

THE BOOK OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

"Paul's Method At Thessalonica"

1 Thessalonians 2:3-10 (1)

Introduction

1. The second chapter of this book records the glorious account of the invasion of the Gospel into Thessalonica. It was preceded by terrible persecution, but nonetheless, there was boldness to preach and this gave some mighty results (v. 2).

2. To some, to accomplish this must have led Paul to some sort of questionable methods. But Paul is quick to respond to such a suggestion. He spends several verses pointing to his proper approach with the Gospel (vv. 3-10).

3. Some aspects of Paul's methodology are given in this study. They focus upon him as a messenger of the Gospel. What kind of messenger was he? Here are some thoughts:

1. Paul was a CALLED messenger v. 4.

a. He was approved. This is signaled in the word "allowed" of God. Actually, this verb is a perfect passive form of a term meaning to test or approve. It was used for metals but here of men. The plural makes the claim that all three (Paul, Silas, and Timothy) were equally approved. None of them was a novice. These men were like Jeremiah (1:5) and John the Baptist (Luke 1:15). Note the details:

1) For Paul There were about 10 years between Paul's conversion and his entrance into service (32 or 33 to 42 or 43 A.D.) as outlined in Acts 11:25, 26. During these years, Paul visited Arabia, returned to Damascus, and three years later went to Jerusalem. Then there were three more years before Paul was commissioned as a missionary (Acts 13:1-3).

2) For Silas He is first mentioned in Acts 15:22, but he had already gained a good report (1 Tim. 3:13). Now he is chosen (Acts 15:40).

3) For Timothy When Paul selected Timothy, he was well known by brethren in Lystra and Iconium (Acts 16:1). Paul also knew quite a bit about him (2 Tim. 3:14, 15).

NOTE: These above comments indicate that the men who started the work at Thessalonica were men approved by their preparation. God, however, is the One Who is the Agent of the verb. They all had passed His test! That is glorious.

b. He was entrusted. This verb is an aorist passive infinitive. What was entrusted to Paul and his colleagues is given: the Gospel. Paul firmly believed that his ministry was a divine activity in his soul. There was nothing of the flesh in this with him (cf. 1 Cor. 9:17; Gal. 2:7; 1 Tim. 1:11; Titus 1:3). What a stewardship was owned!

c. He was equipped The ability for Paul to speak was based upon his claims to approval and entrustment. The present tense of the verb "speak" suggests that Paul was everlastingly at it in view of his divine call. Unquestionably, no one can really speak unless he is persuaded in his own soul of the truth of divine preparation! Now this equipment to speak is clearly detailed. It did not attempt to please men, the generic term for man. The verb here is also present tense, so Paul did not take up his time in an endeavor to get men's accolade. His focus was always on God. After all, he affirms it is God Who in fact "tried" (same word as "allowed" above. It means to approve by means of testing) the hearts of men. What a bold assertion. God's servants need to come to this same conclusion. No true messenger of the Cross will even fully satisfy fickle men! It is better to please HIM Who is the unchangeable God!

2. He was a CONSIDERATE messenger v. 3.

This is derived from the main noun here: exhortation. The term is based on a root which has three basic meanings: beseech or exhort, comfort or console, and encourage. Paul was no tyrant. He came to the people at Thessalonica as a man deeply burdened. He appealed to them to receive the grace of God. He did it as one standing along side of them and calling to them. What a gracious ministry he had! There are all kinds of methods to employ in God's work, but this is one which is sure to gain results.

3. He was a CLEAN messenger v. 3.

Paul's ministry was utterly "clean." His exhortation did not proceed from greed for gain or lust for power. He had good morals. There were others in the Bible whose practice is open to scrutiny along this line (cf. Balaam, Jude 11; Gehazi, 2 Kings 5:21; Annanias, Acts 5:1-11).

4. He was a CONSCIENTIOUS messenger v. 3.

The word "deceit" means error. So Paul's exhortation did not proceed from false teaching of any sort whatsoever. They were not misled themselves nor did they seek to mislead others (cf. Eph. 4:14; 2 Tim. 3:13). The other word here is "guile." This comes from a root meaning to catch with bait. Paul disclaims this sort of method. There was no personal end in view (cf. 2 Cor. 4:2; 12:16).

NOTE: The three words deceit, guile, and unclean all point to a behavior in ministry which was consistent with Paul's high calling to the Gospel. It is a precious personal claim by a man who was sensitive to God's touch on his life.

Conclusion Paul knew there was more in his ministry than a secular education or skill. The mighty God had sent him.