



**PROPER 25** ARTICLE NO. 2005.884  
Epistle 1 Th 2:1-8

**Paul on virtue**  
1 Thessalonians 2:1-8



For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. {been...: or, used authority}

7 But we were **gentle** among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."

**Much of this tract is commentary - don't take it as Gospel. It is here to encourage meditation and study. Use your gift of discernment, to find the truth.**

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1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

This was the very first book of the NT and was written by Paul from Greece c. 49-51 CE. Thessalonica is an important stop on the main Roman highway running across northern Greece and connected Anatolia to Italy. Philippi was also on the route. Paul had some opposition in Philippi and established a small community there, as he did next with Thessalonica.

In 1:9 we read that the Thessalonians "turned to God from idols"), so most of these converts were Gentiles.

Paul was forced to move on (?), and eventually reached Corinth from which he wrote this letter.

Paul said that he was anxious when he talked to them, because of his previous experience in Philippi. He wasn't exhorting them to unclean practice, and he wasn't trying to trick them (into doing something unlawful), he was telling them the truth. For God had given them the Gospel - it was not from man. God had trusted them to tell it like it is,<sup>A</sup> and God was inspecting their hearts to make sure that they told it properly. Paul didn't change God's words, and he was not going to do it just to flatter them, and he didn't tell them only what they wanted to hear, in order to get paid. Paul said he was humble, not seeking the applause of men, nor of the brethren, yet as Apostles of Christ they could have used their calling to lay burdens on the brethren for lodging and money, but did neither. "*But we were gentle...*"

[This is an example of the commandment to love your Neighbour - "*like a nurse caring for her own children*".

*"we are determined to share with you ...our own selves, because you have become very dear to us".]*

Paul said he probably made them worry by telling them of his own woes, because he felt sympathetic to them, and confided in them.

<sup>A</sup> This is the commandment to love God.

*"The gospel (is) ...to please God, who tests our hearts"*

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Don't these reassurances from Paul to the Thessalonians that they were not going to distort the Gospel just to flatter them, ring bells today?

Many churchgoers get to hear only the passages from the bible that are reassuring to them. The entire bible is only to be heard from the lector if we attend church every day of the week, otherwise we just get the Sunday lessons, and homilies on them, and so we hear only the 'nicest' passages. Sometimes, as in proper 28, where the last line of the chapter (verse 30) is not read, controversial bits are left out of the reading - so as not to worry us. Something that Paul condemns.

The hard parts of the Gospel - the condemnation of those who don't encourage the mission of the Apostles; the harsh comments about the Samaritans by Jesus; the commands to leave family, and to "hate" their life; to sacrifice all material wealth and give it to the poor; to comply with a few Jewish tradition; to do good works to earn a place in the kingdom; to forgive everyone, everything and to hold no grudge; to persevere to the end of time etc.  
- are hardly mentioned from the pulpit.

These can be very scary passages to some people, who are weak in the understanding of the faith, and you can understand why some of the brethren at Thessalonica were shaken, and why so many people walked away from the Apostles (and even Jesus, earlier) when they told the whole story (as Paul apparently did here).

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But we, believers in the Apostolic traditions, know that we can get guidance on the difficulties from the Fathers, and from our clergy . We can read books written by the Anglican clergy (some hundreds of years old) and get to the meaning of the difficult passages (some listed on last page).

I have heard from men who are well read in the faith, that what is being fed to them from the pulpit these days, and in the Sunday school lessons, is 'Pap' (baby food) - though this is not the case in my church, I am happy to say . They say "all we hear are words that make us all feel comfortable that whatever we are doing at this moment is the right thing. Everything is 'love, love, love'. - if you just 'love' everybody, especially 'neighbors' then you will be doing the right thing".

The 'love of God', is the greatest of all commandments, and this type of love implies doing God's commandments, but this is hardly mentioned anymore. In fact there are some people who believe that whatever was written in the Old Testament has been overridden by what is written in the New Testament, and what Paul has said about love in Corinthians (much misunderstood by laity) overrides what God said to the Israelites about obedience. And isn't it symptomatic that this aversion to obedience is reflected in today's wedding vows? (When also the passage on love from Corinthians is often read?)  
Love with all its meaning distorted by the 1960's sexual revolution has replaced obedience to God. Isn't that the truth.

When was the last time an invited speaker addressed repentance (as Paul did to the Thessalonians)?

I am sure that the Thessalonians were very concerned about God's commands for them to 'turn around' and to stop doing the things they had always done.

Today, people don't want to hear anything that would cause them to change their lifestyle. It's "Don't tell us to change the way we are - we love ourselves just as we are, and God loves us too, just as we are."

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And they say: “We can’t help being like this. we are not responsible. We are a result of our genes, and our environment, and our schooling. It’s too late to change, anyway. If you don’t like us the way we are now, why didn’t you tell us earlier, before we had all these obligations, all these debts, all our agnostic friends? Where was the Clergy when I was growing up. I didn’t see them at school, or at work. My parents never were ‘religious’, but they had faith, that was all that they needed to be saved, and that’s all I need. I believe that God will choose me when the time comes, so don’t tell me I might not be chosen - where does it say otherwise in the Bible?” And countless profiteering writers will reassure them that “ You should love yourself, just as you are. - Just buy my latest book, which will guaranteed you will be not left behind and will be among God’s chosen!”

And of course they are never told by those who do know the truth, for fear that they might lose what little faith they have acquired, or they might switch to another congregation that would reassure them that they were acceptable as they are. - no changes necessary - something Paul refused to say to the Thessalonians.

4. *But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; **not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.***

5 **For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness;**  
*God is witness:*

And remember (see Proper 23 commentary) Jesus implied in Matthew chapter 22 that if you come to the wedding feast unrepentant, unchanged and without ‘winning’ your wedding garments, you will be condemned. For He said:

*“And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.”*

What happened to all the “hell fire and brimstone” of the 20th century? You are glad that’s gone, you say? Well, today it’s “all inclusiveness’ and don’t rock the boat we have a good thing going here.”

People are distracted from the real meaning of The Faith, by the creation of projects for them to do at church, and in the community, some of which bear no relevance to the Gospel at all. Instead of studying The Faith as described in the scriptures, they study ‘Four Weeks to Perfection - or your money back’. by some non Anglican and non-Apostolic author, who’s primary interest is in lining his own pockets. Except that no-one would use the word ‘perfection’ these days, that suggests you have to change your ways. “Let’s **do** something instead”, they say. “Why not a community project of some sort: mow neighbor’s lawns; fix a broken fence; make soup for someone who is sick. That’s loving your neighbor, isn’t it? If we do that once or twice a year, aren’t we fulfilling the second great commandment?”

And many popular writers and speakers make people feel guilty because he/she doesn’t love the entire world. People are encouraged to contribute financially to hair-brained schemes dreamt up by angst-driven people who haven’t quite understood yet that the Gospel is about spiritual things being more important than physical things<sup>A</sup>. In the third world where I have lived for several years, people with very low income manage quite well, and often are spiritually much better equipped for life than people in the developed countries. Attention should be on lifting people up spiritually, rather than economically. Isn’t cash-giving to these schemes just a way of avoiding personal involvement with the recipients? Is cash now the equivalent of ‘love’ . Has ‘love your neighbor’ beecome ‘spend money on your neighbor’?

<sup>A</sup> except that we must feed and cloth the destitute who are not supported by government programs. In Jesus time there were no programs for the poor - true in some countries still.

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Now, there are many courageous and important projects that are under the aegis of the Anglican Church that need to be supported, both with time and money, and these are well thought out programs, doing projects that some of us are not physically nor emotionally gifted to do - such as medical relief work, and building houses. For some people participation would not be possible, due to infirmity, disability or youth. Here contributions in kind and in cash help compensate for the inability to participate, but the heartfelt desire is to take a part in the program.

But for the majority of fit middle class people isn't the poor management of time and the poor use of God's property (everything we have on loan from God that we think we 'own'), the reason for shuffling off responsibility to our fellows? Isn't it easier to write a check, than rearrange our time so that we can really **do theology**?

Paul's commitment to the Thessalonians was ...  
 (I paraphrase)  
 like a nurse caring for her own children  
 we are determined to share with you ...our own  
 selves, because you have become very dear to us.

Aren't we supposed to be more like Paul? Brothers and Sisters do you feel, as I do, that being a part of the OSV identifies you as someone who is taking God seriously, and who knows that being closer to God and sharing in his divine life, is more important than life itself?

If you do feel like this, then share these feelings with others.

Well, enough of the soap-box oratory. Write to me and let me know what you think c/o the web-site.

Amori Christi et Ecclesiae -  
 Glen C. Miller OSV

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**Recommended Books**

**ISBN**

Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers			
The Life And Epistles of Saint Paul	Conybeare W.J.	S.S. Scranton	
The Fathers of The Church - Origen,	Scheck, Thomas P.	CUA Press	0-8132-0103-9
What Saint Paul Really Said	Wright N.T.	Eerdmans	0-8028-4445-6