



Sermon, Sunday July 3, 2022

"How to Life a Life Pleasing to the Lord"

SCRIPTURE: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 ¹You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, ²but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. ³For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, ⁴but, just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals but to please God, who tests our hearts. ⁵As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed, ⁶nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, ⁷though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. ⁸So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us. ⁹You remember our labor and toil, brothers and sisters; we worked night and day so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers. ¹¹As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, ¹²urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

Introduction: Background to 1 Thessalonians

Today's text is a part of the first letter of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonian church. Apostle Paul sacrificed a lot to preach the Gospel, for he had to suffer from the spread of bad information by the jealous Jews. At that time, there were people in the Thessalonian church who were obstructing Paul's evangelism. To prove that the rumors accusing him were not true, Apostle Paul wrote today's text while looking back on the ministry at the time of evangelism in the Thessalonians.

The process of founding the Thessalonian church is described in Acts chapter 17. Missionaries centered on the Apostle Paul and his co-worker Silas when they arrived in Thessalonica to preach the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a result, pious Greeks and noble ladies accepted the Gospel.

In the process of the dynamic growth of the Thessalonian church, the Diaspora Jews came to interfere with the evangelism of the Apostle Paul. This caused Paul and Silas to leave the dangerous situation in Thessalonica. Later, the Apostle Paul wanted to visit Thessalonica again, but circumstances did not work out. So, Paul sent his spiritual child Timothy to Thessalonica. Apostle Paul heard the news of the Thessalonian church through Timothy and wrote a letter for the Thessalonian church to handle the difficult situation. This is today's text of 1 Thessalonians.

Through today's text, we see that Apostle Paul faithfully carried out the Lord's work. He adhered to clear principles in carrying out the work the Lord had entrusted to him, especially living a life that pleases the Lord in all things and actions. I hope that we too can imitate the Apostle Paul and live a life that pleases the Lord. Then, what kind of life did the Apostle Paul live to please the Lord?

Body: What does it mean to live a life that pleases the Lord?

1. The Apostle Paul did everything in truth.



1 Thessalonians 2:3 says: “For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery.”

There are times in our lives when we flatter those who are stronger than we are to defend our interests. We also deceive others for our own benefit. And we live with the stories that living that way is the way to survive in a smart, competitive society.

So, we think that living honestly and truthfully are too naive. Flattering others may make people feel better, making it easier for us to gain our advantage. We can also achieve our goals in the short term by deceiving others. But because justice lives on, lies and flattery cannot be hidden forever.

But the Apostle Paul confessed that he acted with sincerity in his words and deeds. Because the Apostle Paul was sincere in all things, he could say to the members of the Thessalonian church, **“As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed.”** The conscience, granted to us in the image of the Lord, is exercised in truth. If we are not sincere, our conscience brings us shame and guilt. Therefore, Christians must be sincere in what we say and do. Let us not forget that truthfulness brings no shame to our consciousness but lies and deceit bring shame and guilt to our minds. The Lord delights in the upright and exalts them. What kind of life did the Apostle Paul live to please the Lord?

2. The Apostle Paul did what pleases the Lord rather than men in all that he does.

The Lord searches our hearts. The Lord knows our thoughts, motives, and purposes, but people do not know the thoughts, motives, and purposes of others, because people can only see outward appearances. So, we cannot know the motives and purposes of people just by their outward appearance. But the Lord sees the heart, the deepest part of a person.

Today's text reflects the Apostle Paul's ministry in Thessalonica. The Apostle Paul tells the Thessalonians the fact that he suffered hardship and reproach in Philippi. (v.2) And when the Apostle Paul came from Philippi to Thessalonica to preach the gospel, difficulties lay before him. However, in the face of such challenges, the attitude and appearance that the Apostle Paul and his companions showed to preach the Gospel is more active in the practice of love than in fear of failure.

It was in their obedience to follow the love of Jesus Christ that the apostle Paul and his companions were able to achieve this love. So, for them, “being found right with God” always took precedence over “trying to please men.”

Only those things that are acknowledged and accepted in the love of Jesus on the cross are true. Therefore, the sincerity of the Apostle Paul could be conveyed to the Thessalonians.

But what is that accepted love? **“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13), “It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” (1 Corinthians 13:7)**

This is the starting point of the authenticity of the Apostle Paul and his companions. Therefore, whether people recognize us or not, we must not let our hearts get swept away by their evaluations. Instead, we must dream of becoming a being who loves and serves our neighbors in the Lord's approval. Living in the Lord's approval does not mean evading our responsibility for the things that happen due to our ignorance and mistakes and living with fanatical faith. Our maturity in faith consists of being strict with ourselves, tolerant of others, and humble in acknowledging our weakness before the Lord. Of course, it is not easy to live with such a maturity of faith. However, when we depend on the help of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit leads us to a place of abundant life. May we, like the Apostle Paul, have the strength to be willing to sacrifice our lives because we love the Lord and our neighbor.

Conclusion: Let's live a life that pleases the Lord.

Now let's summarize today's sermon. The Lord searches our thoughts and hearts. The Apostle Paul fulfilled the Lord's command to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles with gratitude and joy. But the Apostle Paul worked hard to accomplish the Lord's will rather than trying for recognition from people. So, he was able to overcome the trials and difficulties that came to him.

In his letter to the Thessalonian church, the Apostle Paul urges the Thessalonians to live a life that pleases the Lord. This request of the Apostle Paul is also a request for us living today.

Also, the Apostle Paul completely depended on the Lord who entrusted him with the mission. The Lord who has entrusted us with a mission gives us strength, too. I hope that everyone will depend on the Lord and live a life that is pleasing to the Lord. Amen!