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Friday, February 07, 2014
<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

Personal Study of the Bible-61

1 Thessalonians 2- Application: Walking with, before, and after God

We are going through 1 and 2 Thessalonians one more time. This time we are emphasizing spiritual principles in each chapter. We are now in the second chapter of First Thessalonians. Read this chapter, paying special attention to Paul's spiritual life. Paul understood very well that his ministry among these believers was not in v____ (2:1). Even after experiencing opposition, mistreatment, and suffering from persecution, he was still b____ in preaching the gospel of God (2:2). His enthusiasm for the Word of God and the person of Christ could not be stifled. Consider Paul's spiritual virtues as he notes that his exhortation did not come from error or impurity or d____ (2:3). Paul did not live for man, unbeliever or believer, he lived to please G____ and lived in the reality that God examines our h____ (2:4). Paul was not the kind of minister who f____ believers with an eye toward g____, as God is his witness (2:5). Paul did not seek *glory* from any man (2:6).

Note Paul's love for these Thessalonians as he was g____ among them, being sensitive to their needs as a wet nurse to a baby (2:7). He was very f____ of them and well-pleased to give them the gospel and his own life (2:8). He worked night and day in manual labor in order to preach to them the gospel of Christ without charge because he did not want money to be an issue and did not want to b____ them (2:9).

In 2:10-12 we have emphases on Paul's personal integrity. Note how Paul brings God into the context and notes how d____, uprightly, and blamelessly he behaved toward these believers (2:10). Note the passion of Paul in his activities of exhorting, encouraging, and i____ these believers, as a father would be to his own children, to live out the truths of the spiritual life (2:11-12). He was adamant about the need for believers to live out their spiritual lives, which is walking in a manner w____ of the God who called them into His own kingdom and glory (2:12).

In 2:13-18 we see his appreciation for their positive volition, a volition which was the source of them being marvelous examples of Christian living, especially in the midst of pressures and sufferings from their own c____ (2:14). He wanted them to know that he had planned on visiting them but was hindered through the activity of S____ (2:18).

Throughout this chapter we can see the power of fellowship in the life of the Apostle Paul. He had a keen awareness that he and all that he did was in the sight of God. This is the mark of true fellowship with God: a life with conscious awareness of living *with, before, and after* God. Let's note these three aspects of fellowship. First, there is walking *with* God, cf., Gen. 5:24. The picture of walking with God is one of two individuals walking together on a journey. How can two walk together unless they are in agreement (Amos 3:3)? Analogously, it is a picture of two individuals walking together down a road, keeping each other company: they are aware of and communicate with each other as they go down the road together. Fellowship with or walking with God should never be *reduced to simply* the mechanics of being confessed up.

When a believer walks with God, he knows God is there and lives his life through the hustle and bustle of daily life with a conscious awareness of His nearness. His presence fills the believer's life, regardless of how busy and weary the day may be. This fellowship is very powerful, but it is also very fragile. All it takes is one unconscious sin to spoil that intimacy and plunge the believer into the darkness of a life lived in the absence of God. Walking with God translates into realizing that whatever you are doing, you do it with Him and for Him. This fellowship is the most important and the most blessed truth of the Christian life and is the secret of experiential blessedness, tranquility, power, and everything good. Paul's walking with God in this sense is obvious in the chapter we have just covered. Again, walking with God is critical to the spiritual life. Lack of walking with God means not only spiritual darkness, it means God has become a stranger to your daily life.

Second, there is what is known as walking *before* God (read Gen. 17:1). Walking before God carries the idea of walking in light of Him examining your life—we see this throughout 2 Thessalonians as well, cf. 2:4, “God who examines our hearts.” This is only possible, at least as a blessing, for those who are walking *with* God. If one is not walking *with* God, he certainly is not going to be occupied with his life being evaluated *before* God. Only when a believer is walking with God and enjoying His presence in all things, can the believer enjoy the light of God's evaluation of his life. Read 1 Peter 1:15-17 and see the connection between the call for holiness and how the believer is to live out his sojourning on this earth in light of God's evaluation of his life. So, walking *with* God is enjoying His presence made possible by Christ, Bible doctrine, and provisions of 1 John 1:9; and walking *before* God is living in light of His evaluation of the life. There is no blessing in walking before God if one is not walking with God. If one is not walking in communion with God, he certainly not going to be blessed by awareness that God's eye is evaluating his life. What does Genesis 17:1 say is the intended results of walking before God? It is walking before God that motivates us to make those necessary corrections in our lives to move to maturity.

Third, there is what is called walking *after* God. Walking *with* God will lead to walking *before* God and walking *before* God will lead to walking *after* God. Read Psalm 63:8; Philip. 3:14. This phrase brings in the element of moving closer to God, of yearning to understand Him more so one can get closer and closer to Him. This is pressing forward to God. Of course, no one is going to follow *after* God unless they are already walking *with* Him and *before* Him. What does John 10:4 and 10:27 say about why the sheep follow the Lord? Is that not impossible unless the sheep are already walking *with* and *before* the Lord?

Micah 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?

*In 'Ehyeh,
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