 1) Paul reminded the Ephesian elders that they were overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. Acts 20:28
 - * Paul clearly calls Jesus God in the statement!
2. Whenever we are being true witnesses unto Christ and someone commends us, we usually

won't be aware of the extent or example if our motive is love for God.

- a. The Proverbs declare, "Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own mouth." Prov. 27:2
 - b. Paul reminds the Corinthians, "What do you have that you did not received? Now if you did indeed received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" 1Cor. 4:7
- 3.** A mediocre or carnal life results in an example of shallow patience and faith, evidence of love for self, rather than Christ.
- a. The Corinthians were plagued by carnality, though they had spiritual gifts, so gifts are no evidence of your spirituality. 1Cor. 3:1
 - b. The state is the result of refusing to grow spiritually in the solid food of the word. Heb. 5.12-14
- 4.** Endurance in trials comes by trusting God and going through the fire.
- a. We are promised that we will never be tested beyond our ability to endure but with every testing show us the way of escape. 1Cor. 10:13
 - b. We are reminded that it is not by might nor by power but by God's Holy Spirit. Zech. 4:6, Eph. 5:18
 - c. We are instructed to count it all joy in our various trials for they produce patience, that

we may lack nothing, so we are to ask God not doubting. Ja. 1:2-8

- d. We are to not think it strange when fiery trails come to us and that we are partaking in the suffering of Christ, for the blessing is that the spirit of glory and of God will rest on us. And is we suffer, we need to make sure it isn't for our own wrong or evil doing but as a Christian, not being ashamed and glorifying God as a faithful Creator. 1Pet 4:12-16,19

This was Paul's commendation of the Thessalonians!

III. Paul's declaration to the Thessalonians. vs. 5

- A.** Paul tells them that the fact that they were patience, faith and endurance through persecution, provided the justification for God's choice of them.
 - 1.** He says their suffering is manifest evidence.
 - a. The word manifest "endigma", means token or plain proof, found only this one time in the New Testament.
 - b. The plain evidence points back to the preceding verse, their steadfast

- endurance and faith in their sufferings.
- c. The persecution to their lives came about due to their choice to follow Jesus and remain faithful to Him.
 - d. The example had been set by Paul and Silas at Philippi and witnessed by the believers at Thessalonica and Berea. 1Thess. 2:2
 - e. The very gospel they preached marked the greatest example by the persecution of Jesus and death on the cross for sinners.
 - f. The apostles had told them from the beginning that Christians were appointed to and would suffer tribulation. 1Thess. 3:3-4
2. He knew they were the object of hatred for Christ's sake.
- a. They had been chosen and separated by God, and were now the object of hatred and persecution. 1Thess. 2:13-14
 - b. They had become followers of the Lord and the apostles, having received God's word in much affliction and joy of the Holy Spirit. And consequently became examples to all the churches of Macedonia and Achaia who believe. 1Thess. 1:6-7

- c. They were enabled effectively by the word, becoming initiators of the churches of God which were in Judea in Christ Jesus, suffering from their own countrymen as they of the Judeans. 1Thess. 2:13-14
 - d. They had been Paul's anxious concern in view of their suffering and was hindered from coming to them twice 1Thess. 2:18, 3:1-3
3. He calls God's judgment righteous.
- a. The word righteous "dikaios" means right, proper or due.
 - 1) When choice or judgment involves man, there is always a chance of error.
 - 2) When choice or judgment involves God, there is no chance of error, for He is perfect in every way.
 - b. The word Judgment "krisis" denotes a separation, by a decision or verdict good from evil and without partiality.
 - 1) The context is talking about God's righteous verdict over the Thessalonian saints to make them His own, not the judgment of those persecuting them.
 - 2) The judgment of God to vindicate the persecuted saints of Thessalonica and all future ones is

dwelt with in the following verses.
vs. 6-10

* Verse six is clear, “Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you.”

- 3) The apostle told them about the men who killed both the Lord and their prophets, as well as persecuting them, they did not please God, for bade the preaching of the gospel to the Gentile in order that they be saved, filling up the measure of their sins but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost. 1Thess. 2:15-16

B. Paul tells them that their suffering and endurance for the kingdom of God was a badge or proof of their citizenship

1. The phrase count worthy “kataxioo”, is a judicial term and means to regard worthy not to make me worthy.
 - a. The sufferings of the believer do not make him or her merit entrance into the kingdom of God.
 - b. The fact that they were enduring as Paul already stated, was the outcome and gave evidence of God’s choice of them.

- b. The fact that they endured also gave evidence of their genuine birth from heaven by faith and grace.
 - c. They were sons and daughters of God, heirs with Jesus Christ.
2. This was Paul teaching in his first letter to them.
 - a. His exhortation and charge to them was, “That they walk worthy of God who calls them into His own kingdom and glory. 1Thess. 2:12
 - b. His second letter to them was most likely in reception of a second letter from them , though we have no information about it.
 - c. Whether Timothy , Silas or perhaps both return we are not told.
3. The kingdom of God refers to the future open manifestation of God’s rule on the earth.
 - a. The phrase for their present lives describes the rule of God in the hearts of men.
 - b. The phrase is found sixty-nine times in the New Testament.
 - c. The phrase describes the universal church of God, in heaven and in earth.
 - d. The phrase indicates that God alone knows who are His, as He reigns in the hearts through obedience.

- e. The phrase identifies the reason for their suffering in the past, even to the present day, “For which you also suffer”.
- f. Their alligiance to the Kingdom of God is their motivation for enduring the persecution and sufferings.

Illustration

The psalmist becomes envious of the wicked until God opens his eyes to their eternal doom. Psalm 73

* I think of the suffering that the Sudan Christians are enduring, as the are systematic been starve solely because they will not deny their faith or the fact that their daughters, sons and wives are kidnapped into slavery and their only hope is to buy them back but they have no money.

Application

1. The fact that God predestines the believer and the believer exercised his or her free moral agency of choice, makes up God righteous judgment for salvation, followed by perseverance.
 - a. As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor

any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. 8:36-39

- b. Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. 2Cor. 4:16-18
2. Suffering for the kingdom or Christ sake will only verify your citizenship.
 - a. Paul says, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” 2Tim. 3:12
 - b. Peter warns us, “For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is* commendable before God.” 1Pet. 2:20
 - c. Peter reminds us of our primary example, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:” 1Pet. 2:21
 - d. Peter tells us of the privilege, “But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake,

you are blessed. “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.” 1Pet. 3:14

- e. Peter lastly declares the true value of our suffering, “For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. 1Pet. 3:17

3. God calls us to love our enemies of the gospel following His steps. Rom 12.19-21

- a. Paul says, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.” vs. 19
- b. Paul tells us what we are to do, “Therefore If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” vs. 20
- c. Paul warns us of our human and carnal sin nature and Old Man, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” vs. 21

This was Paul’s declaration to the Thessalonians!

Conclusion

Paul’s thanksgiving prayer expresses:

- I. His admiration of their growth in faith and love!
- II. His commendation of their example through persecution!

- III. His declaration that God’s choosing of them verified their partaking of the Kingdom in their sufferings!