

LEANING IN AND LOOKING AHEAD - PART III

We have been looking at Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians and today we will delve into the second chapter of this book. Here are a few reminders of 'gems' we have gathered so far:

- Paul tells us that 'making mention of people in prayer' is a consistent means of prayer for him.
- Mentioning someone's name in His presence counts with God.
- These people were 'leaning into' God's purposes for them by their energized faith and empowered love while looking ahead with envisioned hope.
- Their hope was fixed on Jesus 'coming back' and His 'coming through' for them until He returns. (Both His 'return and His rescue')
- They had turned to God from idols...the false teachings, deceptions, opinions, ungodly desires, religious novelties, and worldly practices that captured their attention and practices.

1For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, 2but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. 3For our exhortation does not *come* from error or impurity or by way of deceit; 4but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. 5For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness— 6nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. 7But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children. 8Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. 9For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; 11just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children, 12so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

13For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. **I Thessalonians 2:1-13 NASB**

- Paul is 'approved by God' via a thorough heart examination. (**I Thessalonians 2:1-6**)
 - Paul states his function as a true apostle. (v6)
 - All Apostles are probably spiritual fathers.

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- Not all spiritual fathers are Apostles.
- Apostolic heart standards
 - Strong character proven through spiritual conflict and opposition. (See **Acts 16:14-20**)
 - Sound teaching that is free from delusion, impurity, and deception. (**I Thessalonians 2:3**)
 - Authentic purpose of pleasing God vs. placating man. (v4)
 - Values free from greed and self-promotion. (v5)
 - Valid God-given authority.
6 Nor did we seek to extract praise and honor and glory from men, either from you or from anyone else, though we might have asserted our authority [stood on our dignity and claimed honor] as apostles (special missionaries) of Christ (the Messiah). I Thessalonians 2:6 Amplified Bible
 - Amplified Bible says that there is an authority, dignity and honor that attends such a ministry.
 - “Nor seeking glory from people – neither from you, nor from others, [although] being able to be with weight as apostles of Christ.” (**Transline New Testament**)
 - True humility of heart is Paul’s ministry. (v1-6)
- Apostolic nurture... (he ‘mothers’ the church) **I Thessalonians 2:7-8**
 - Birthing – bringing forth. (v7)
 - Nursing – providing the sincere milk of the Word.
 - “Feeder” or Mother – only time used in the NT
 - This word means gives warmth to or warms in one’s bosom. (See **Ephesians 5:29** – only two places used in NT).
 - So fond an affection or longing.
 - Only place this word appears in the Bible was found on a gravestone of parents longing for their dead child.
 - Very dear to us...literally ‘beloved’.
- Apostolic nature (he fathers them) **I Thessalonians 2:8-12**
 - He imparts the Gospel through self-sacrifice.
 - He imparts his own ‘life’ to them.
 - He is an example of hard-work, integrity, and blamelessness.
 - He exhorts, he encourages, he implores, he loves. *10 You are witnesses, [yes] and God [also], how unworldly and upright and blameless was our behavior toward you believers [who adhered to and trusted in and relied on our Lord Jesus*

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Christ]. 11 For you know how, as a father [dealing with] his children, we used to exhort each of you personally, stimulating and encouraging and charging you. 12 To live lives worthy of God, Who calls you into His own kingdom and the glorious blessedness [into which true believers will enter after Christ's return].

Paul's Parenting Activities

Mothering

Nurtured

Pampered

Delicate touch

He offered acceptance

He gave to them

He mothered them into the way

He mothered them into the family of God

Fathering

Nudged

Prodded

Disciplined training

He expected excellence

He required of them

He fathered them into the walk

He fathered them into the Army of God

- He brought people to the place of benefit and blessing in God and he turned their hearts to God so that the Lord would receive blessing and glory from them.
- Most importantly, what Paul did to parent this group of people worked! It produced the ultimate result. (v13)

- 13 And we also [especially] thank God continually for this, that when you received the message of God [which you heard] from us, you welcomed it not as the word of [mere] men, but as it truly is, the Word of God, which is effectually at work in you who believe [exercising its superhuman power in those who adhere to and trust in and rely on it]. **I Thessalonians 2:13**

Amplified Bible

- The word which is inwardly working itself in you who believe...**The Emphasized NT**
- ...which has living power in you who have faith...**The NT in Basic English**
- God's Word which is being constantly set in operation in you who believe...**Wuest NT**

14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the assemblies (churches) of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea, for you too have suffered the same kind of treatment from your own fellow countrymen as they did [who were persecuted at the hands] of the Jews,

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15 Who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and harassed *and* drove us out, and continue to make themselves hateful *and* offensive to God and to show themselves foes of all men,

16 Forbidding *and* hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles (the nations) that they may be saved. So as always, they fill up [to the brim the measure of] their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last [completely and forever]! [Gen. 15:16.]

17 But since we were bereft of you, brethren, for a little while in person, [of course] not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great longing to see you face to face,

18 Because it was our will to come to you. [I mean that] I, Paul, again and again [wanted to come], but Satan hindered *and* impeded us.

19 For what is our hope or happiness or our victor's wreath of exultant triumph when we stand in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? Is it not you?

20 For you are [indeed] our glory and our joy! **I Thessalonians 2:14-20 AMPC**

- Paul was thrilled at the way the Thessalonians 'received' the Word in their inner being. Now he is expressing the fact that they have truly become a church.
 - "...imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea!!" (v14)
 - He knows this is true by how they have embraced the Word and the Holy Spirit working in them even through struggles and difficulties.
 - They were getting flack from their own people, just as the early churches in Judea got from the Jews.
 - Not only were their obstacles for the Thessalonians, but Paul and his team were fighting the enemy as well. (**I Thessalonians 2:18**)
 - Paul says that the believer in Thessalonica were their glory and joy...how fitting! (v19-20)