

## I Thessalonians 2:1–9

*I Thessalonians 2:1–2 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:*

*<sup>2</sup> 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.*

THE adversity that true saints are willing to endure to preach the gospel is a testimony to the sincerity of their faith. When tribulation and persecution arise for the sake of the Word, they will not, as impostors do,<sup>1</sup> cease to hold forth the truth boldly. Thus, though Paul and his companions suffered and were shamefully treated at Philippi, this did not prohibit them from continuing to boldly hold forth the Word of the Lord. The influence and power of Christ's nature within His people undoubtedly are far greater than all the powers of darkness in this world. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater*

*is he that is in you, than he that is in the world (I John 4:4).*

(*Benson Commentary*, I John 4:4) The Son of God, who stands at the head of that interest in which you are embarked, and who aids you by the mighty communications of his Spirit, is infinitely too strong for Satan, the great head of the apostacy, and for all his confederates. Thus, the issue of the divine government will be, that truth and virtue shall be finally victorious over error and wickedness, because God, the Patron of truth and virtue, possesseth far greater power and wisdom than the evil spirits who promote error and wickedness.

In the third stanza of his hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," Martin Luther wrote, "And though this world, with devils filled, / Should threaten to undo us, / We will not fear, for God hath willed / His truth to triumph through us."<sup>2</sup> If men are tempted to believe that Christ's power is less than Satan's, then let them consider that no devil or evil spirit ever cast out Jesus; rather, He cast *them* out.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mark 4:17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended*

<sup>2</sup> *Duncan, Ligon. "Mark 5:1–20 Christ's Power and Authority Over Evil." Cov Life Blog, Covenant Life Church | Tampa, FL, 2 Feb. 2018.*

<sup>3</sup> *Matt. 8:16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:*

*Matt. 8:31–32 So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. <sup>32</sup>And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.*

*Mark 9:25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.*

*Mark 16:9 Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.*

*Luke 4:35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.*

*Luke 4:41 And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.*

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The spiritual realm has but one King, and it is not the god of this world.<sup>4</sup> Through Christ's name demons depart and sinners are saved. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords,<sup>5</sup> and because of His celestial authority, those whom He chooses for heaven<sup>6</sup> will prevail. Thus, all victory for the people of God can be traced to the Spirit of Christ, Who lives within them. With respect to Jesus' current position in God's creation, the book of Revelation reveals this: *And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS* (Rev. 19:16).

(Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, Rev. 19:16) "His name written on His vesture and on His thigh," was written partly on the vesture, partly on the thigh itself, at the part where in an equestrian figure the robe drops from the thigh. The thigh symbolizes Christ's humanity as having come, after the flesh, from the loins of David, and now appearing as the glorified "Son of man." On the other hand, His incommunicable divine name, "which no man knew," is on His head (Re 19:12),<sup>7</sup> [Menochius].

*KING OF KINGS*—Compare Re 17:14,<sup>8</sup> in contrast with Re 19:17,<sup>9</sup> the beast being in attempted usurpation a king of kings, the ten kings delivering their kingdom to him.

When men consider the events recorded in the book of Revelation, they may be tempted to become fearful of the power of the dragon, the beast, or the ungodly world governments that will align themselves with them. In these moments Christians need to remember that He Who died on the cross and was raised by God to sit at His right hand is vastly greater than all who oppose Him. The power of the Christian, therefore, lies not in his own human strength but in the divine authority given to the Son. Because Christ is supreme, His people will prevail in spiritual battle.

(Benson Commentary, I John 4:4) *Because greater is he that is in you*—Namely, the Spirit of Christ; *than he*—The spirit of antichrist; *that is in the world* . . .

It is not a Christian's flesh or natural strength that allows him to overcome but rather the fact that both the Father and the Son abide in him. *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him* (John 14:23). Because Christ is supreme and has been given divine power over all things by God,<sup>10</sup> He has also made His saved people

Luke 11:14 *And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered.*

4 II Cor. 4:4 *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

5 I Tim. 6:15 *Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;*

6 John 15:16 *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

7 Rev. 19:12 *His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.*

8 Rev. 17:14 *These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*

9 Rev. 19:17 *And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;*

10 Matt. 28:18 *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Acts 10:38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

Eph. 1:20–22 *Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup>Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every*

to be more than conquerors. *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us* (Rom. 8:37). All saints should realize that victory lies in the fact that Christ's Spirit is the greatest spirit in the world today. The Holy Spirit may seem to be at times only a small part in the Christian heart, but because God's presence lives within them,<sup>11</sup> the Lord's people will be made more than conquerors through Him Who loved them. Nothing and no one inferior to Christ could cause them to either depart from or desert their calling, simply because true spiritual boldness lies not in the strength of human will or the cleverness of human reasoning—but in the power and inward strengthening of the Holy Spirit. God's power causes His people to stand, and God's power enables weak men like ourselves to boldly proclaim the gospel, even when there are so many in the world who despise it. Furthermore, believers are persecuted for proclaiming the truth because those who prefer the freedom to sin have rejected God's rule. Thus, the greatest persecutors of faith will be seen to be those who most despise God's heavenly rule. Ultimately, those who cherish the right to sin will hate those who preach that God despises it.<sup>12</sup>

*name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.*<sup>22</sup> *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,*

11 *Gal. 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

*Col. 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

12 *Prov. 9:8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.*

*Prov. 15:12 A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise.*

*Jer. 26:20–21 And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjathjearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah.*

<sup>21</sup>*And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death: . . .*

*Acts 7:54–60 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on [Stephen] with their teeth. <sup>55</sup>But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, <sup>56</sup>And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. <sup>57</sup>Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, <sup>58</sup>And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. <sup>59</sup>And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. <sup>60</sup>And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

***I Thessalonians 2:3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:***

Here Paul states that their ministry was not motivated by deceit, uncleanness, or guile. The apostles' real reason for ministry lay in their sincere belief that the gospel would produce fruit in those who believed it. Because the apostles' motives were undefiled, they could openly encourage the Thessalonians to inspect their motives. In business terms, the apostles invited the Thessalonians to look at their books. They had nothing to hide, and they wanted everyone to whom they preached Christ to know this.

***I Thessalonians 2:4 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.***

It is not a right but a privilege to be trusted with the gospel. All true ministers serve at God's discretion, and they can be as easily removed from their divine positions as they were placed in them. Moreover, when God has entrusted the gospel to men of God, their sole loyalty and allegiance will always be to God. It is the Lord Who has called and saved them, and to

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Him alone their allegiance lies. Thus, it is the impostor, not the true minister, whose main objective is to please the people he oversees.<sup>13</sup> No man also is more open to corruption than he who complies with the wishes and desires of sinful men. The Old Testament figure Aaron is a clear example of this. Because of external pressure from rebellious Israel, he assisted them in making a molten calf to worship,<sup>14</sup> ultimately attributing the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt to an Egyptian idol. Because Aaron lacked sufficient godly character, he was compromised spiritually. No man can remain true to God if he can be compromised by anybody or anything apart from God's will for his life. This must include even the strong influences of his own heart.

Whenever men secretly desire the praise of other men, they will speak things that they believe will be pleasing to them. Their speech, though it may contain selected bits of the truth, will never really be the truth. In reality, those who say things to please the hearer actually speak only to please themselves. The book of Romans contains a great verse that illustrates that those who seek to fill their own bellies and satisfy their own lusts are the same who employ good words and fair speeches to deceive the hearts of the simple.

**Romans 16:18** *For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*

13 Gal. 1:10 *For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*

14 Exod. 32:1–4 *And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. <sup>2</sup>And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. <sup>3</sup>And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. <sup>4</sup>And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

15 Col. 2:4 *And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.*

II Pet. 3:3 *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,*

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Rom. 16:18) *Serve not*—Obey not. Though they are professedly, yet they are not his real friends and followers.

*But their own belly*—Their own “lusts;” their own private interests; they do this to obtain support. The authors of parties and divisions, in church and state, have this usually in view. It is for the indulgence of some earthly appetite; to obtain function or property; or to gratify the love of dominion.

*And by good words*—Mild, fair, plausible speeches; with an appearance of great sincerity, and regard for the truth; compare Colossians 2:4; 2 Peter 3:3.<sup>15</sup> People who cause divisions commonly make great pretensions to peculiar love of truth and orthodoxy; and put on the appearance of great sincerity, sanctity, and humility.

*And fair speeches*—Greek εὐλογίας *eulogias*, eulogy, praise, flattery. This is another very common art. “Flattery” is one of the most powerful means of forming parties in the church; and “a little special attention,” or promise of an office, or commendation for talents or acquirements, will secure “many” to the purposes of party whom no regard for truth or orthodoxy could influence a moment.

*Deceive the hearts of the simple*—The minds of the unsuspecting, or those who are without guile τῶν ἀκάκων *tōn akakōn*. The apostle means to designate those who are simple-hearted, without any disposition to deceive others themselves, and of course without any suspicions of the “designs” of others. He has thus drawn the art of mak-

ing parties with the hand of a master. First, there are smooth, plausible pretences, as of great love for truth. Then, an artful mingling of attentions and flatteries; and all this practiced on the minds of the unsuspecting, drawing their “hearts” and “affections” toward themselves. Happy would it have been if the art had been confined to his own times.

to commend people if truth would admit of it, and never hesitating to declare his honest convictions about their guilt and danger. One of the principal arts of the deceiver on all subjects is flattery; and Paul says, that when preaching to the Thessalonians he had carefully avoided it. He now appeals to that fact as a proof of his own integrity.

***I Thessalonians 2:5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:***

One of the most prevalent ways of attempting to deceive is through flattery. The word *flattery*, #2850 *kolakeia*, is defined by *Strong's Expository Dictionary* as saying things “with a view to advantage or gain.” Fraudulent ministries will often use flattery to increase their religious influence. When men do not possess any true spiritual power, they must resort to flattery in order to gain religious influence. This is surely not the case for the divine ministries that Christ appoints in His church. For them, flattery and hidden covetousness are as spiritually despised as apostasy itself.

Paul emphasizes to the Thessalonians that he had not in any way used his ministerial office for financial gain. This dishonest practice was no doubt as prevalent in Paul's time as it is in ours, when men hijack spiritual positions in the church for the primary purpose of obtaining material gain for themselves. Thus, counterfeit ministers regularly make merchandise of God's people<sup>16</sup> to fulfill their own carnal desire for earthly riches. The epistle of Philippians reveals their final end and spiritual judgment: *Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things* (Phil. 3:19).

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, I Thess. 2:5) The word here rendered “flattering”—*κολακείας kolakeias*—occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The meaning is, that the apostle did not deal in the language of adulation; he did not praise them for their beauty, wealth, talent, or accomplishments, and conceal from them the painful truths about their guilt and danger. He stated simple truth—not refusing

In contrast to this deceptive religious behavior are those who are sincerely sent by the Lord, who openly can call upon the Lord as a witness to their own spiritual genuineness.<sup>17</sup> This is seen with Elijah and the prophets of Baal,<sup>18</sup> with Moses and Korah,<sup>1</sup> and even with our Lord Jesus, whose earthly life<sup>19</sup> and spiritual resurrection from the dead proved that what He had proclaimed about Himself, as coming from God, could be attested

16 II Pet. 2:3 *And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.*

17 Rom. 1:9 *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;*

II Cor. 1:23 *Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.*

Phil. 1:8 *For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.*

18 I Kgs. 18:37–39 *Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.*<sup>38</sup> *Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.*<sup>39</sup> *And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.*

19 Acts 2:22 *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:*

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to by God.<sup>20</sup> *I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me* (John 8:18).

***I Thessalonians 2:6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.***

Any who seek glory from men in Christ's church are not a blessing but rather a burden. Looking to please themselves, those who desire praise from others care not for the lasting praise that comes from God alone. It is also true that when men seek the praise of other men, they cannot sincerely believe in the Son of God—simply because when men are driven by the desire for human praise, they have abandoned all true desire of possessing real faith in Christ. Ultimately, one cannot be controlled by a carnal nature, which seeks man's approval, and at the same time grow in any real faith in the Son of God. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?* (John 5:44).

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, John 5:44) A man cannot believe the gospel while he is wholly under the influence of ambition.

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(*Expositor's Greek Testament*, John 5:44) The Jewish inability to believe arose from their earthly ambition: πῶς δύνασθε . . . οὐ ζητεῖτε. The root of their unbelief was their earthly idea of glory, what they could win or bestow. This incapacitated them from seeing the glory of Christ, which was divine and heavenly, which men could not give or remove.

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(*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, John 5:44) *How can ye believe*] The empha-

sis is on 'ye.' How is it possible, for you, who care only for the glory that man bestows, to believe on One who rejects such glory. This is the climax of Christ's accusation. They have reduced themselves to such a condition that they cannot believe. They must change their whole view and manner of life before they can do so. . . .

Whenever and wherever religious acts are performed for the sole purpose of gaining human approval, then all heavenly reward will be lost. *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven* (Matt. 6:1).

(*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, Matt. 6:1) *To be seen of them.*—It is the motive, and not the fact of publicity, that vitiates the action. The high ideal of the disciple of Christ is to let his light shine "before men" (the self-same words are used in Matthew 5:16<sup>21</sup> as here), and yet to be indifferent to their praise or even their opinion. In most religious men there is probably a mingling of the two motives, and we dare not say at what precise stage the presence of the lower overpowers the higher. It is enough to remember that it is the little speck which may taint the whole character till it loses all its life.

How shortsighted are those who instead of seeking the highest glory, which is spiritual and originates from above, foolishly seek the shallow and dissipating fame of sinners like themselves! *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:* (Eph. 4:18). Such also is the effect of sin, which so weakens men's mental powers that they lose the spiritual wisdom to seek heavenly glory above worldly satisfaction and advancement.

<sup>20</sup> John 5:37 *And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.*

<sup>21</sup> Matt. 5:16 *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Eph. 4:18) Nothing is more obvious than that indulgence in sin weakens the mental powers, and renders them unfit for high intellectual effort. . . . It follows, too, that as man has debased his "understanding" by sin, it is needful to make an exertion to elevate it again: and hence a large part of the efforts to save people must consist in patient "instruction."

Because sinners cannot perceive the true glory of the Lord, they are left with pursuing the temporal and fading glory of a condemned world.<sup>22</sup> In contrast to this, true believers will seek the Lord's approval, and not man's, above anything or any-one worldly.<sup>23</sup>

(*Matthew Poole's Commentary*, I Thess. 2:4) Ministers of the gospel are Christ's servants by office, and, as servants, they are to please their own Master. *If I pleased men*, saith Paul, *I should not be the servant of Christ*, Galatians 1:10.<sup>24</sup> And this made the apostle have regard not only to his doctrine and outward conversation, but the inward aim and intentions of his heart, as knowing God tried his heart. And expecting the reward of his labours more from God than men, he therefore sought to please God rather than men,

and approve his heart unto him. And here-in he reflects upon those false apostles that sought to please men. . . .

***I Thessalonians 2:7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:***

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, I Thess. 2:7) *But we were gentle among you*—Instead of using authority, we used only the most kind and gentle methods to win you and to promote your peace and order. The word here rendered "nurse," may mean any one who nurses a child, whether a mother or another person. It seems here to refer to a mother (compare 1 Thessalonians 2:11),<sup>25</sup> and the idea is, that the apostle felt for them the affectionate solicitude which a mother does for the child at her breast.

Throughout the book of Thessalonians Paul reiterates his great affection for these early believers in Christ,<sup>26</sup> teaching us that when men are true ministers of the gospel, they will care for God's people as their own. Hence, even as sinners love their own, so shall those who are themselves born of God love the children of God. Consequently, if a man is born again<sup>27</sup>

22 II Tim. 4:10 *For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.*

23 I Thess. 2:4 *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.*

24 Gal. 1:10 *For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*

25 I Thess. 2:11 *As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,*

26 I Thess. 1:2 *We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; I Thess. 3:2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:*

*I Thess. 3:9–10 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; <sup>10</sup>Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?*

*I Thess. 3:12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:*

27 I Pet. 1:23 *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

*John 3:3–8 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup>Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. <sup>8</sup>The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not*

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and has God's Holy Spirit within him, his true loyalty will be to the family of God. When men also have passed from death unto life and have been saved by Christ, their love for the other children of God proves that salvation has been given to them. *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death* (I John 3:14). Practically, if divine love for the brethren is present, Christians are assured by God that they have passed from death unto life. Love for the brethren, therefore, provides the spiritual discernment regarding whom God has actually saved and whom He has not.

*(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I John 3:14) He that loveth not his brother abideth in death—* He remains dead in sins; that is, he has never been converted. Compare the notes at I John 3:6.<sup>28</sup> As love to the Christian brotherhood is essential to true piety, it follows that he who has not that remains unconverted, or is in a state of spiritual death. He is by nature dead in sin, and unless he has evidence that he is brought out of that state, he "remains" or "abides" in it.

***I Thessalonians 2:8 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.***

Because the Thessalonians were precious in God's sight, the apostles were willing to sacrifice their own lives for them. This went beyond merely preaching the Word

*tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

28 I John 3:6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

29 Matt. 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Matt. 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Luke 12:22 And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

Luke 12:13 And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

Mark 3:4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

of truth to include much personal sacrifice. Men will lay down their lives for those they truly love, and the apostles were more than willing to do so for the Thessalonians, whom they both spiritually loved and cherished.

*(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Thess. 2:8) Not the gospel of God only—* To be willing to communicate the knowledge of the gospel was in itself a strong proof of love, even if it were attended with no self-denial or hazard in doing it. We evince a decided love for a man when we tell him of the way of salvation, and urge him to accept of it. We show strong interest for one who is in danger, when we tell him of a way of escape, or for one who is sick, when we tell him of a medicine that will restore him; but we manifest a much higher love when we tell a lost and ruined sinner of the way in which he may be saved. There is no method in which we can show so strong an interest in our fellow-men, and so much true benevolence for them, as to go to them and tell them of the way by which they may be rescued from everlasting ruin.

*But also our own souls—* Or rather "lives"—*ψυχὰς psuchas*; Matthew 6:25; Matthew 20:28; Luke 12:22, Luke 12:13; Mark 3:4.<sup>29</sup> This does not mean that the apostle was willing to be damned, or to lose his soul in order to save them, but that if it had been necessary he would have been ready to lay down his life;

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*(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I John 3:16) The spirit which led the Saviour to sacrifice his life for the good of the church, should lead us to do the same thing for our brethren if*

circumstances should require it. That this is a correct principle no one can doubt; for:

- (1) the Saviour did it, and we are bound to imitate his example, and to possess his spirit;
- (2) the prophets, apostles, and martyrs did it, laying down their lives in the cause of truth, and for the good of the church and the world; and,
- (3) it has always been held that it is right and proper, in certain circumstances, for a man to lay down his life for the good of others.

This selflessness of laying down one's life for others is the mark of true Christianity. It was this holy attribute that characterized Jesus, and it will be evident of all who are truly His. It is also the denial of self that proves true discipleship to the Son of God. *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me* (Matt. 16:24). It is Jesus Who first denied Himself to please the Father, and all those truly born of Him will follow His selfless spiritual example. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down*

*our lives for the brethren* (I John 3:16). It is not enough to speak words of love if we withhold the sacrifice of self that proves love. True love for God and the people of God therefore must progress beyond mere words and include personal sacrifice. If it does not, then you can be sure that it is not actually love at all.

***I Thessalonians 2:9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.***

The degree to which Paul labored among the Thessalonians shows us the cost he was willing to pay for their continued spiritual growth. By a man's walk, not his words, is his religion proved. It had cost much for the apostles to preach the gospel to the Thessalonians. To this truth Paul called the Thessalonians to remembrance, which practically proved the sincerity of his love toward them. He, then, who joyfully and willingly labors for God and the people of God reveals the sincerity of his love for God.

## Endnote

i Num. 16:1–40 Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: <sup>2</sup>And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: <sup>3</sup>And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? <sup>4</sup>And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face: <sup>5</sup>And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him. <sup>6</sup>This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company; <sup>7</sup>And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the LORD to morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the LORD doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi. <sup>8</sup>And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: <sup>9</sup>Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? <sup>10</sup>And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also? <sup>11</sup>For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the LORD: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him? <sup>12</sup>And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up: <sup>13</sup>Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? <sup>14</sup>Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up. <sup>15</sup>And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the LORD, Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them. <sup>16</sup>And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the LORD, thou, and they, and Aaron, to morrow: <sup>17</sup>And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the LORD every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each of you his censer. <sup>18</sup>And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron. <sup>19</sup>And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the

congregation: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation. <sup>20</sup>And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, <sup>21</sup>Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. <sup>22</sup>And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation? <sup>23</sup>And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>24</sup>Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. <sup>25</sup>And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. <sup>26</sup>And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. <sup>27</sup>So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. <sup>28</sup>And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. <sup>29</sup>If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me. <sup>30</sup>But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. <sup>31</sup>And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: <sup>32</sup>And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. <sup>33</sup>They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. <sup>34</sup>And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also. <sup>35</sup>And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense. <sup>36</sup>And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>37</sup>Speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the fire yonder; for they are hallowed. <sup>38</sup>The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar: for they offered them before the LORD, therefore they are hallowed: and they shall be a sign unto the children of Israel. <sup>39</sup>And Eleazar the priest took the brasen censers, wherewith they that were burnt had offered; and they were made broad plates for a covering of the altar: <sup>40</sup>To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the LORD; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the LORD said to him by the hand of Moses.