

The Bible for Everyman: 1 Thessalonians

As One: The Unity of God's People

Week 2: 1 Thessalonians Chapter 2

As we consider the unity among God's people, let's look to the Roman War Machine and defense strategy called the TESTUDO....or *The Roman Tortoise*.

We will not have _____ as God's men, until Christ sits on the throne of _____ of our hearts. Period.

This unity was on full display at the launch of the GLOBAL church all the way back in Acts 2:42 where we read...

"All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer."

In difficult times, _____! Instead, _____ together to the men God's surrounded you with. Don't isolate!

"Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

Your _____ is meant to cover those _____.

"You know how badly we had been treated at Philippi just before we came to you and how much we suffered there. Yet our God gave us the courage to declare his Good News to you boldly, in spite of great opposition. So you can see we were not preaching with any deceit or impure motives or trickery." (1 Thess. 2:2-3)

Re-read the second half of verse 2....

"Yet our God gave us the COURAGE to declare His Good News to you boldly, in spite of opposition."

God did not provide a way _____ of the struggle, he provided the _____ to stay in it.

What were they in it for then? If not respect, or feelings of purpose, or the joy they themselves experienced? What was their big WHY?

The _____ of the Gospel

The _____ of God

The _____ of the people

Can we say no to our flesh....while culture tells us to TRUST our hearts....to follow our impulses...to be TRUE to ourselves....Can we say NO to self, and yes to Jesus?

Will we live a life to impress and please people (including ourselves)....

Or will we live to serve and honor God? Paul encourages us to fight this battle:

Look at verse 4 ***“For we speak as messengers approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to please God, not people”***

Simply and profoundly put: **Our purpose is to _____ above all else.**

Verse 5 & 6 layout several traps the enemy will try and catch us in ***“Never once did we try to win you with flattery, as you well know. And God is our witness that we were not pretending to be your friends just to get your money! As for human praise, we have never sought it from you or anyone else.”***

Paul lists three enemies of a heart that seeks to please Jesus, they are this:

1. **Winning people with _____**
2. **_____ to be friends for _____**
3. **Seeking _____**

This is an incredible challenge for us. Why? Because:

I want to be _____

I want to be _____

I want more _____

“Obviously, I’m not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ’s servant.” (Galatians 1:10)

This is one of the hallmarks of a true follower of Jesus....we no longer seek the approval of people, but of God. Look at Romans 2:29

“No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by the Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people.”

The Spirit of God *changes* us, fundamentally. It creates NEW desires in us....we no longer cling to lesser and temporal values of praise and adoration, and we begin to seek the eternal rewards God has for us...we begin to live to see HIS Kingdom built in our lives....and in losing our lives, we actually find them. In laying down our lives as a CHURCH....we find UNITY. We move forward AS ONE!

We cling to _____.

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Like the life preserver that it is...we cling to God's word. Look at verse 13 - ***"Therefore, we never stop thanking God that when you received his message from us, you didn't think of our words as mere human ideas. You accepted what we said as the very word of God—which, of course, it is. And this word continues to work in you who believe."***

"Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts." (Colossians 3:16)

We have to EXPECT and PREPARE for REAL opposition to the way of Christ, it's always been that way...and the forms it takes are varied..

Verse 14 ***"And then, dear brothers and sisters, you suffered persecution from your own countrymen."*** Opposition from those closest to us can cut the deepest.

And other times, the opposition is more spiritual than that...Paul says in verse 18 that ***"We wanted very much to come to you, and I, Paul, tried again and again, but Satan prevented us."***

"After all, what gives us hope and joy, and what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand before our Lord Jesus when he returns? It is you!" (1 Thess. 2:19)

Dallas Willard reminds us that ***"Grace isn't opposed to effort, it's opposed to earning."***

1 Corinthians 15:10 ***"But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me—and not without results. For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace."***

To win people to Christ is the ultimate aim. The goal of our lives. The finish line. The trophy. Look at Verse 20 ***"Yes, you are our pride and joy."***