

Week 7 | “Paul’s Defense Pt.2”

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. With Paul having to leave Thessalonica suddenly in the dead of night, in his absence, the people, some within the Church, new converts, young Christians have listened to whoever picked up the mic that was left by Paul. And unfortunately, those that picked up the mic were disgruntled Jews and Gentiles who began sharing hateful words of criticism against Paul, the apostolic team and their intentions among them.
- B. And though Paul is going to make a clear, long defense of his actions among them, this isn’t a caviler or humanistic testimony/defense. It’s a defense, FROM his seated position in the Lord Jesus, FROM the approval that he already has in Christ. Paul’s doesn’t want something FROM them, he want’s something FOR them.
- C. Previously, as Paul started his defense in **1st Thessalonians 2:1-2**, he was clear about three specific things;
 - 1. *There wasn’t really a need for him to defend his actions; because they KNEW first-hand how he lived among them.*
 - 2. *That their coming to them wasn’t in vain; because these followers of Jesus in Thessalonica were born again through his preaching and ministry among them.*
 - 3. *They were aware of his previous suffering, just 100 miles from Thessalonica in Philippi.*

II. THE CALL OF A STEWARD

- A. Last week we asked the question, what’s driving Paul? What’s motivating Paul to do what he’s doing? Why is Paul making a defense about his life, to try and clean up this massive character assassination? And we answered it in part by stating that Paul was working FROM his position in Christ, a position where he was seated with Christ in heavenly places (**Colossians 3:1-4**).
- B. But the second part of what’s driving Paul is his stewardship responsibility before Christ. Paul’s aware that at the end of his life, he won’t simply cease to exist. On the contrary he knows he’s going to live forever, and that he’s able to change the quality of that eternity based on how he obeys the Lord Jesus in this age regarding what’s been given to him.
- C. Being a follower of Jesus means that you’re a steward, a person who’s been given responsibility over something that didn’t originate with you. And as a steward, who’s been given something that didn’t originate with you, you will give an account for how you used or put to work what’s been given to you.
- D. It would be easy to assume that this STEWARDSHIP responsibility only applies to people in fulltime ministry, or missionaries in foreign countries, but it also applies to stay-at-home moms, investment bankers, grocery clerks, medical doctors, contractors, teachers and convenience store employees.
- E. Nobody in Christ will be able to escape Jesus’ evaluation of their stewardship. So the question isn’t IF WE ARE A STEWARD, it’s ARE WE A GOOD OR BAD STEWARD? Are we managing well, and taking ownership over what’s been entrusted to us.

- F. Let's look at a few places where we see Paul walking out his stewardship before Christ and others;
1. **1st Corinthians 3:11-15** "According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he is built on it in endures he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."
 2. **Romans 1:1** "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the Gospel of God..."
 3. **1st Corinthians 9:16-17** "For if I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship."
 4. **1st Timothy 1:1** "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ..."
 5. **2nd Timothy 4:8** "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

III. PAUL'S CONTINUED DEFENSE (1ST THESSALONIANS 2:3-6)

- A. Paul continues his defense of his motives, his action's and his character;
1. **1st Thessalonians 2:3** "For our exhortation did not come from error, or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit."
- B. That word exhortation simply means *to comfort*. It's said that the Gospel that exhorts, is the Gospel that comforts and those that it convicts, it also consoles, and the Gospel that breaks, is also the Gospel that heals.
- C. Paul's saying, "*Guys, our Gospel, our teaching, our exhortation among you wasn't done out of impure motives (error), we weren't lusting or hoping for anything you had (uncleanness), and we didn't withhold anything, or soften the truth to make it more appealing (deceit).*"
1. One scholar rightly says, "*It's easy to be a preacher without deceit when we are honoring the Lord Jesus. But it's hard to honor God when He's One of many, not the Lord of Lord and the King of Kings.*"
- D. Paul's defense doesn't stop here, he continues;
1. **1st Thessalonians 2:4** "But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts."
- E. When Paul says he's been approved by God, he's liking his appointment to preach the gospel like a political candidate that's been tested, tried and found qualified in the end.

- F. And it's not that God TESTED his heart, it's that God is still TESTING his heart. Paul's saying to them;
1. *"Guys, we've been deemed fit not by you, not by others, not by prophets and spiritual people, but by God. And if God Himself has and does approve of us, at the very least you guys should accept us, and receive us, and know that we aren't working to please men, but God."*
- G. It's interesting to me how easy it is for God's family to separate our theology from our practice. What I mean is, how we separate our thoughts about God (Theology) with the way that we live (our practice). I think that's it's something that transcends Christianity, and actually touches the whole of our existence as humans.
- H. But it's especially clear when you look at God's family and how much information we receive about Jesus, and how little people actually see Jesus through our lives. Though this might be human nature, it's simply not God's nature, nor His intention for His family.
- I. God's desire is that our theology, would inform our practice so that the things we are meditating on, actually change the way we live our lives in the day to day. This was a unique feature about Paul's life.
- J. Unique meaning, Paul was a guy who worked to live out his theology, or another way I like to say it is, Pauline theology leads to Pauline mission. Meaning Paul's thoughts about God, lead to Paul's missionary work, or ministerial labor.
- K. This is why Paul says, "...we have...been entrusted with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God..." This Gospel entrustment in Paul's life led to a certain way of talking, a certain way of living, a certain way of serving, not as pleasing men, but God (**Matthew 12:34**).
1. When you think about your life, does your LIFESTYLE match YOUR THEOLOGY? Do your thoughts about God, what you've learned about Christ, change the way that you live in private, among co-workers, among neighbors, and even your own family?
- L. Paul goes on to say in **1st Thessalonians 2:5-6**;
1. "For neither at any time did we use flattering words, AS YOU KNOW, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ."
- M. Flattery—This word speaks about *tailoring truth to fit popular opinion*. Paul's reminding them that he didn't use conjecture, and he didn't trade truth for popular opinion AS YOU KNOW.
1. In order to be messengers today, and at the end of this age, we must be free so that we don't use flattery in the way that we serve others.
- N. Nor A Cloak For Covetousness—The idea here is that Paul didn't *put on a mask to cover up for his greed*. And because greed is a matter of the heart, a motive that isn't seen from the OUTSIDE, Paul called GOD AS HIS WITNESS.
1. Paul placed himself in the path of God's judgment as an assurance that he wasn't lying.
- O. Nor Did We Seek Glory From Men...—Paul's not receiving praise and worship that only belongs to Jesus. Paul wasn't allowing folks to worship him as the messenger.

1. It's common today to exalt leaders, icons, and people of faith to a place that only Jesus deserves. But when we live like Paul, as followers of Jesus, seated with Christ, we can be secure in Christ, *allowing the praise that folks are directing towards us to go only, and exclusively to Christ.*
- P. When We Might Have Made Demands As Apostles Of Christ—This is the only time in this letter that Paul refers to his apostleship, something that was RIGHTLY his in the grace of God, something given to him from Christ Himself.
1. Paul's saying, "*we could've rightfully, in the grace of God taking money from you. We could've made a financial demand upon you, which would've been Biblical, and well within our rights, but we choose not to. Instead, we served you in humility, preferring you over ourselves.*"
 2. Paul was simply taking his cues, not from culture, not from his own heart, but from Christ;
 - a. **Philippians 2:5-8** *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God...made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men...He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death..."*
 3. Paul's theology about the incarnation, INFORMED Paul's actions, or Paul's lifestyle.
- Q. Are you taking seriously, soberly, the assignment that God has given to you? Do you consider your occupation, your career, like Paul as a stewardship that's been entrusted to you? Are you thinking about the Day of Christ, when you will give an account for what you've been given?