

1 Thessalonians Part 2

Note:

In this teaching, the following terms are used: “new creation”, “new man” or “new self”, “Christ in You”, “holy spirit” and “gift of holy spirit”. All these terms refer to that which is received and born in a person when he or she becomes born again.

In part 1 of this series we covered the background of 1 Thessalonians. In part 2 we are going to cover some of the leadership aspects of this epistle and re-examine some of chapters 1 and 2 in greater depth.

Turn to Ephesians 4

Paul was called to serve in the church, the body of Christ as an apostle. The apostles, prophets and teachers function as visionaries. Other functions in the church such as helps, governments and those who are appointed as elders or “overseers” function as administrators. The administrators are appointed by the visionaries and function at the direction of the visionaries.

The general, overall purpose of the visionaries within the body of Christ is declared in Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:11

11 And he (*Christ*) gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

12 **to** (*here is the purpose*) equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

Verse 12 in the Amplified Bible reads as follows:

12 His intention was the perfecting *and* the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [**that they should do**] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church),

Who gave the visionaries in the body of Christ? Christ did; people did not give them or appoint them. The best people can do is to recognize what is already functioning in the body of Christ. The visionaries in the church have the responsibility of fully equipping the saints so that they can carry out their responsibility of the ministry, which is building up the body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:13

13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

The work of the visionaries and the work of the saints is to continue on until we ALL grow up and are as mature as Christ is. It continues until we all attain to the unity of the faith. This does not happen until Christ returns and we are gathered together with him.

The unity of the faith refers to our practice, our walk as sons of God in the body of Christ. We always have the unity of the spirit, but we will not have the complete unity of the faith until after Christ returns for us.

Turn to 1 Thessalonians 1

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So, Paul, Silas and Timothy, as visionaries, work with the saints, to fully equip them. Some of the new believers, as they mature will discover their calling as visionaries. The saints are to be equipped to be able to fully function as members in particular in the body of Christ.

1 Thessalonians is a short record of the functioning of the visionaries to equip the saints, and their response, which was to perform the ministry of the building up of the body of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:4

4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,

Who chose the new believers in Thessalonica? It was GOD, not Paul or his fellow workers.

1 Thessalonians 1:5

5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

Paul and his fellow workers spoke and worked in Thessalonica with great power. Those who God had chosen believed.

1 Thessalonians 1:6

6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

The new believers became imitators of Paul, Silas, Timothy, AND the LORD! This is the way leaders within the body of Christ are to lead – BY EXAMPLE.

Paul was not called to gain followers to himself. His calling was to open peoples eyes so that they would turn from the power of satan to God and His power. These believers were not to follow Paul as some great business or military leader. They were to imitate his example.

The believers in Thessalonica were equipped to imitate the Lord so effectively, that they became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

Paul and the others working with him were walking by the spirit – they were in Macedonia by revelation. They taught the new believers how to walk by the spirit, so they could produce the fruit of the spirit and have JOY for the first time in their lives.

These new believers became an example of walking by the spirit to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. It was the operation of the power of God and the spiritual fruit in the Thessalonian believers which riveted the attention of the people in Macedonia and Achaia.

1 Thessalonians 1:8

8 For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.

Now, how can “your faith in God” go anywhere? Remember what we just covered in Ephesians 4

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about the “unity of the faith”? This refers to the functioning, conduct, behavior, practice, and example as believers in the body of Christ. Their example went everywhere, not just among the believers.

1 Thessalonians 1:9

9 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, (*this is the believers 'work of faith and labor of love'*)

10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (*this is the 'steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ'.*)

The believers imitated Paul as they walked by the gift of holy spirit, the new spiritual self. It is interesting to note that Paul led by example and the believers in Thessalonica led by example. They did such a good job that they became leaders in the whole region of Macedonia and Achaia. Paul was not offended or insecure when he perceived the impact they were having on the region.

In chapter 2 Paul documents his functioning, conduct, behavior, and practice among them as a visionary, equipping the saints for their work. This is done so that other maturing visionaries in the body of Christ can be fully equipped for every good work as they study and learn from Paul's example.

1 Thessalonians 2:11

11 For you know how, like a father with his children,

12 we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

Paul was like a father to the new believers. He was not like a lawyer, judge, or ruler, attempting to force them into submission.

As a father with his children, he taught the believers how to walk in manner worthy of God. He taught them how to walk by the spirit with love and endurance.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

14 For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews,

15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind

16 by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last!

The believers in Thessalonica continued to stand and function in the body of Christ, they continued

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to speak the gospel of the Grace of God as they had been taught, just as the believers in Judea did. This includes walking by the spirit and speaking the word with great boldness.

1 Thessalonians 2:17

- 17** But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face,
18 because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us.
19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before (or in front of) our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?
20 For you are our glory and joy.

As we learned from the record in Acts 17, Paul and Silas had to leave Thessalonica quickly. Paul deeply desired to visit the believers in Thessalonica again, but he was hindered by satan.

Remember that we continue to be in a spiritual battle!

The work that Paul did among the believers has an everlasting impact. Those who were called by God, who listened and responded to the gospel of the Grace of God will be present with Paul when Christ returns and gathers us together. What a joy that will be!

Each believer who functions within the body of Christ can know that their labor is not in vain. Our labor within the body of Christ has an everlasting impact.

1 Thessalonians 3:1

- 1** Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone,
2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith,
3 that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this.
4 For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.
5 For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

Paul had prepared the believers, his brothers and sisters in Christ, for what was to happen to him. Paul was persecuted mercilessly by the god of this world working through the religious people. He desired that the believers be established and exhorted in their faith, in their practice, conduct, behavior, and functioning as members in particular in the body of Christ. Paul could not be there, so he sent Timothy to do this work.

Chapter 3, verses 1 through 5 refer to the time recorded in Acts 17 when Paul traveled to Athens. Verse 6 occurs when Paul is in Corinth. This event is recorded in Acts 18.

1 Thessalonians 3:6

- 6** But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you—

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1 Thessalonians 3:7

7 for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith (*your behavior, conduct, functioning as believers*).

8 For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.

9 For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God,

10 as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and **supply what is lacking in your faith?**

In spite of all the persecution and spiritual pressure against Paul, he is comforted knowing that the believers are standing fast in the Lord. This comfort, this relief was life to Paul.

Now, we have all been given The Measure of Faith. We have all received 100% of the faith of Jesus Christ that is available. God does not give anything less than 100% of this faith to each one of us. So, this verse CANNOT be referring to the faith of Jesus Christ. It can only be referring to the believers behavior, conduct, practice and functioning within the body of Christ. Our conduct and practice can and should always be improving as we grow.

When people are hungry for the things of the spirit of God, salvation is never enough. Paul and his fellow workers were not satisfied with simply ministering the new birth and then leaving town. Salvation is only the beginning. The new believers require feeding with the nourishing words of the gospel of the Grace of God. They require strengthening so that they can digest the spiritual meat of the wisdom of God, which includes the knowledge and application of the Great Mystery. Paul is most concerned that his beloved brothers and sisters in Christ are standing fast in the Lord. Later, Paul wrote in Ephesians what is required of a believer to stand fast in the Lord. This is what he and Timothy taught them so that they could be established and continue to stand fast. He wrote in Ephesians 6:13:

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

This is spiritual armor, a functioning of the new spiritual self, the gift of holy spirit. The saints in Thessalonica had matured quite a bit and were functioning powerfully within the body of Christ in a relatively short period of time.

Paul was not physically with the brothers and sisters in Thessalonica but he continued to pray for them every time he remembered them. Verse 11 continues his prayer for them:

1 Thessalonians 3:11

11 Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you,

12 and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, (*this happens in the new spiritual self, Christ in each one of us*)

13 so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus **with all his saints**.

The last part of verse 13 reads "...at the coming of our Lord Jesus WITH all his saints". This is not referring to the event when we meet him in the clouds and are gathered together with him. Verse 13 is referring to a time AFTER we meet him in the clouds. Sometime later, the Lord Jesus will return to the EARTH WITH all his saints. That is the event verse 13 is referring to.

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1 Thessalonians 4:1

1 Finally, then, brothers (*and sisters*), we ask and urge (*this is not a religious law*) you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. (*we can always grow and improve*)

2 For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. (*by revelation*)

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;

4 that **each one of you** know how to control his own body in holiness and honor,

5 not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;

6 that no one transgress and wrong his brother (*or sister*) in this matter (*sexuality*), because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.

7 For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

8 Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

The individuals, the believers, the brothers and sisters that are to be at the forefront of the application of these admonitions are the spiritual visionaries, administrators and elders. The spiritual leadership are to be practicing and teaching how to walk, how to please God, how to have self control of ones physical body. Sanctification is basically being set apart from the sin nature, from the flesh, from the exercised power of the god of this world. We are set apart by the accomplishments of Jesus Christ. Now we are to set ourselves apart from the passions and lusts of the flesh, for service to God.

Turn to John 17

In their passion and lust, the Gentiles would exploit one another for their own pleasure and gain. Those who serve as spiritual leaders are not to exploit anyone for any reason, including sexual gratification.

Jesus provides a wonderful example of spiritual leadership. He is praying for the believers that the Father had given him:

John 17:17

17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word (*written, spoken and revealed*) is truth.

18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

19 And **for their sake** I consecrate (*sanctify*) myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

20 "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,

Jesus himself lead by example – he sanctified himself so that the believers would also sanctify themselves.

Turn to 1 Thessalonians 4

Paul certainly imitated this example as did the believers in Thessalonica as is noted in 1 Thessalonians 1:6.

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In chapter 4, verse 1 it states that he taught them “how you ought to walk and to please God”. In Hebrews 11:6 it says that “And without faith (*or spiritual believing*) it is impossible to please him (God)”. Paul taught the believers how the manifestation of the gift of holy spirit works, with its benefits of spiritual knowledge, wisdom and spiritual believing.

Paul taught and instructed the believers collectively and individually by revelation – spiritual knowledge and spiritual wisdom. He put this wisdom into action by spiritual believing.

Each one, each individual is to know how to control their own body. This is a personal work, between the individual and their heavenly Father. The individual can learn how to mature in their thinking and conduct within their relationship with God. Galatians 5:16 & 17 states:

Galatians 5:16

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

It is the operation of the new spiritual self which gives us the understanding of the scriptures and spiritual truth. It is by way of the new spiritual self that we can discern how to think and behave. This is part of crucifying the flesh as stated in Galatians 5:24.

The way a person thinks, the habits and processes of the mind are very private and personal. The thought processes of the flesh are opposed to the thought processes of the spirit. Individually, we get to decide which thoughts to hold on to, and which to discard.

It is important to know that God is not waiting for us to perfect our thinking before He will work in us. He is at work in us to help us with this task of identifying the thoughts of the flesh and the spiritual thoughts. Romans chapters 6 through 8 are good to study on this subject.

1 Thessalonians 4:6

6 that no one transgress and wrong his brother (*or sister*) in this matter (*sexuality*), because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.

7 For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

8 Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

It is important for these verses to be written and read by all the believers. This knowledge is a warning to those serving as spiritual leaders, as examples in the body of Christ, not to exploit the believers, but to love them as God would have them loved.

With this knowledge, all the individual believers know that if anyone attempts to exploit them, even if it is a leader, that person is disregarding God and is not behaving as they should.

The key to staying in control of your physical body is love – both the love of God and brotherly love. It is certainly not loving to exploit others to your own selfish advantage.

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1 Thessalonians 4:9

9 Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, (*this is the operation of the new spiritual self*)

10 for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers (*and sisters*) throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, (*we can always grow and improve*)

11 and to **aspire** to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you,

12 so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

Obviously, these verses are not addressed to dependent children, retired people, or those who were disabled. These instructions are addressed to those serving as spiritual leaders, first and foremost, as they are responsible to carry out these instructions as examples.

As we read these instructions, we dare not set our thinking on the flesh and attempt to apply these instructions as religious law. Our understanding of the application of these practical instructions is in the new spiritual self. It is incredibly easy to be critical and condemning of people when thinking legalistically, according to the flesh. When there are difficulties in these areas of life believers need strengthening and encouragement, not condemnation. This requires walking in love with spiritual wisdom and spiritual perception.

Turn to 2 Corinthians 2

Paul and his fellow workers did a wonderful job serving in the body of Christ, building up the believers in Thessalonica. The persecution that Paul was enduring was also visited upon the believers in Thessalonica just as it had been experienced by the believers in Judea. This is a good time to explain a bit more about why the religious leaders and followers were so upset.

2 Corinthians 2:14

14 But thanks be to **God, who in Christ always leads us** in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing,

16 to one (*those who are perishing*) a fragrance from death to death, to the other (*those who are being saved*) a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?

Turn to Ephesians 2

The aroma, the fragrance of Christ to God, the knowledge of him is being spread everywhere. To those who are perishing, we STINK! In truth we are the smell of death to those who are perishing. To those who are being saved, we, and they smell wonderful and sweet; its the smell of life! Why is the smell of Christ so stinky to those who are perishing?

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Romans 10:4

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Or "Christ is the end of the law *that everyone who believes may be justified.*"

This agrees with Ephesians 2:14

Ephesians 2:14

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility

15 by **abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances**, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,

Turn to Acts 17

Christ ABOLISHED the law! It has no spiritual significance any longer! That means that the religion, its institutions, all the offices, employment and commerce is at an end! That religious way of life is over; its time to move on. The money, time, talents, resources, allegiance, and respect of those being saved are not available to the religious organization which was built on the law.

Acts 17:29

29 Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

30 The times of ignorance (*ignorant thinking mentioned in verse 29*) God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, (*The times of ignorance is not being overlooked now*)

31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Turn to Acts 13

The ignorance of religion, made and maintained by the works of people is not being overlooked by God anymore. The futility and ignorance of religion has been exposed. Its hold on mankind has been led captive by Christ. Our day is a day of judgment as well.

Acts 13:44

44 The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.

45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.

46 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

47 For so the Lord has commanded us ...

Turn to Acts 19

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This is a time of judgment. People can accept a judgment of justification and righteousness, or they can judge themselves as unworthy of eternal life.

Acts 19:23

23 About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way.

24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen.

25 These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth.

26 And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods.

Acts 19:27

27 And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship."

The commerce of religion had come into disrepute, the temples and their institutions, and offices have been exposed as the worthless fraud that they are. The respect, awe, worship, money, time, and talents of the believers were not available to these worthless organizations any longer!

The law of Moses all its commandments contained in ordinances has been brought to an end. All the counterfeit religious laws which have been based on the law of Moses are valueless, without any spiritual significance; these have been exposed and done away with.

The idolatry practiced and taught throughout the remainder of the world has been exposed as dead and worthless.

In short, the gospel of the Grace of God declared in the ministry of the spirit is a declaration of **the end of all religion, religious institutions, religious practices, its ignorance and its bondage**. That is why the aroma of Christ to God smells like death to those who are perishing. That is why the devil spirits and their hosts in the senses realm, the religious institutions, employees and people fight so hard against the ministry of the spirit, and against the believers who function in the body of Christ. In the face of persecution, Paul, his fellow workers and the believers in Thessalonica refused to modify or water down the gospel of the Grace of God. They refused to apologize for the good news or for walking in newness of life. The example of the believers was there for all to see. Their example of walking in newness of life was declared in 1 Thessalonians 1:9

9 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

As God worked in the believers, their conduct and new way of life walking by the spirit, exposed the dead futility of religion and idolatry, and showed the knowledge of the living and true God. The impact of your life as you walk by the spirit is no less powerful.