

Week 8 | “Paul’s Defense Pt. 3”

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. According to **Acts 17:1-9** we learn that Paul was in Thessalonica for at least 3 sabbaths, or 3 full weeks. And while he was there, he was preaching regularly in the synagogue, reasoning from the scriptures about Jesus Christ, that He had to suffer, die and be raised again.
- B. Paul’s preaching brought about two primary results; some were convinced and put faith in Christ, and others became angry and incited a mob to kill/drive him and the ministry team out of town. This angry mob was made up of disgruntled Jew’s and gentiles.
- C. The seething anger from the mob forced Paul and the ministry team to immediately and unexpectedly flee town in the middle of the night, without the ability to say goodbye to this brand-new, freshly converted community of believers that have put faith in Christ.
- D. As word travel’s back to Paul from Timothy, about 4 months after his absence from Thessalonica, Timothy makes Paul aware that the faith of many is growing, spreading beyond Thessalonica into the surrounding regions, but there’s also great accusation against Paul and the ministry team.
- E. As it happens in life, with the absence of leadership, the people listen to whoever steps up the microphone. And in Thessalonica those that spoke out against Paul leveled great accusations against him and their efforts among them. They quickly discredited Paul as being a charlatan, a traveling salesman who’s self-indulgent, simply preying on the innocent religious desire of those in the city.
- F. But this couldn’t be further from the truth. As Paul writes **1st Thessalonians** he takes the 1st chapter to celebrate their faith, the spread of the Gospel, and that they’ve truly turned from the dead, lifeless idols of their culture, to both put faith in Christ, and also to wait for His return!
- G. But **1st Thessalonians 2:1-3:10** (30 verses) Paul makes a stout defense of his time among them, and the upright way that they carried themselves while they were in Thessalonica. In the previous 2 messages, which were titled Paul’s defense pt.1 and pt.2, Paul gives 6 denials to counter their accusation against him. This is what we learn about the start of Paul’s defense from **1st Thessalonians 2:1-6**;
 - 1. That his efforts among them weren’t in vain (**1st Thess. 2:1**).
 - 2. He was bold among them, even in the face of present, and previous suffering/persecution (**1st Thess. 2:2**).
 - 3. Their motives were pure in how they served (**1st Thess. 2:3**)
 - 4. They lived among them as slaves, entrusted with a message, that caused them to speak uprightly, and not with deception (**1st Thess. 2:4**)
 - 5. They weren’t serving them in order to get something in return (**1st Thess. 2:5**).
 - 6. They didn’t make financial demands upon the new Church, even though they could’ve in the grace of God (**1st Thess. 2:6**).
- H. And now, in the following 6 verses, Paul moves from making denial’s, to affirming how they lived among them.

II. PAUL DEFENSE CONTINUED THROUGH AFFIRMATIONS

- A. If greed and manipulation didn't characterize the actions of Paul and the missionary team among them, then what did? They lived lives of gentleness, love, a desire to share the good things of the Gospel, *they worked hard, they were financially independent, pursued holiness, righteousness, and blamelessness among them;*
1. **1st Thessalonians 2:7** *"But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children."*
- B. Often times, if not exclusively, Church folk can be among the hardest people to lead. Their often *opinionated, divisive, judgmental, critical, apathetic* and even *rebellious*. But Paul says that he was gentle among them, tender with them, like a mother nursing and cherishing her own children.
- C. Paul, in all of his apostolic, type-a driven, strong male leadership gift, is coming down to the level of a child among these newly converted believers. Canonized eternally is Paul saying he served this community like a mother. *Paul's not demanding that they rise to his heights, he's meeting them where they are.*
- D. This is something I've observed among God's family for years. We have an older generation that often (*and rightly so*) demands that the younger generation respect them and treat them in a certain way. But according to **Malachi 4:5-6**, God says, *"...he (the Spirit of Elijah) will turn the hearts of the fathers towards the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers..."* Biblically, our seasoned, elder Church members are called to turn their hearts FIRST. How do you serve those around you?
1. **1st Thessalonians 2:8** *"So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the Gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us."*
- E. The idea here is that Paul literally became attached to them, being as close to them as humanly possible. Paul had sought them, not theirs; themselves, not their goods; to gain them, not be a gainer of them, or to make a merchandise of them.
- F. Paul wasn't a detached preacher, simply giving INFORMATION/DOCTRINE, and WITHHOLDING HIS LIFE. For Paul, the Gospel came with a welcome mat, with a house key. Remember, this is part of Paul's defense, not only of his WORDS, but his WAY OF LIFE.
- G. When it comes to discipleship and discipling people, we IMPART GOD'S DOCTRINE and OUR DNA. This is why we have to take great caution to the quality of life we are living, as well as our Gospel/doctrine. If we try to get the Gospel right, our life should follow suite, but if we focus on our lives, apart from the Gospel, we can lose both the Gospel and our life;
1. **Matthew 7:17-18** *"Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit."*
- H. The Gospel has to be incarnated, not only through Christ, but also through the Church, through you.
- I. Becoming an apostolic community, means that we are becoming an incarnational community, meaning that we take on the task of sharing both CHRIST and OUR LIVES with others in such a way that they can *feel, touch, and see Christ*.

1. **2nd Corinthians 3:2-3** “You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.”
- J. This is the GOAL and GREAT CHALLENGE; that our doctrine matches up with our lifestyle, that our THEOLOGY (*good theology*) informs our PRACTICE. Paul’s words about God (*theology/doctrine*) matched his lifestyle (*practice*) among them.
 1. **1st Thessalonians 2:9** “For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the Gospel of God.”
- K. Under great duress against mounting accusation towards Paul and the missionary team, he doesn’t write them off, he doesn’t strong arm them and drop his credentials; instead he refers to them as his brethren, his family.
- L. The labor and toil that Paul did while he was there, is defined by *exhausting manual labor, intense work, by hardship, and being wearied with fatigue*. The Greeks considered this type of work and labor as something that belonged to slaves.
- M. One of the greatest tragedies in missionaries being well funded is a demonic lie that’s been spread among God’s family, that because Paul was a tentmaker, missionaries should also have some sort of side hustle to fund their Gospel work.
 1. From what we can see in the scriptures, Paul made tents (*leather work*) for about 4 years in total during a roughly 30-year stint of mission’s work. What we have to remember about Paul’s work among the Thessalonians, is that he subjected himself to certain things that he didn’t have to, for the sake of being an example;
 - a. **1st Corinthians 9:7-10, 14** “Whoever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same thing also? For it is written in the law of Moses, you shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain. Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does he say it all together for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow and hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope...Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the Gospel should live from the Gospel (Lev. 7; Matt. 10:10; Lk. 10:7; 22:35-38; 2nd Cor. 11:27).”
 - b. **Philippians 4:15-16** “For you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel (my ministry), when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.”
 - c. **Acts 18:3-5** “So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.”
 - d. **2nd Thessalonians 3:8-10** “...nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil, night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.”

- N. Paul and the missionary team weren't working because they didn't have money, they were working to show an example of how new followers of Jesus should participate within society and the family of God (**1st Thess. 2:6,12; Philemon 8-10**).
1. **1st Thessalonians 2:10** *"You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe..."*
- O. Paul, for the 2nd time in just 5 verses calls speaks God into the witness box, to testify on behalf of his life. But it's not just God, it's also the Church of Thessalonica that he calls to testify on his behalf.
- P. And the things he calls them to testify about aren't internal things they could've never known, like inner purity, or motive. He calls them to testify about things they witnessed.
1. If pressed by others, what will they say about your conduct among them? Can your life, your business, your family, your ministry stand up to the scrutiny of others? What do others say about your doctrine and your ethics, your Christian behavior in light of what you say you believe?
- Q. This is always our goal in life, that both God, and others will approve that our THEOLOGY matched our PRACTICE.
1. **1st Thessalonians 2:11-12** *"...as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."*
- R. For the sixth time, in just 11 verses, Paul's appealing to their personal, firsthand knowledge of his conduct among them by saying, *"...as you know..."* It's as if he's saying;
1. *"Others have said things about me, but you yourselves know that those things simply aren't true. Why are you giving them airplay in your minds? Why are you entertaining those thoughts and accusations about me, about the team and about our ministry among you? You yourselves know how I lived among you."*
- S. Well, not only was Paul like a mother in his tenderness among them, he was also like a father, *exhorting, comforting and charging them*. These are all verbs, active words that speak of leadership. Paul was building them up, persuading them, and calling them into righteousness.
- T. Paul's intention of service among these new believers, wasn't for them to be like him, or to walk in his ways, but to WALK WORTHY OF GOD. Paul's choice to subject himself to God, and others, when he didn't have to, was unto them walking worthy of God.
- U. This is where we see the Paul's jealousy for the glory of God on full display. The crux of his previous presentation, including his denials, and affirmations about his conduct among them has one end game in mind; that the people of God walk in a way that's worthy of the God who called them.
1. Beloved, the glory of God, the greatness of God is worth enduring pain, persecution, social rejection, and personal disruption to bring forth the glory of God in our lives, and in the lives of those we lead/influence.
- V. The only way we will bring forth a mature Church, filled with the glory of God, is if there's an apostolic people, who go low, serve others, washing their feet and enduring much. Paul was looking to anchor a people beyond this age, into the age to come!