

January 17, 2010

Messengers of Light or Shadow?

1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

We will try to determine today how to understand the calling of God. How do we distinguish God's voice to us from a message from a mere man? Sometimes it's hard to do. Paul was apart from the Thessalonians, but he was always trying to encourage them, and keep his relationship strong.

1. 1 Thess 2:13. Paul again thanks this church for something they are doing well. They believed a correct message from God. What convinced you that the message of the Bible is the true message from God? The resurrection? Something else? What can you do to help others come to this belief? The stories of Samuel **1Sam3:4-9** and Gideon **Judges 6:36-40** show us that we often confuse God's message with something from men. But once we figure it out, we can become strong in the Lord. People often have their attention in difficult places, making the gospel hard to get through. **Matt 8:4-8**. Because of this parable, how do we direct our efforts toward telling others about Jesus? **1Cor 9:22**.

2. vss. 14-16. Have you suffered in ways to help you identify with the Thessalonians? Why were those folks willing to bear up under suffering as Christians? Would we do the same? From where does opposition come that would make it more difficult to live for Jesus?

1. Friends I had before becoming a Christian
2. The pressures of this secular and worldly culture
3. The hypocrites within the church
4. My inner conflict or turmoil or doubt
5. From non-Christian family members
6. Other?_____

Whose support is most valuable to overcome this opposition?

3. vss. 17-18. How would you describe Paul's feelings about being separated from the Thessalonians? Have you found yourself separated from some Christian brother or sister? How can you re-connect? When you are separated from someone to whom you have been close, how do you react?

- "out of sight, out of mind"
- 'absence makes the heart grow fonder'
- I run up a big long-distance phone bill
- E-mail is our friend
- I make many contacts at first, fewer as time wears on
- I invest my emotional energy in someone else
- Other?_____

4. vss. 19-20. When Christ returns, to whom would you point with pride and say you helped them come to faith in Jesus? How would you describe Paul's emotions toward the Thessalonian church from his words in these 2 verses? How do you build such a

relationship with anyone? Some say this verse is proof that we shall know each other in heaven.

5. Romans 10:10-13. plus vs. 14-15 also are important to understanding this passage. Does your faith go beyond 'lip service'? Does your life show that you truly trust Him? What would be the evidences? What kinds of behaviors would show openly? Could other people be fooled by your outward behavior to think you're a dedicated follower of Jesus when you really are not?

How is hearing God's message like using your cell phone?

1. You must be ready to receive messages from God.
2. You must minimize interference.
3. You must be hooked up to a good network.