

1Thessalonians, Chapter One, Lesson Two

SHOWING GRATITUDE 1Thessalonians 1:2-5

STIMULATE

** Last week we were introduced to two topics which will be repeated throughout this wonderful epistle. Do you recall what they were?

1. A genuine "love for the brethren"
2. A "desire for instruction from the Word of God"

** When you consider the events which gravely impacted our nation on 09-11-01, how could that day stimulate our desire for personal growth in either of these two areas?

When men driven by "doctrines of demons" (1Timothy 4:1) can be committed to the point of taking their own lives, we understand the need for us to be committed to the TRUTH of God's Word and the living out of that truth through our love for one another, so that we might be lights in the middle of a dark, crooked and perverse generation.

MOTIVATE

** For today, let's begin by defining the word "attitude", what does it mean?

Webster: "a mental position...or a feeling or emotion toward a fact or state."

** With that in mind, what is our attitude to be like regarding our fellow believers?

We are to develop an "attitude of gratitude". That is not a new expression to us, but how does it flesh itself out in the life of a Christian? Paul is going to show us, by example, the need for "**Showing Gratitude**" for those around us and how it will be made manifest in our life if it is genuine. Please open your Bibles to 1Thessalonians 1:2-5 and let's enjoy together all that our Lord has for us to learn.

Read Passage (V.2-5)

Opening Prayer

Showing Gratitude

INVESTIGATE

V. 2 ** In our study last week, we watched Paul, Silas and Timothy as they were "**Sharing Greetings**" of grace and peace for the Thessalonians. How does Paul now follow up that greeting?

"We give thanks to God always for all of you..."

Paul was compelled to give thanks to God for what He had done in the lives of others.
cf. 2Thessalonians 1:3

"We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting" The word translated "ought" is *opheilo* and means "to owe". It refers to a debt which must be paid, which is why Paul continues with (*axios*) "as is only fitting". That word means "of weight, of worth, worthy."

** Why is it so important for Christians to give thanks specifically "to God"?

Scriptures commands that we do!

Colossians 3:15-17 "giving thanks through Christ"

Ephesians 5:20 "always giving thanks..to God"

Romans 1:21 "sinners fail to give thanks"

** According to our text, for whom was Paul, Silas and Timothy thankful?

"...for all of you..." The strong Christians, the baby Christians, the weak Christians

** How often are Christians to be giving thanks to God for each other?

"...always..." This is an established pattern of thanksgiving, which is not deterred by circumstance.
cf. 1Thessalonians 5:18, (All see) Psalm 107:1-2, 8, 15, 21-22, 31 and 43

** Back in our text for today, how does Paul communicate his thankfulness to God?

By "making mention of you in our prayers". A truly thankful Christian will have a strong prayer life to vent that thankfulness. They will overflow with an "attitude of gratitude" towards God!

Paul repeatedly prayed for other Christians:

Romans 1:9, Ephesians 1:16, Philippians 1:3, Colossians 1:9

V. 3 ** As Paul prays with thanksgiving to God for the Thessalonians, he is constantly bearing in mind three aspects of their Christian walk. What are they?

First - "...their work of faith..."

** What does that mean?

William Hendriksen - "work resulting from faith" i.e.- caring for the sick, comfort the dying, instructing the uninformed.

Second - "...labor of love..."

** In today's mindset, how would you define that phrase?

Commentator Leon Morris offers that this is in reference to "small services we render without hope of reward". However, Paul's Greek term here (*kopos* - lit. "laborious toil") is a strong one which implies "that out of their love, they have labored to the point of weariness."
cf. Colossians 1:29 (*agonizomai*)

Third - "...their steadfastness of hope..."

**** Do you think that Paul is referring to a hope that is just a passive resignation - like "I sure hope this all turns out well"?**

Absolutely not! cf. Hebrews 11:1

Regarding this phrase, William Barkley says, "It is the spirit which can bear things, not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope". It is a solid certainty.

**** In Whom had the Thessalonians placed their hope?**

In "...our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father".

**** There is no question that the best place to put your hope is in the person of Jesus Christ. But what theological truth is represented by that phrase and how does it make Jesus Christ different from any other "religious leader" the world has ever known?**

He is equal with God and He (alone) is in the presence of God! Consider the resurrection and ascension of Christ. cf. 1Corinthians 15:3-4, Acts 1:9, Philippians 2:9 and Hebrews 10:10-13

Just as a footnote, some commentators feel that the phrase "in the presence of God" is referring to the Thessalonians or possibly even Paul as he prays. However, it is best to view this descriptive phrase as one focused upon the person of Christ.

V. 4 ** What two things did Paul know about the Thessalonians which reflect the grace of God?

They were "beloved by God" and "chosen" by God!

**** What familiar doctrine does that re-introduce to us?**

The doctrine of election. Perhaps no other doctrine contained in Scripture better demonstrates God's love for His children than this one.

Remember: Ephesians 1:4-5, Romans 11:5-6 (Israel too!), Colossians 3:12-13 (Obey as chosen)

Both terms, beloved and chosen, are used in 2Thessalonians 2:13.

V. 5 ** Was Paul's gospel message merely a slick sales promotion?

No! It was "not in word only". God "proved" what Paul was saying by "signs, wonders and miracles". cf. 2Corinthians 12:12, Acts 20:7-12, Acts 28:1-6

**** From where does Paul get the power to perform "signs, wonders and miracles"?**

"...in power and in the Holy Spirit..." cf. John 3:21

**** What kind of impact did Paul's "Holy Spirit powered" message have upon those in Thessalonica?**

It was received with "full conviction".

**** What does that mean?**

Those hearing the message and observing the life of the messenger, were fully convicted of the truth, even unto the salvation of their souls. Note: Hendriksen offers that the conviction could also be speaking of Paul's heart as he presented God's saving truth.

** How did the power of God manifest itself in the lives of Paul, Silas and Timothy according to this verse?

"...just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you..."

These men, having been changed themselves by the gospel message they preached, were living out the godly example which is always produced by the Word of God.

** Who was to benefit from their godly example?

The Thessalonians - "...**for your sake.**" It was designed to give birth to the Thessalonians' faith and to then sustain it by virtue of following that same example.
cf. 1Thessalonians 2:10-12, Hebrew 13:7

EXTRICATE

** Our passage for today has been filled with godly examples for us to follow. Let's see how many we can find.

V. 2 - Give thanks to God, "Attitude of Gratitude".

V. 2 - Pray always for our brothers and sisters.

V. 3 - Work of Faith.

V. 3 - Labor of love.

V. 3 - Steadfastness of hope.

V. 4 - Obedient living because we are "beloved and chosen" of God.

V. 5 - Live exemplary lives for others to follow.

DELINEATE

** As you reflect upon the depraved world around us, and now consider who you are in Christ Jesus by the Grace of God, for what should you be thankful?

1. Our salvation based upon the word.(Romans 10:17)
2. Our wives, husbands, children.
3. Our church family - grounded in the TRUTH.
4. God's precious Word. (Acts 20:32)
5. Encouragement of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:4)

EVALUATE

** How often do you mention these things in prayer to God with "thanksgiving".

A conservative answer might be, "Not often enough".

ACTIVATE

** In this country there are a few (Matthew 7:14) who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. As Christians, when the world unravels around us, we should be steadfast in our hope (a hope that is based exclusively on the Word of God) and we should be thankful to God for all He has provided for us through our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Further, we should be committed to living out godly lives which can be used as an example for others to follow.

Will you take a moment now and commit to the Lord to be more faithful in this area of thankful prayer and godly living for His name sake?

Closing prayer