

Happy and Holy in a Hostile World

Getting Back to the Basics

1 Thessalonians 1; Coast School of Theology; Earl Miles; 11-17-2019

Introduction

John Wooden, the eminently successful basketball coach at UCLA during its dynasty years, was asked his secret in producing stellar teams. His answer: "We master the basics. We drill over and over again on the fundamentals." - *Moody Monthly*, September, 1989, p. 4.

- Five weeks on the five chapters of 1 Thessalonians.
- On the topic of The Basics of the Christian Life: Happiness in God in a Hostile Culture
- First or one of the first epistles of Paul (49-51 AD)
- Thessalonica: A Hostile and Immoral Metropolitan City (Acts 17)
- Gospel Call: To be counter-cultural
- Chapter Themes
 1. The Nature of True Conversion
 2. The Nature of True Gospel Ministry
 3. The Testing of Our Faith
 4. The Temptation of Life in a Fallen World
 5. The Day of the Lord

1 Thessalonians 1: The Nature of True Conversion

- Faith, Hope and Love (1-3)**

¹ Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. ² We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers; ³ constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

- God and Jesus are one.
- Afflicted Christians are not separated from God but united with God.
- Grace (power) and peace (true prosperity) comes through the truth.
- We are to be thankful for all God's people.
- God is to be thanked for any good that anyone receives.
- We are look for evidences of grace in terms of faith, hope and love.

- The measure of success for a Christian or a church is faith, hope and love not bodies, bucks and buildings.
- Faith produces good works.
- Love is not easy but labor.
- Hope is what keeps us going so that we don't give up.

‘Someone once asked Paul Harvey, the journalist and radio commentator, to reveal the secret of his success. "I get up when I fall down," said Harvey.

Bits & Pieces, March 3, 1994, p. 16.

□ **Word and Spirit (4-5a)**

⁴ knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you; ⁵ for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction;

- We can know if we are chosen by God.
- If we are chosen, then we are loved in the greatest of ways.
- The word can be taught and preached without people being changed.
- But when the Spirit works through the Word then people are changed.
- The evidence that we are chosen is that the Word changes us.

How do I know that I am one of the elect? (4)

□ **Tribulation and Joy (5b-7)**

Just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶ You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

- The Spirit works through the Word to change us into imitators.
- Imperfect imitators can still be imitated.
- We are to imitate those who have joy (happiness in God) in the midst of troubles.

□ **Testimony of Faith (8)**

⁸ For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.

- The word of the Lord is the good news of Jesus.
- It takes both speaking well and suffering well to spread the gospel.

□ **Turning from Idols (9)**

⁹ For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God,

- Repentance is a turning from and a turning to.
- Repentance is turning from idols.
- Idolatry is looking to created things for the help and happiness that only God can provide.
- Repentance is turning to God for help and happiness.
- Serving God is not helping God or giving God something He doesn't have but trusting and obeying God because you are looking to Him for help and happiness.

□ **Waiting for Jesus (10)**

¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

- Waiting is not inactivity but faithfulness to do what God calls us to do while we wait for His promises to be fulfilled.
- Waiting means saying no to some things and yes to others in light of what we are waiting for.
- We are waiting for the return of Christ.
- The return of Christ is when all suffering and evil will be brought to an end and the final judgment will come to all men.
- The return of Christ is when the kingdom of perfect happiness in God will be ushered in (heaven on earth).
- The reason we can be confident in Christ's return is because of His resurrection.
- If Jesus can conquer death and sin and hell, then He can keep every other promise He has made.

'Waiting for God is not laziness. Waiting for God is not going to sleep. Waiting for God is not the abandonment of effort. Waiting for God means, first, activity under command; second, readiness for any new command that may come; third, the ability to do nothing until the command is given. - G. Campbell Morgan

'If we consider the greatness and the glory of the life we shall have when we have risen from the dead, it would not be difficult at all for us to bear the concerns of this world. If I believe the Word, I shall on the Last Day, after the sentence has been pronounced, not only gladly have suffered ordinary temptations, insults, and imprisonment, but I shall also say: "O, that I did not throw myself under the feet of all the godless for the sake of the great glory which I now see revealed and which has come to me through the merit of Christ!" - Martin Luther.