

The Churches of Christ Salute You

Lesson Five

(Romans 16:16)

March 30, 2008

LESSONS FROM THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA

Overview:

1. Paul wrote to the Romans about the “churches of Christ.”
2. A plurality of churches did not mean a number of different denominations.
3. Instead, each was a local body of believers that belonged to Christ.
4. Since we also are a church of Christ, there are many lessons to be learned from these early churches.

Introduction:

1. Thessalonica was located about 100 miles southwest of Philippi.
2. It was a free city under Roman rule and inhabited by Romans, Greeks and Jews.
3. Just south of the city was “Mount Olympus,” the home of the Greek gods.
4. In spite of the idolatry of the city, the Lord’s church was established in Thessalonica.
5. Let us learn some lessons from the church at Thessalonica...

- I. Turning the World Right-Side-Up (Acts 17:1-9)
 - A. In Thessalonica, Paul and Silas (and other Christians) were accused of turning the world upside down.
 - B. What had Paul done that was so earth shaking?
 1. He reasoned out of the Scriptures.
 - a. The word “reasoned” means, “to mingle thought with thought; to discuss, ponder; to argue or dispute.”
 - b. It is not wrong to discuss or argue about matters of religion.
 - c. Notice that Paul’s reasoning was “out of the scriptures” – not out of feelings, wishes or emotionalism.
 - d. Also, Paul was patient – he reasoned with them for 3 weeks.
 - d. God demands that man use reason (1 Sam. 12:7; Isa. 1:18; Luke 20:5-6; Acts 18:4; 24:25; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 3:15).
 2. He explained the Scriptures.
 - a. The word “opened” means, “to open thoroughly; to expound or explain; to open the mind to cause understanding.”
 - b. Jesus was Paul’s example (cf. Luke 24:32, 44-46).
 - c. We must be ready, willing and able to explain the Scriptures.
 3. He proved his teaching from the Scriptures.
 - a. The word “alleging” means, “to place along side.”
 - b. Thus, Paul was placing his teaching alongside the Scriptures and, thereby, proving that what he said was from God.
 - c. This is “book, chapter and verse” preaching!
 - C. What had Paul preached that was so destructive to the culture of man?
 1. He preached the suffering of Christ.
 2. He preached the resurrection of Christ.
 3. He preached the authority of Christ.
 - D. What were the results of Paul’s preaching that “shook things up?”
 1. Some believed.
 2. Some became associated with Paul; literally, they were added to.
 3. A large number of them were devout, God-fearing Gentiles.
 4. Many of them were chief (“first in rank”) women of the city.
 5. But, the unbelieving Jews were the ones who caused the trouble!

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- E. In truth, Paul – through the Gospel – was turning the world right side up!
 - 1. Mark 5:15 – The demon-possessed man was in his right mind.
 - 2. Acts 8:21-22 – Simon’s heart was made right with God.
 - 3. Acts 26:17-18 – Men were turned from Satan unto God.
 - 4. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 – They turned from idols unto the true God.
- F. Those who teach and stand for the Truth are often accused of causing trouble.
 - 1. Elijah – 1 Kings 18:17-18
 - 2. Jeremiah – Jeremiah 38:1-4
 - 3. Amos – Amos 7:10
 - 4. Jesus – Luke 23:5
 - 5. Paul – Acts 21:28-31; 24:5
- II. Turning the Church toward Heaven (1 Thessalonians)
 - A. Paul wrote the epistles of First and Second Thessalonians.
 - 1. His time there had been cut short by the persecution of the Jews.
 - 2. These books are most likely the earliest written of the New Testament.
 - B. Paul writes to turn them toward Heaven by encouraging them in suffering.
 - 1. He reminded them of his own persecution (2:1-2, 9).
 - 2. He reminded them of the persecution of the churches (2:14-16).
 - 3. He encouraged them to remain faithful in spite of persecution...
 - a. To set the right example (1:6-10).
 - b. To be worthy of God and the church (2:12).
 - c. To not be moved from the Truth (3:1-4).
 - d. To warn others from going astray (5:14).
 - C. Paul writes to turn them toward Heaven by giving them hope for the dead.
 - 1. He wanted to correct their ignorance and misunderstanding (4:13a).
 - 2. He wanted to alleviate their grief and sorrow (4:13b).
 - 3. He wanted to assure them of the resurrection (4:14).
 - 4. He wanted to remind them of a coming reunion (4:15-18).
- III. Turning the Heart toward Patience (2 Thessalonians)
 - A. Patience was needed to endure persecution (1:3-4).
 - B. Patience was needed to await the return of Jesus (1:5-10)
 - 1. It was not imminent (2:1-2).
 - 2. A “falling away” must occur first (2:3-12).
 - C. Patience was needed to stand fast in living the Christian life (2:13-17).
 - 1. In obedience to the Truth (3:1-4).
 - 2. In waiting for the Lord (3:5).
 - 3. In withdrawing from the unfaithful (3:6, 14-15).
 - 4. In laboring in honesty to earn a living (3:7-12).
 - 5. In not growing weary in service (3:13).

Conclusion:

- 1. May we learn to imitate the good qualities of these Christians.
- 2. May we strive to be a faithful and dedicated congregation of the Lord.
- 3. May we ever have hearts of patience that are focused on Heaven.
- 4. May we turn the world right side up with the Gospel of Christ.