

THE WORK OF THE LORD

1 Thess. 1, 2

Intro: As far as we know, 1 Thessalonians was the first of the Epistles of Paul.

In some respects it is a very unique Epistle. It not only tells what had happened to some of the Thessalonians -- those who had trusted the Lord as Savior -- but it tells how all of this came to pass.

The Epistle, therefore, sets the standard for all future works of the Lord. It establishes the basic principles upon which we can expect to see the blessing of God even today. In a day when many of the Lord's people seem to be more concerned about HOW TO than they are WHAT, this Epistle is of extreme importance.

I. WHAT HAD HAPPENED?

See 1 Thess. 1:2, 3. Then read vv. 9, 10.

However, as wonderful as this was, there was more. Note the three points which Paul makes in vv. 6, 7, and 8.

Paul touches on it again in chapter 2, verse 13.

A work which had been started in the hearts of some in Thessalonica was being felt in all of the regions round about. Considering what Paul found when he went there, this could be nothing less than the work of the Lord.

II. HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

There are four things that Paul mentions:

A. The recognition of the sovereignty of God in His own work.

See 1 Thess. 1:4.

This is why he would be so full of praise to God -- instead of glorying in what he had done. See 1:2. See also v. 9 ("what manner of entering in we had unto you"). See 2:4, and then v. 13.

An even greater statement is given in 2 Thess. 2:13, 14.

Paul was not doing the work, and asking God to bless him. He was entering into a work already ordained by God. This is an emphasis almost unheard of in our day.

But there was a second thing.

B. The message.

In v. 5 when he says, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only," we must see that the statement means, first of all that it was with the Gospel that Paul came to the Thessalonians.

What is the Gospel?

In answering this note: 1 Thess. 2:2. It was not a message that was outwardly attractive to men.

See 1 Thess. 2:3, 4. It was far more important to Paul to make the message pleasing to God than to men.

See 1 Thess. 2:9. He wanted to keep the message on a basis of unmerited grace.

The content of the message is indicated in 1 Thess. 1:10 -- what God had done through Christ to deliver those who believe from the wrath to come.

How important it is for us to stop and look and listen to the message we proclaim. Is it a message of the sovereign grace of God to meet the needs of sinful man who are both unable and unwilling to do anything about his own need? If not, it is not what Paul preached -- as all of the Word of God will indicate!

C. The manner.

Could I say without seeking to minimize the message that this is often the missing ingredient in the preaching of the Word today? Note the first part of 1 Thess. 1:5.

Remember Acts 1:8. The Holy Spirit gives power to the preaching of the Gospel -- a power which cannot come from any other source. And it is the Holy Spirit Who produces in the hearts of men that "full assurance," or complete confidence, that the message is true.

If we were more dependent upon the Holy Spirit, we would not have to resort to all other kinds of means to try to prove that the Gospel which we preach is true.

D. The messengers.

Here we are thinking about the latter part of 1:5 -- "as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." Note the negatives in 1 Thess. 2:3-6 (one in each verse), and then the positives in vv. 7-12.

Where do we stand in comparison with such a record?

And what was the result? See 1:6. No, the order is not wrong. It is exactly as Paul said it. "And ye became followers (mimics) of us AND of the Lord . . ." How often the loveliness of the Gospel is tarnished by the messenger who brings it! But not so with the Apostle Paul.

Concl: A final question: WHAT SHOULD ALL OF THIS MEAN TO US?

The answer: It ought to mean that the things which were important to Paul and which made his life so mighty should become important to us if we expect to see the blessing of God in our day.

Will you take these four things and pray that the Lord will give you the understanding of them that you need?

- 1) The glory of our salvation -- with its roots in eternity past, and its greatest glory to be seen in all of the ages of eternity to come.
- 2) The truth of the Gospel -- giving all of the glory to God, and leaving man utterly dependent upon God for salvation from start to finish!
- 3) Your relationship to the Holy Spirit.
- 4) How you can become an example for other believers to follow so that they will then be following the Lord.