
EVANGELISM & DISCIPLESHIP IN THE 1ST CENTURY

I. THE BACKGROUND TO 1 THESSALONIANS

- A. Picking up Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-8)
- B. The Macedonian call (Acts 16:9-11)
- C. The city of Philippi (Acts 16:12-13)
 - 1. Lydia's conversion (Acts 16:14-15)
 - 2. The demon-possessed girl (Acts 16:16-23a)
 - 3. Paul and Silas in prison (Acts 16:23b-40)
- D. The city of Thessalonica (Acts 17:1a)
 - 1. A major road and a major hub
 - 2. "The Mother of All Macedonia"
 - 3. Freedom and fierce loyalty to Rome: "Caesar is Lord!"
 - 4. Combating local skepticism
 - 5. Into the local synagogue (Acts 17:1b-2a)
 - 6. The persuasive power of "logic on fire" (Acts 17:2b-4a)

7. Jason, Aristarchus, and Secundus (Acts 17:6f, 19:29, 20:4, 27:2; Col 4:10)
 8. From the Jewish synagogue to the Gentile street (Acts 17:4b)
 9. “Jesus is Lord!”
 10. The rent-a-mob riot in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5)
 11. Charges against Jason and the other Christians (Acts 17:6-9)
- E. The departure of Paul to Berea, and then to Athens (Acts 17:10-34)
1. The smear campaign against believers back in Thessalonica
 2. Paul’s concern over the Thessalonians
- F. Timothy dispatched to Thessalonica as Paul goes to Corinth (1 Thess 3:1-2)
1. Timothy’s good news about the Thessalonians
 - a. Their firm faith in Christ (1 Thess 3:6-8)
 - b. Their deep love for one another (1 Thess 4:9-10)
 2. Timothy’s bad news about the Thessalonians
 - a. The problem of continued hostility (1 Thess 2:14-16)
 - b. The problem of bad eschatology (1 Thess 4:13-18; 2 Thess 3:6-15)
 - c. The problem of loose morality (1 Thess 4:3-7)

G. 1 Thessalonians: Paul pastoring by pen

II. THE BURDEN OF 1 THESSALONIANS

A. The general structure of 1 Thessalonians

1. Chapters 1-3 = Encouragement
2. Chapters 4-5 = Exhortation

B. A reassurance of love and integrity

1. We're not "fair weather Christians," as some are alleging. (2:2)
2. We're not religious hucksters, as some are alleging. (2:3)
3. We're not religious terrorists, as some are alleging. (2:6-7)
4. We're not looking at you as "customers" in our cult, as some are alleging. (2:8)
5. We're not interested in taking your money, as some are alleging. (2:9)

C. Some insights about discipleship from 1 Thessalonians 1

1. Discipleship involves not only words but a demonstration of the Spirit's power. (1:5)
2. Discipleship can impact others when done with deep conviction. (1:5)
3. Discipleship is credible when the discipler's life matches the discipler's message. (1:5)

4. Discipleship has been effective when the follower begins to imitate the leader. (1:6)
 5. Discipleship is relevant when done in the midst of problems and difficulties. (1:6)
 6. Discipleship has met its goals when the trainees become trainers themselves. (1:7-8)
 7. Discipleship is finished when the leader has no need to say anything more. (1:8)
- D. Some insights about the discipling relationship from 1 Thessalonians 2
1. We can be like a gentle, nurturing mother, to our disciples. (2:7)
 2. We can share not only the good news, but our very lives as well. (2:8)
 3. We can work hard so as to not to overburden our disciple with our needs. (2:9)
 4. We can strive to be an example while among our disciples. (2:10)
 5. We can deal with our disciples as a father deals with his children. (2:11)
 6. We can encourage our disciples to live up to their spiritual potential. (2:12)
- E. Some insights about discipleship delegation (or “staffing”) from 1 Thessalonians 3
1. Our trusted delegates can give our disciples strength and encouragement. (3:2)

2. Our trusted delegates can work to rescue those who might fall away. (3:3)
 3. Our trusted delegates can fight to ensure that our work has not been in vain. (3:4-5)
 4. Our trusted delegates can motivate and cheer our disciples on to grow. (3:6-7)
 5. Our trusted delegates can report to us how our disciples' faith is flourishing. (3:6-8)
 6. Our trusted delegates can lead the way in praying for what our disciples need. (3:9-10)
- F. Some insights about motivating disciples from 1 Thessalonians 4-5
1. Provide comfort for those who have lost loved ones. (4:13-15)
 2. Provide assurance for those who believe. (4:16-18)
 3. Provide warning for those who might forget. (5:1-5)
 4. Provide direction for those who need it. (5:6-11)

III. CONCLUSION

- A. Why God may have allowed this whole crisis in the first place
- B. We don't have forever to engage in evangelism and discipleship!

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Fox, Robin Lane. *Pagans and Christians*. New York: Knopf, 1986.
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- Holland, Tom. *Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World*. New York: Basic, 2019.
- Green, Michael. *Evangelism in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996; New York: HarperOne, 1997.
- Wilken, Robert L. *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.