

Sermon Text Discussion 8/14/2016

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5: "Gospel Thankfulness" by Drew Hunter

First of a new series, "Until He Comes," covering 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Goals include (1) encouragement in difficult times, (2) reinvigorated hope in Christ's return, and (3) becoming a church devoted to growing in discipleship.

Overview

God calls us to value the sorts of things Paul valued, revealed by what Paul gave thanks for in these verses. Those things center on God's purposes, and the recognition that we are wholly dependent on him for their fulfillment. In particular, we see Paul giving thanks for (1) true churches, (2) spiritual growth, and (3) God's electing love.

Quotations

"The unvarnished truth is that what we most frequently give thanks for betrays what we most highly value." -D. A. Carson, *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation*

"If you are a Christian, the reality that you have spiritual life pulsing through you right now is a miracle. It's a miracle that each of us keep walking in here week after week." -Drew Hunter

Understanding & Application

- 1) Do we really believe that the true faith present at ZF is a miracle of God?
- 2) It is easy to understand Paul's concern for the young Thessalonian church since it was undergoing persecution. Do we have any less cause for concern in our environment? What are the dangers we face, and how should they shape our prayers?
- 3) The passage speaks of three evidences of spiritual growth: a faith that works, a love that labors, and a hope that is steadfast.
 - a. What does it mean for faith to work, but for salvation not to be by works?
 - b. How does love "labor" in the context of church life?
 - c. How does hope lead to steadfastness? On what is this hope focused?
- 4) How much evidence is there of these things at ZF? In our small group?
- 5) Paul is not hesitant to talk about God's sovereignty in salvation, often encapsulated in the word "election." Is this a topic that causes us to increase in thanksgiving or to become embroiled in controversy? How can we grow to be more like Paul with respect to this topic?
- 6) Drew spoke of "a sense of self-sufficiency and entitlement" that can keep us from giving thanks the way Paul did. Is that true of us? If so, how should we respond?
- 7) How might you use the glimpse into Paul's prayer life given by 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5 to shape your own praying?
- 8) Drew encouraged us to focus on remembering God and all of his grace to us in Christ, and indicated that thanksgiving would naturally follow. Do you agree that this is the right approach to becoming people who are more thankful, and thankful for the most important things?