

1 & 2 Thessalonians

Imitation of Christ

1 Thessalonians 1:5b-10 Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

4/30/2023

Introduction:

Thirty plus years ago I served in the US Army as a paratrooper. The motto for the Airborne is “all the way”. One of the things that sets the airborne apart from the rest of the Army units is the way they deploy. In most units the officers send their troops into battle and follow them into fight. In the airborne, the officers are the first on the battle field and the last to leave the battle field. This builds great trust and understanding that our officers have been where we are going. In my own experience this led me to look up to the officers in my unit and try to emulate them knowing that I would follow them anywhere. I wanted to be just like them, I wanted to blouse my uniform pants just like they did, where my beret just like they did, walk like they did, talk like they did. Lead like they did.

In our Christian walk there is someone we should look to emulate always. In fact, it is in the name Christian “Christianos” which means – follower of Christ. He is the one to whom we should be looking for our example of how to dress, how to walk, how to talk, how to lead. How many of you have ever seen Jesus? Right, so how do we know how to follow Jesus? Well fortunately for us here in 21st century Lynnwood we have 2000ish years of folks that have followed Jesus. The big idea for today is:

The Big Idea: The Imitation of Christ often comes through imitation of those who have walked with Him longer.

The Caveat:

Paul plainly states to the church in Corinth “be imitators of me, as I am of Christ”. Sometimes when we think about these men that wrote the Bible, we may have an idealized version of them in our minds. Remember they were flawed broken humans just like you and me. You see they were able to follow Christ not in their own power but by the power of the Holy Spirit. If we have any chance of imitating Christ or helping others imitate Christ, we too must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. You became imitators of us

Regardless of present circumstances

V. 6

The Thessalonians were facing real threats, physical death. Yet they still followed Christ by following Paul.

The good news impacts our everyday

V.6

The Thessalonians welcomed the good news. Sometimes its hard for us to understand just how life changing the gospel was to these folks. We have the benefit of a society based loosely in Judeo / Christian values. They did not.

Because of the Holy Spirit, with Joy

V.6

Joy is not based on circumstances it is based on the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individual believers. He is the power for us to be able to follow Jesus.

2. You became Examples to others

Paul and company are giving us insight here into what it means to be an imitator of Christ. They are describing how the Thessalonians portrayed Christ to others and in doing so showed how they displayed Christ to the Thessalonians.

You proclaimed the Gospel

V.8

“The word of the Lord rang out from you”. They proclaimed, shouted the good news of Jesus. As we mature in following Christ the gospel will be shown in our lives and in our words.

You turned to God from Idols

v.9

In our culture we don't think much about idols. That sounds like superstition or foreign religions, but we create idols of the heart whenever we put anything in our lives before God.

You serve God

V.9

What does it mean to serve the living and true God.

‘For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me; I was in prison and you visited me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?’

When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or without clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick, or in prison, and visit you?' "And the King will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'
Matthew 25:35-40

You await Jesus' return

The old preachers used to say, "don't be so heavenly minded that you're no earthly good. Don't be so earthly minded that you're no heavenly good". That phrase means we wait while we work.

3. So What?

Have you welcomed the message of the Gospel?

Do you have a person in your life that exemplifies Christ?

Are you a person that exemplifies Christ to others?