
IN THE WAITING

Living For God

Have you ever wondered if your efforts truly matter? Not all contributions carry equal weight. I think that all of us want our efforts and our time to count for something, right? We want to have purpose.

(Re)Counting the Beat

As we delve into this series on 1 Thessalonians, it's worth noting its connection to our previous exploration of Colossians. In the rhythm of Paul's writing, our focus in Colossians was on our new identity and reality within God's Kingdom, and in 1 Thessalonians, our emphasis is on the practical aspects of living in this alternative reality while awaiting Jesus' return.

How we go about living out the alternative reality that is now true of us makes a HUGE difference to how the message of Jesus – the good news – is received by the people we interact with.

Background on 1 Thessalonians

This letter was penned to the city of Thessalonica, located in Roman-occupied Macedonia (modern Greece). Thessalonica was a free city with a degree of self-governance, attracting a diverse array of traveling preachers. The authors, including Paul, wrote to a church that likely comprised new converts, primarily gentiles with limited exposure to Jewish traditions. The early church was still shaping its beliefs and practices, making this one of the earliest known New Testament writings.

You're (Not) So Vain!

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

In this section, Paul and the team present a defence of their conduct during the initial declaration of the gospel to Thessalonica. They emphasise

that their visit wasn't in vain, despite facing adversity. Opposition doesn't disqualify the good news or their efforts in sharing it! Paul's boldness in sharing the gospel with the Thessalonians shines through, even with all the challenges and 'pressing' he faced.

Paul, Timothy and Silas assert the purity of their intentions, citing their accountability to God as stewards of the gospel. Their motive wasn't personal gain or fame, but rather to please God, the ultimate judge of their hearts.

The striking image of a gentle, caring mother describes their approach to the Thessalonians. This nurturing, vulnerable stance reinforced their message and invited a deeper level of relationship. Paul's affection for the Thessalonians shines through, demonstrating that their efforts went beyond simply delivering a message; they offered a whole-life relationship

1 Corinthians 1:18

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Beasts of Burden: The Importance of Conduct

1 Thessalonians 2:9-12

Paul and his companions aimed to avoid burdening the Thessalonians any further in their personal conduct when presenting the gospel in their city. While Paul's defensiveness may seem over the top to our modern ears, it underscores a deeper truth: the importance of how the Gospel is communicated. It's not just the words we speak but also how we live that conveys the message.

We shouldn't be offensive in our conduct for communicating the gospel, nor should we shy away from it.

There is significance in love in our interactions and gospel communication.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 – this emphasises that even if they had the most profound knowledge or faith but lacked love, their efforts would be in vain. This sentiment serves as a reminder that the way we communicate is as important as the message itself.

Friends of P(aul)

1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

At the end of the passage, in reflection on Paul's time in Thessalonica, he recognises the positive outcomes of their ministry there. The Thessalonians received the Word of God not as mere human words but as the Word of God itself, which began to work within them. They became imitators of other churches, sharing in the challenges and opposition faced by those who accepted the same message.

Conclusion: Living for God in the Waiting

Are we communicating the truth of Jesus with love, inviting people into a relationship that extends beyond words?

In a world marked by polarisation and division, love is our most powerful tool for sharing the good news and transforming lives.

When we come with the truth of the gospel in the way of love, it creates the opportunity for the Holy Spirit to bring about the fruit of the kingdom and the multiplication of the message and medium – Spirit-filled disciples who love God and love other people.

How do we Live for God in the waiting? We love people enough to do whatever it takes to have them hear the good news of Jesus! And we trust God that He will work it out through us and in them.

How do you do that? Is there an invitation you need to respond to from the Lord to love first? Maybe you need to say sorry to Him for loving only so far, and not sharing the good news?

Discussion Questions

1. How can we trust God to work through us when sharing the gospel, even when we may not see immediate results?

Context: The sermon concluded that when the truth of the gospel is presented with love, it creates the opportunity for the Holy Spirit to bring about fruit.

Apply It: Can you think of a time when you shared the gospel and didn't see immediate results? How can you trust God in those moments?

2. Based on 1 Thessalonians, what do you think is the importance of having pure intentions and accountability to God when sharing the gospel?

Context: In the sermon, Paul emphasised that they were not seeking personal gain or glory but rather had pure intentions and were approved by God.

Apply It: How can you ensure your motives are pure when sharing your faith, and what steps can you take to remain accountable to God?

3. Why is non-verbal communication significant when sharing the gospel, and how can we ensure our non-verbal communication matches our message?

Context: The sermon emphasised that 70-90% of communication is non-verbal and that Paul's conduct backed up his words by showing his genuine love and care for the Thessalonians.

Apply It: What are some ways you can improve your non-verbal communication when sharing your faith?

4. Why is it important to build relationships when sharing the good news instead of just a 'dump and run' approach?

Context: The message pointed out that Paul and his team shared not only the gospel but also their own lives with the Thessalonians because they cared for them.

Apply It: How can you better invest in relationships with people you want to share the gospel with?

5. How can we imitate Paul's boldness in the face of opposition when sharing the gospel?

Context: The message mentioned that Paul, Silas and Timothy, continued sharing the gospel of God despite facing opposition and mistreatment.

Apply It: Can you think of a time when you faced opposition for your faith? How did you respond and what can you do differently next time?