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THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

"they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so."

II Thessalonians



A paraphrase of 2 Thessalonians 1

"We are writing you as fellow members of the Body of Christ, realizing that we both have peace with God by grace through Christ. We are proud of you because you show a living testimony of faith, hope, and love centered in the Gospel in the way you respond to abuse in this life. Be assured that God sees this and will reward you when Christ returns to bring justice to this world, at which time he will respond not only to your faith, but also to the rebellion of and damage inflicted on you by those who did not follow Christ. We pray that God will be glorified through you as you have glorified Christ by the grace of God."

In this chapter, Paul models for us four things that are important in our call to make disciples of Christ.

1. **Enlightenment - Get the full Gospel message right.**
2. **Encouragement - Recognize and reinforce abiding faith in the midst of afflictions.**
3. **Expectations - Justice (rewards & retribution) are in God's hands, not ours.**
4. **Example - Modeling the life of Christ and his Apostles.**

2 Thessalonians 1

"1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2 **Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**."

1. Enlightenment - Get the full Gospel message right.

- **The New Covenant Grace and Peace in Christ.**
- **Word and Way of the Cross.**

Matthew 6

"22 The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But **if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness**. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"

- Some things we should not see dimly!

Disciples of Jesus must see the big picture of the Gospel narrative - not just a part of it.

Romans 10

"22 For I testify about them that they have **a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge**. 23 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God."

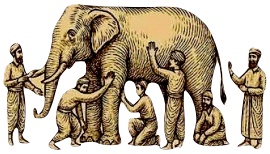
Matthew 23:27

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like **whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones**."

Ephesians 1

"18 I pray that the **eyes of your heart may be enlightened,** so that you may know what is the **hope of His calling**, what are the riches of the **glory of His inheritance** in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing **greatness of His power** toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might."

John Godfrey Saxe



It was six men of Indostan,
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

The First approached the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bail:
"God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"

The Second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, "Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear,
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"

The Third approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
"I see," -quoth he- "the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"

The Fourth reached out an eager hand,
And felt about the knee:
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain," -quoth he,-
"Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"

The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said- "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!"

The sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"To me," -quoth he,- "the Elephant
Is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
Yet all were in the wrong!

So, oft in theologic wars
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean;
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!

John Godfrey Saxe

But Jesus made a bolder claim
As prophet of the light,
He touched a man who could not see
And gave him perfect sight,
To look into his healer's face,
And then see God aright.

We, like the six of Indostan,
Who only saw in part,
Must put it all together
And seek to know God's heart
So as to make disciples
As the Gospel we impart.

Is this woman old or young?

How you see the big picture will dictate the answer.

What is the big picture in the Biblical story?



A proper understanding of the relationship of the Old & New Covenants is vital.

Romans 10:4

"For Christ is the end of the law of righteousness to everyone who believes."

Christians are free from the Law of Moses -

- as a covenant of holiness by our good works



but not from the law of Christ -

- as a part of the Body of Christ 1Cor.9:21

Christians are freed from the Law of Moses.

Galatians 4

"4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, **born under the Law**, 5 in order that He might **redeem those who were under the Law**, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

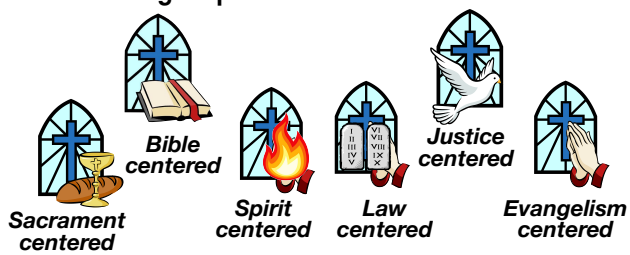
1 Corinthians 9

"20 And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, **though not being myself under the Law**, that I might win those who are under the Law; 21 to those who are without law, as without law, though **not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ**, that I might win those who are without law."

1 Corinthians 1

"11 For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. 12 Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, **"I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."** 13 **Has Christ been divided?** Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"

The differing emphasis in Christian communities.



Romans 12

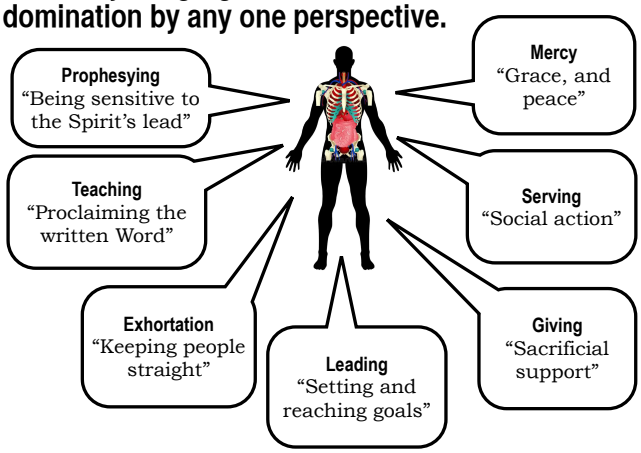
"4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if **prophecy**, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if **service**, in his serving; or he who **teaches**, in his teaching; 8 or he who **exhorts**, in his exhortation; he who **gives**, with liberality; he who **leads**, with diligence; he who **shows mercy**, with cheerfulness."

The church is NOT the Body Parts of Christ.



The church is the Body of Christ, but only when the pieces function as attached to one another and the head - Christ who is the image of God.

A healthy congregation must avoid domination by any one perspective.



2 Thessalonians 1

"3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your **faith is greatly enlarged,** and the **love of each one of you toward one another grows** ever greater; 4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your **perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure**. 5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed **you are suffering**."

2. Encouragement - Recognize and reinforce abiding faith in the midst of afflictions.

Abiding "faith" is notarized by our -

- growing love of God's people.

- gracious response in the face of life's "trials".

Our hope is not in this time, body, or life, nor from this world.

Romans 7

"24 **Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?** 25 **Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!** So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin."

Romans 8

"1 There is therefore **now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.** 2 For the **law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free** from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, **God did: sending His own Son** in the likeness of sinful flesh and **as an offering for sin,** He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that **the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit**."

Romans 8:18

"For I consider that the **sufferings of this present time** are not worthy to be compared with **the glory that is to be revealed** to us."

1 Corinthians 15:19

"If we have **hoped in Christ in this life only**, we are of all men most to be pitied."

Philippians 4:11

"Not that I speak from want; for **I have learned to be content** in whatever circumstances I am."

2 Thessalonians 1

"6 For after all it is only **just for God** to repay with affliction **those who afflict you**, 7 and to **give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,** 8 **dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.** 9 And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 **when He comes** to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed."

3. Expectations - Justice (rewards & retribution) are in God's hands & time, not ours.

"*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*"
is best understood as a reference to OUR DOING God's will on earth as aliens rather than heaven coming to earth.
(Matt.13:36-43, 1Cor.15:24-26, Rom.8:19-23, Rev.21:1-4)

In this life we bear a Cross to a Banquet (in the next life).

The light of the Spirit shines brightest against the darkness of this world.

Jeremiah 2:13

"For My people have committed two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."



Romans 12

"17 **Never pay back evil for evil to anyone**. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "***Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*" says the Lord**. 20 "*But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.*" 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Vengeance belongs only to God who knows the heart. (next week's lesson)

The way we respond to injustice and abuse will reveal a lot about the object and subject of our faith, hope, and love.

Proverbs 20:22
"**Do not say, "I will repay evil"**; Wait for the Lord, and He will save you."

Matthew 5:44
"But I say to you, **love your enemies**, and pray for those who persecute you"

1 Peter 2:23
"and while being reviled, **He did not revile in return**;"

2 Thessalonians 1

"11 To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; 12 **in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him,** according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

4. Example - Modeling Christ and his Apostles.

- The Cross of Christ is a reminder of his sacrifice on our behalf,

1 Peter 2:21

"For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you **an example for you to follow** in his steps."

- and it shows us how to love others through our self denial.

John 15:13

"Greater love has no one than this, that one **lay down his life** for his friends."

Agape love is a credential and a calling.

John 13:35

"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, **if you have love for one another**."

- It IDs us as Christians.

- It assures us of union with Christ.

- It authenticates our witness to the Gospel.

Note what IS NOT mentioned -
personal piety, charismatic revival, reformed theology, social peace & justice.

Endurance through trial is also a credential and calling.

James 1:12

"Blessed is the man who **remains steadfast under trial**, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life.""

- Discipleship is notarized by abiding trust.

- Our witness to the Gospel is our response (of peace) in the midst of trouble.

Note what IS NOT mentioned -
worldly success or wealth, escape from trouble, physical comfort, impressive optics.

Suffering plays an important role in life:

Leading to the Cross

Romans 8:18

"For I consider that **the sufferings of this present time** are not worthy to be **compared with the glory** that is to be revealed to us."

Spiritual Fellowship with Christ

Philippians 3:10

"**that I may know him** and the power of his resurrection and **the fellowship of his sufferings**, being conformed to his death;"

Witness and Ministry

2 Corinthians 1

"3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; 4 who comforts us in all our affliction **so that we may be able to comfort** those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

So what are we to take home from this?

- **Enlightenment - Get the full Gospel message right.**
- **Encouragement - Get support from a church that knows and shows faith, hope, and love IN and FOR the right things.**
- **Expectations - Don't look for or seek heaven before its time and without its King.**
- **Example - Find a model and be a model as a ministry / witness.**

Be a disciple and a disciple maker.


II Thessalonians
Next week
2:1-12
Mystery of
Lawlessness
& saving faith