

## **Authentic Christian Living**

### **1 Thessalonians 2:1-13**

#### **Introduction**

How many of you know that some things in life are a matter of expedience, while others are just a matter of convenience? Unfortunately, we sometimes let the urgent things in life rob us of accomplishing the more important things.

The problem with urgent things is they are always fighting, clawing, and screaming for our attention. Urgent things love to dominate your time and make you think you're committing an unpardonable sin if you don't stop immediately and give attention to the pressing situation. And so, once again, you find the essential things in your life put on hold so you can focus your attention on some urgent request. If you allow this pattern to persist, you will find yourself doing urgent things from one crisis to the next.

Truly important things are neither noisy nor demanding. They wait patiently and quietly for us to realize their significance. When was the last time you asked yourself, "What are the most important things in my life?"

Charles Swindoll writes: "In some ways, people and organizations are alike. Both tend to lose vitality rather than gain it as time passes. Both also tend to give greater attention to what they were rather than what they are becoming. It's easier to look back into the past and smile on yesterday's accomplishments than to look ahead into the future and think about tomorrow's possibilities."

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, Paul addresses this whole subject of priorities for the early Christians. In verse 1, he writes, "You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results." ([1 Thessalonians 2:1](#))

Even though Paul hadn't stayed in Thessalonica very long, his ministry there was not a wasted effort. Though his time there was brief and at times even discouraging, it wasn't in vain. As he writes this letter, he reminds the Thessalonians of his life and ministry among them. As you study his comments, you realize that Paul had some very definite priorities for his life.

Paul concentrated on important things rather than urgent things.

#### **I. Scriptural vs Spiritual**

In verse 2, he writes, "We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition. For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts." ([1 Thessalonians 2:2-4](#))

You can't read these verses of scripture without realizing that Paul was frequently inundated with a barrage of urgent things at Thessalonica. Instead of looking at the pressing circumstances and focusing all his attention on how to handle the situations in Thessalonica, Paul chose to concentrate on the Scriptures, continue to develop his relationship with Christ, and let his life and ministry reflect that experience.

Many people are absorbed by how others see them, but Paul focused on what God required of him. Even when facing public opposition, Paul didn't allow himself to get drawn into a debate. He didn't try to argue doctrine or share his own opinions; he confidently lived and shared the gospel message. The foundation of his teachings about the Christian life did not focus on the errors or failures but upon the grace and truth of the scriptures.

Paul was convinced that the Word of God was entrusted to him to deliver its saving message to anyone who would listen. His relationship with Jesus gave Paul such a sense of security and confidence that he refused to compromise his message. His goal was to please God. Paul was not what we'd call a 'people pleaser.'

It may sound very basic, but the first and most important principle to maintaining a vibrant and meaningful Christian life is a love for and obedience to the scriptures. I'm not talking about doing research or a Bible study. I'm talking about just reading the Bible over and over until the Holy Spirit unlocks the hidden truth contained in the scriptures to you. How often do you read your Bible? What priority do you give it?

The best philosophy of life or the finest abilities and talents cannot guarantee you will live forever. Even a well-developed intellect or a perfectly positioned can buy you a place with God in the hereafter. Only Jesus Christ can assure you'll make it to heaven. In John 5, Jesus told the Pharisees, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." (John 5:39-40 NKJV)

Do you read the scriptures just to read them, or do you read them asking the Holy Spirit to unlock its eternal truths to you. Some think the Bible is too difficult to understand - steeped in antiquity - not relevant in this modern age. Where do you put Bible reading in your list of priorities? Do you live according to the scriptures? Find a translation you like to read and start a habit of reading it every day. Read it as if God is speaking to you. Build a discipline of communing with God through the scriptures.

C.H. Spurgeon once said: 'It is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible itself until, at last, you come to take in scriptural language, and your spirit is flavored with the words of the Lord, and the very essence of the Bible flows from you.' Devoted Bible readers live and act like true disciples rather than just a group of admirers.

Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any

double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." (Hebrews 4:12-13)

God knows what deep down in your heart. He can help you more than any sermon or counselor ever can. Through the scriptures, God can speak to you directly and powerfully. Jesus knows and understands our problems and, even better, has a solution for them! Don't let the urgent things of your day; rob you from getting in on God's insights and wisdom. Before you do anything else, you ought to talk to God about your day and let God talk to you through His Word.

## **II. Belief vs. Faith**

The second essential of Christian living is: 'Don't just believe in the Bible, apply the Scriptures to your life! Be scriptural, but also be an authentic believer!

Listen to how Paul shifts the emphasis from the message to the messenger in verse 5, "You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though, as apostles of Christ, we could have asserted our authority. Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well." (1 Thessalonians 2:5-8)

Paul is transparent when he says, 'Look, people, there's no mask here, no cover-up, we're open and transparent before God and you! We are authentic followers of Christ.

Paul was more than a believer; He was a man of faith. Belief in Jesus is not the same as having the faith of Christ. The devils believe in Jesus, but they do not have faith in Jesus. We could say Paul was a person of genuine faith! He wasn't pushing for the limelight or popularity; he consciously resisted being a power abuser. Paul wasn't going to take unfair advantage of his role as an apostle. His priority was to live what he preached.

Being genuine and authentic is being free from life's imaginary and false imitations. An authentic Christian is free from the usual hype, sensationalism, and salesmanship you see in life. When we live and practice Bible principles faithfully, we are set free from this sinful world. We are empowered to live the faith that God imparts to us. Authentic Christians know how to enjoy life and get the most out of their experiences. The Bible is our foundation. But it's not just a great book to read; it is the pattern for how we live. Can you say you are living the Word of God?

Authentic Christian living calls us to be scriptural and authentic. But it also teaches us compassion for others on their journey through life.

### **III. Compassion vs. Judgment**

In verse 9, Paul says, "Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous, and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory." (1 Thessalonians 2:9-12)

Paul doesn't strike out at them with criticism or rebuke. He reaches out with a compassionate and gracious spirit making himself approachable and tender. He says, "I care for you as a nursing mother cares for her children and as a father tenderly guides his children." Paul was established on the firm foundation of the scriptures, but He was also a living example of its presence and power. God's grace made him tender and compassionate to those around him, no matter who they were or what they had done.

If you want to keep the joy of the spirit in your life each day, you've got to develop a genuine spirit of tenderness and compassion for others. Without authentic love and compassion, rubbing shoulders with others will only make you bitter instead of better. When someone irritates or frustrates you, causing all kinds of inner conflict within you, could it be that you are not seeing them the way Christ does? Christ can love even the unlovable.

Paul was interested in doing more than dumping a truckload of theology and doctrine on the Thessalonians. Of course, he wanted to preach the gospel, but he also wanted them to see how it worked in his own life. To do that, you've got to have a certain tolerance for people!

Sadly, our society has turned us from compassionate, loving, and forgiving people into harsh, insensitive, vindictive judges. But God is the only rightful Judge, and he probably does better without our help in that area. Our job is to show mercy and compassion towards every person to bring them into the fellowship of Christ.

Don't fall into the trap of using people to promote your agenda- learn to really love them! Oh, I already do that, Pastor! Oh really? Then why do we spend so much time trying to change people instead of accepting them as God does and letting Him do the changing? Why do we get so upset when a person doesn't respond and change and do things the way we want them done? Hello? Are you still there?

Do you have any confidence in the Holy Spirit to deal with a person's heart to help them see the imperfections that need to be covered by the cross?

### **Conclusion**

Peter ends his second epistle with, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our

Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.” (2 Peter 3:18)

Most people don't need more rules and regulations. Most people need a little more tenderness, compassion, and concern. We need the love of Jesus to flow over us not just from the lips of the preacher but from the lifestyles of those in the pews!

There is a need and a place for conviction, correction, and a firm commitment to truth. But Jesus always wove grace into the garment of truth. Authentic Christian living does not choose Law or Grace. It is not an either-or matter! God's law brings us to God's grace.

There are those who long for and deserve the message of truth presented in compassionate love! Paul told the Thessalonians, "Don't forget, as a mother....as a father....I came to you!" In verse 13, he says, "And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe."

(1 Thessalonians 2:13)

Read your Bible, be a person of faith, and show compassion when dealing with others and you'll be well on your way to living an authentic Christian life.