

LIVING AND SERVING ACCORDING TO GOD'S ECONOMY CONCERNING THE CHURCH

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Seven

The Pattern of the Apostle Paul

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 1:16; 4:12; 1 Thes. 2:1-12

- I. Paul was a pattern to the believers of living Christ, magnifying Christ, and ministering Christ as the Spirit in his spirit for the building up of the Body of Christ—1 Tim. 1:16; 4:12; Rom. 8:16; Phil. 1:19-21a, 25; 2 Cor. 3:3, 6:**
- A. The Lord appeared to Paul to appoint him as a minister and a witness both of the things in which Paul had seen Him and of the things in which He would appear to Paul—Acts 26:16-19; cf. 1:8; 23:11; 20:20, 31:
 - 1. Paul lived a life that was fully dignified, with the highest standard of human virtues expressing the most excellent divine attributes, a life that resembled the one that the Lord Himself had lived on the earth years before—Eph. 4:20-21; Phil. 4:5-8, 11-13.
 - 2. The wonderful, excellent, and mysterious God-man, who lived in the Gospels, continued to live through Paul as one of His many members; Paul was a living witness of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and God-exalted Christ—Acts 1:8; Phil. 2:2, 5; 1:8; 2:13; Acts 27:22, 24-25; 28:3-9, see footnote 1 on v. 9.
 - B. Paul took Christ as everything—as his living, pattern, goal, and secret—Phil. 1:19-21a; 2:5-16; 3:7-14; 4:11-13.
 - C. Paul was infused with God to shine forth God in the ministry of the new covenant, which is the ministry of the Spirit, the ministry of righteousness, and the ministry of reconciliation—2 Cor. 3:18; 4:1; 3:6, 8-9; 5:18-20.
 - D. Because Paul was a pattern to the believers (1 Tim. 1:16), he could charge Timothy to be a pattern “in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (4:12).
 - E. Paul is our pattern in his being an ambassador of Christ (Eph. 6:20; 2 Cor. 5:18-20) with the following qualifications:
 - 1. He did not live by what he was or could do but by the immortal life, which is Christ Himself—v. 4; John 14:6; Col. 3:4; Gal. 2:20.
 - 2. He was determined to gain the honor of being well pleasing to Christ in all things—living Christ, growing Christ, expressing Christ, and propagating Christ in every respect—2 Cor. 5:9; Col. 1:10.
 - 3. He was constrained by the love of Christ to no longer live to himself but to live to the Lord; for us to live “to the Lord” means that we are under the Lord’s direction and control and that we want to fulfill His requirements, satisfy His desires, and complete what He intends—2 Cor. 5:14-15.
 - 4. He did not know others outwardly according to the flesh in the old creation but inwardly according to the spirit in the new creation—vv. 16-17; Gal. 6:15.
 - F. Paul is our pattern by living and serving God in his regenerated spirit by the indwelling Christ, the life-giving Spirit, not in his soul by the power and ability of the soul; he was a spiritual man who sowed unto the Spirit to bear the fruit of the Spirit—Rom. 1:9; 7:6; 8:4, 16; Gal. 3:3; 5:16, 22-25; 6:8; 2 Cor. 4:5; 1 Cor. 2:15; 2 Cor. 2:13.

G. Paul is our pattern in his being Body-conscious and Body-centered, doing everything in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body—Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:1-6, 15-16; Col. 2:19; Acts 28:13-15 and footnote 2 on v. 15.

II. The best way to shepherd people, to cherish and nourish them, is to give them a proper pattern; Paul fed his spiritual children with his own living of Christ—1 Thes. 2:1-12; 2 Cor. 1:23—2:14; 11:28-29; 1 Cor. 9:22; Acts 20:28:

- A. Paul and his co-workers were a pattern of the glad tidings that they spread; “you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake”—1 Thes. 1:5b.
- B. In the church the most important thing is the person; the person is the way, and the person is the Lord’s work; what you are is what you do—John 5:19; 6:57; Phil. 1:19-26; Acts 20:18-35; Matt. 7:17-18; 12:33-37.
- C. We need to follow the pattern of the apostles to pay more attention to life than to work—John 12:24; 2 Cor. 4:12.
- D. The apostles not only preached the gospel but also lived it; their ministering of the gospel was not only by word but also by a life that displayed the power of God, a life in the Holy Spirit and in the assurance of faith—1 Thes. 1:5.
- E. The saints in Thessalonica became imitators of the apostles; this led them to follow the Lord, to take Him as their pattern, thus making them a pattern to all other believers—vv. 6-7.
- F. The apostle Paul stressed repeatedly the apostles’ entrance toward the believers; this shows that their manner of life played a great role in infusing the gospel into the new converts—vv. 5, 9; 2:1:
 - 1. The apostles were struggling and speaking the gospel to the Thessalonians in the boldness of God—v. 2.
 - 2. The apostles were free from deception, uncleanness, and guile—v. 3.
 - 3. The apostles were first tested and approved by God and then were entrusted by Him with the gospel; hence, their speaking, the preaching of the gospel, was not of themselves to please men but of God to please Him; God proved, examined, and tested their hearts continually—v. 4; Psa. 26:2; 139:23-24; 2 Cor. 1:12; 6:6; 7:3.
 - 4. The apostles were neither found with flattering speech nor with a pretext for covetousness—1 Thes. 2:5:
 - a. To have any pretext for covetousness is to peddle or adulterate the word of God—2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2.
 - b. It is also to pretend to be godly for the sake of gain—1 Tim. 6:5; Titus 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:3.
 - 5. The apostles did not seek glory from men—1 Thes. 2:6a:
 - a. To seek glory from men is a real temptation to every Christian worker; many have been devoured and spoiled by this matter—cf. 1 Sam. 15:12.
 - b. Lucifer became God’s adversary, Satan, because of glory-seeking; anyone who seeks glory from men is a follower of Satan—Ezek. 28:13-17; Isa. 14:12-15; Matt. 4:8-10.
 - c. How much we will be used by the Lord and how long our usefulness will last depend on whether we seek glory from men—cf. John 7:17-18; 5:39-44; 12:43; 2 Cor. 4:5.
 - 6. The apostles did not stand on their own authority or dignity as apostles of Christ—1 Thes. 2:6b:

- a. To assert authority, dignity, or right in Christian work damages that work; the Lord Jesus, while on earth, gave up His dignity (John 13:4-5), and the apostle preferred not to use his right (1 Cor. 9:12).
- b. If we follow this pattern, we will kill a deadly disease germ in the Body of Christ, the germ of assuming a position—Matt. 20:20-28.
7. The apostles cherished the believers and yearned over them as a nursing mother would cherish and yearn over her own children—1 Thes. 2:7-8; cf. Gal. 4:19; Isa. 49:14-15; 66:12-13:
 - a. To cherish people is to make them happy, to comfort them, to make them feel that you are pleasant to them, easy to be contacted in everything and in every way.
 - b. To cherish people in our natural humanity is not genuine; we must cherish people with the Lord's presence as the charming factor, as the reality of resurrection.
 - c. Cherishing includes nourishing; to nourish people is to feed them with the all-inclusive Christ in His full ministry of three stages—Eph. 5:29.
8. The apostles not only imparted the gospel of God to the Thessalonians; they also imparted their own souls—1 Thes. 2:8:
 - a. To live a clean and upright life (vv. 3-6, 10) and to love the new converts, even by giving our own souls to them (vv. 7-9, 11), are the prerequisites for infusing them with the gospel.
 - b. Paul was willing to spend not only what he had but also himself, his very being, on behalf of the saints—2 Cor. 12:15.
9. The apostles considered themselves as fathers in exhorting the believers to walk in a manner worthy of God, to have a walk that will enable them to enter into the kingdom of God and usher them into the glory of God—1 Thes. 2:11-12.