

THE BOOK OF 1 THESSALONIANS

"Paul's Method at Thessalonica" (3)

1 Thessalonians 2:8-12

Introduction

1. Paul was called to God's work at Thessalonica (v. 4). He was considerate (v. 3) and very conscientious (v. 3). He had proper attitudes toward the Lord (vv. 4, 5), toward the Thessalonians (vv. 5, 7, 8), and toward self (v. 6).
2. The approach described above was totally consistent with the message of the Gospel Paul brought (vv. 1, 2). Hence, the man and his message combined to make a forceful witness for Christ at Thessalonica. God gave some results (Acts 17:4, 5).
3. This section of the text underscores the qualities of Paul as a servant of God. He served the Lord with full heart and life. This is seen in that:

1. He served SACRIFICIALLY v. 8.

The take off here is from the first part of the verse. Paul had an affectionate longing for the Thessalonians. This was demonstrated in that Paul spent and was spent for the Thessalonians (cf. 2 Cor. 12:15). It is true he gave them the Gospel (vv. 1, 2). But he gave more--he gave his very life for them (Greek: "soul"). The plural of the noun notes that Timothy and Silas were also included. The reflexive pronoun adds strength to the entire argument. But the real thrust is in the compound verb. Prefixed to the normal word for "give" is a preposition which makes the entire verb have the meaning of "share" (cf. Luke 3:11; Rom. 1:11; 12:8; Eph. 4:28). The final comment of the verse notes the basic rationale for the entire concern Paul had for the believers: they were beloved!

2. He served LABORIOUSLY v. 9.

Paul calls the believers to remembrance how he labored among them. Three words describe the quality of his labor: 1) toil resulting in weariness; 2) toil involving hard work, a term stronger than the first; 3) just plain work. The final word is a present tense verb in the middle voice and notes personal involvement. But this work was not spasmodic, rather it was continuous, both day and night. The purpose for this is indicated: Paul did not want to be a burden (chargeable) to them. The verb "burden" is only found three times in the New Testament (here, 2 Thess. 3:8; 2 Cor. 2:5). Some have understood this to mean that Paul was advocating working pastors or missionaries. This is far from the truth (cf. 2 Cor. 8, 9; Phil. 4). Paul had one

job: preaching the Gospel of God (cf. vv. 2, 8). He worked when others failed to provide for his needs (Phil. 4:16; 2 Cor. 8:1, 2). Paul never felt that poverty and liberality were incompatible! In modern times, Paul would have advocated a paid ministry.

3. He served SINCERELY v. 10.

Here Paul calls both God and the Thessalonians to witness the kind of man he was (cf. v. 5). The verb "behave" is really "become" and being passive marks out the work of the Spirit in his life among them. They are termed "believers" (a present tense active participle equivalent to a noun). Paul lists three areas in which there was no controversy concerning his behavior (becoming): 1) toward God--holy; 2) toward men--righteous (originally this was spelled "rightwise" speaking of straight dealing); 3) toward everyone--blameless. This word means to not find fault (cf. Mark 7:2; Rom. 9:19; Heb. 8:8). The entire verse is a strong argument that Paul gave himself unreservedly to the Lord and His work.

4. He served ACTIVELY vv. 11, 12.

It would have been easy for Paul to possess superior qualities without actually getting involved. But that is not the case according to the record. In fact, Paul was a very personable individual. This is gained from the phrase "every one of you" (v. 11). The emphasis is on the word "one." He took individual concern for the Thessalonians. He testifies to a three-fold ministry: 1) exhortation (the verb here means three types of counsel: entreating, urging, and comforting); 2) comforting (this verb virtually is the same in meaning as the previous one); 3) charging (this really means to bear witness). Earlier Paul had claimed he worked as "nursing mother" (v. 7). Here he is a stern father. This parental idea in Pauline books is only used among the believers. While most dislike paternalism, it is a Biblical concept. Why did Paul do this? One reason: he wanted the Thessalonians to walk worthy of God (v. 12). This is a common concern of Paul (cf. Rom. 16:2; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10). Mark that it was God Who was calling (present tense verb) the Thessalonians unto His kingdom and glory, a statement of their future relationship in millennial glory.

Conclusion If ever there was an hour when we needed men of Paul's sort, it is now. The motivation of so many is tainted with worldly goals and desires. God give us men who have a message and who hold the standard high in methods! Let us pray for men of this caliber for the ministry.