

3rd Quarter 2012
Lesson 5 The Apostolic Example

Sabbath's Lesson

“But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts” (1 Thessalonians 2:4, ESV).

What does it mean to be approved by God?? What sort of ministry is “pleasing to God”?? What does it mean to have our hearts tested by God?? To be entrusted with which gospel?? Don't most ministers think they are approved by God?? Does He approve of all ministers?? All versions of the gospel?? How can we discern the differences since we cannot read hearts or minds??

Sunday's Lesson

Read Acts 16:16-40

16 Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. 17 She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” 18 She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her.

19 When her owners realized that their hope of making money(was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. 20 They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar 21 by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.”

22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. 23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. 24 When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. 27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, “Don't harm yourself! We are all here!”

29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.

35 When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: “Release those men.” 36 The jailer(told Paul, “The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace.”

37 But Paul said to the officers: “They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out.”

38 The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. 39 They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. 40 After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left.

Consider the experience of Paul and Silas earlier in Philippi. How many of us would have been willing to continue preaching Christ and Him crucified??

Might their visible wound lent credibility to the source of the Gospel??

Monday's Lesson

The lesson gives three [3] keys to persuading people to change their minds. *Ethos*: a valid argument based on the character of the speaker. *Logos*: the quality/logic of the argument itself. *Pathos*: The appeal of the argument or speaker to the listener's emotions.

Based on our class' approach to study, should either of these be weighed more heavily?? Which one is most important?? Least?? Should they harmonize like science, Scripture, and experience??

In I Thes. 2:3 Paul uses three [3] words to describe poor motivations for ministry. Error, Impurity, Deception.

Will it make any difference whether we are sincerely preaching an erroneous gospel, or the correct gospel based on self promotion, or if we are intentionally trying to deceive? Does the Law of Gravity care whether we step off a cliff in error, or follow someone we admire off the cliff, or if we are deceived in to jumping off the cliff?? **Does the Law of God function any differently??**

Tuesday's Lesson

Which comes first, the cart or the horse? Which comes first, the "behaviors" or a transformation of character? Which pleases God? [see Matt 7: 21-23]

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

The lesson states: “Human beings need a sense of worth in order to function. We often seek this worth by accumulating possessions, by achievements, or through the positive opinions that others express about us. But all these sources of self-worth are fragile and so temporary. Genuine and lasting self-worth is found only through the gospel. When we fully grasp that Christ died for us, we begin to experience a sense of worth that nothing in this world can shake.”

Will our “self-worth” be any different based on which gospel we believe? Consider the gospel that has Jesus standing between us and an angry God pleading for mercy because we are covered by His blood, and has paid the penalty for sin. Does that gospel do much for our “self-worth”?

Now, consider the gospel that has Jesus standing at the right hand of God pleading with us to take the healing remedy for our sinful disease, and allow Him to transform our characters in to His likeness. Would this gospel do any more for our “self-worth”?

I see a trend in society to reward everyone for “trying”. Schools don’t give out grades anymore, because if we gave a child a D or F, it might damage their self esteem. Athletic events have no “winners or losers”, because half of the participants will have damage to their self esteem. Parents try not to let their children fail for fear of damage to self esteem. Governments give people free food, housing, health care, cell phones, etc. just to please them. Does this make any sense? Which is more beneficial to self esteem? To get a D in a class, realize that you didn’t do your best, apply yourself the next semester, and raise your grade to a B or A, or to not get a grade at all? What about doing the best you possibly could, and still receive a D?

Shouldn’t we wrestle with the gospel and our salvation, and make mistakes? How will we learn anything if we don’t?

Wednesday’s Lesson

In the 3rd paragraph, the lesson states: “While Paul’s primary motivation was to please God, in verses 7 and 8 he expresses an additional motivation—his great affection for the Thessalonians themselves. Verse 8 uses the language of emotional warmth. Preaching the gospel was much more than a duty for Paul; he gave his heart, even his whole self, to the people.”

I am going to suggest that the lesson has the cart before the horse. I think that Paul’s primary motivation was revealing Christ’s love for his fellow man, and this, by default, is pleasing to God. I believe that the Pharisee’s primary motivation was to please God, and look how that worked out for them. Thursday’s, and Friday’s lesson agrees with me.

[TH] “The key is the love Paul had for his converts. He did all he could to model authenticity for them; yet, he realized that there were things that they were not ready to

handle (see also John 16:12). So, he worked with his hands and adapted his instruction, all in order to avoid putting unnecessary barriers in the way of people's acceptance of the gospel. A powerful lesson in self-sacrifice for sure. "

[FR] "No matter how high the profession, he whose heart is not filled with love for God and his fellow men is not a true disciple of Christ. . . . He might display great liberality; but should he, from some other motive than genuine love, bestow all his goods to feed the poor, the act would not commend him to the favor of God."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 318, 319.

Also, in the last paragraph, the lesson states that [in I Thes. 2: 7,8] we see an appeal to the emotional bond between Paul, et. al, and the Thessalonians, and that "the gospel is at its most powerful when it touches the heart."

Are there any churches or gospels that focus only on the emotional response? Is this healthy? I'm going to suggest the gospel is at its most powerful when it **transforms** the heart in to the heart of Christ. EGW states that this is the "miracle of miracles." [AA 476]

Thursday's Lesson

We could probably have spent all day on this lesson alone. Did God ever intend for ministers to only work at ministry? Are they supposed to be entertainers 1 day a week, spending the other 6 preparing to entertain?

This is EGW's summary of Paul's education: "Though Paul sat, a diligent student, at the feet of Gamaliel, he also learned a trade. He was an educated tentmaker. It was the custom among the Jews, the wealthy as well as the poorer classes, to train their sons and daughters to some useful employment, so that should adverse circumstances come, they would not be dependent on others, but would have educated ability to provide for their own necessities. They might be instructed in literary lines, but they must also be trained to some craft. This was deemed an indispensable part of their education." {TDG 203.2}

Solomon gives us other insight. [see Prov. 14:23, 20:13, 21:5, 23:21, 24:34, 28:19]

How different would our church look if it were modeled after the early church?