

January 10, 2010

Entrusted With Eternity

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

What comes to your mind with the word *eternity*? Today, we will look into Paul's life and calling, and observe how he labored in the first-century church. We will seek out the principles that guided him, and attempt to find how it applies to our life in Christ.

Let's look into our text:

1. 1Thess 2:1-2. Paul continued to tell the gospel, even in the face of persecution and hardship. He acknowledged that it was with the *help of our God*. What would Jesus desire of us in our witness? What if we were opposed or mistreated? How hard is it to return to a task after you've been 'burned' for something similar? Why? What helps you get past that reluctance? What does God do or promise that gives you the strength to stick with it?

2. vss. 3-4. What would be an impure motive for sharing the gospel? How could the gospel be used to *trick* any person? Paul was not trying to merely please the people, but please God. **2Tim 4:3**. What would this look like today? Think of these topics: Homosexuality, women's roles in church, styles of worship music. Would these stir controversy? Would there be some who would be drawn away by hearing only what their itching ears want to hear? Have you ever been tempted to amend the gospel to make it more appealing to some person? Is there some particular person or group that you are tempted to try to please in such a way as to discount God's requirements? What is the one principle for which you would stand no matter if it made others happy or not?

3. vss. 5-6. What is so tempting about receiving the praise of other people? **Matt 6:1-8**. Have you ever found yourself doing supposedly Christian work, but for your own selfish advantage? When we give aid, without someone saying 'thank you', does that diminish your desire to assist again? Why? Have you talked to God about this?

4. vss. 7-10. Why would Paul use the imagery of a mother's care? Do you have someone who is like your spiritual child? How are you showing love to them? Do you have a Christian brother or sister who is *dear* to you? What makes them so?

5. vss. 11-12. Not everyone has this earthly father example, but it is a tender picture of love and support. Who do you know who needs your urging toward comfort and encouragement? How can you give that support to them? Why would you not give it?

If we are going to truly please God rather than people, what are two things we need to separate?

1. Express the gospel in a way that the culture understands and accepts
2. Change the gospel message itself to make it acceptable to the culture.

Think back on Paul's experience in Thessalonica. What was the biggest key to his success?

- Not being discouraged by a bad experience
- Sincerity of heart
- His focus on pleasing God instead of people
- The love he showed the people
- His encouraging spirit
- His urging others to attain a high moral character

Paul was entrusted with spreading the gospel. What ministry or manner of spreading the gospel is God entrusting to you right now?

What help do you need to carry out this work entrusted to you?

- God's strength to overcome a past failure or trauma
- God's strength to stop being a mere people-pleaser
- More time to commit to such work
- Encouragement from fellow Christians
- Some training or special skill
- Better information about the gospel
- More appreciation of God's gift of salvation
- Other? _____

Action steps:

1. Tell someone what Christ has done for you. **1Pet 3:14-16.**
2. Encourage a fellow Christian
3. Investigate a ministry of WCC into which you think God may be calling you.

