

What Does a Gospel Teacher Do?

I Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

1 2 Have you ever wondered what a gospel teacher does?

When the Apostles Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica they preached to the Jews. Having no success, they went to the non - Jews (the Gentiles) and established a church.

The Jews became jealous and threw them out of town after only a month or two of ministry. The apostle longed to get back to them.

The next couple of messages here in First Thessalonians look at relationships we need to have with one another in the church.

First Thessalonians, chapter 2, beginning with verse 17 and ending in chapter 3, verse 13, address our relationship with gospel preachers. What is it that they do? 3

But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. For

we wanted to come to you — certainly I, Paul, did, again and again — but Satan stopped us. For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.¹ ⁴

So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.² ⁵

For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless. But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news

¹ | Thessalonians 2:17-20.

² | Thessalonians 3:1-4.

about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you.^{3 6}

Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.^{4 7}

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and

³ | Thessalonians 3:5-6.

⁴ | Thessalonians 3:7-10.

Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.⁵⁸

So . . .

I. What Is a Gospel Teacher's Responsibilities?

What is a gospel teacher's responsibilities? ⁹

The first one is obvious. Verse 2, **We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ . . .** The first responsibility is **to spread the gospel**.¹⁰

Continuing in verse 3, . . . **to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials.** The second responsibility is **to strengthen you** in your faith.¹¹

The word **strengthen**⁶ means to establish and set you firmly in place.¹² Verse 5 says the teacher needs to

⁵ I Thessalonians 3:11-13.

⁶ στηρίζω.

find out where your faith is so he can direct his teaching to keep you from temptations. ⁷ ₁₃

Verse 3 then says, **to strengthen and encourage you in your faith**, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. The third responsibility is **to encourage you** in your faith. ₁₄

The term **encourage** ⁸ means, literally, to call you to his side. It is to counsel you and exhort you. The King James Version translates this word “comfort”. ₁₅ Philippians, chapter 2, verse 1 tells us this counseling is to be done in love. ⁹ ₁₆ Chapter 5, verse 11 says we are to encourage one another. ¹⁰ ₁₇

Verse 4 gives us the teacher’s fourth responsibility; **to be honest with you**. In fact, when we were with you,

⁷ I Thessalonians 2:5 - For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.

⁸ παρακαλέω.

⁹ Philippians 2:1 - If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love.

¹⁰ I Thessalonians 5:11 - Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.

Paul told them that if they became Christians they would be persecuted; and they were! ¹⁸

What is involved in being a Christian?

Christians surrender to a Lord and make a commitment to a King! ¹⁹ What does this imply?

It implies that they know God's plan of salvation, obey it and witness to others. It is more than simply saying a prayer or being baptized! ²⁰

Lord Jesus said, If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. ¹¹ ²¹

Romans, chapter 12, verse 1, Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. ²²

¹¹ Luke 9:23-24.

The final responsibility found in this passage is in verse 10; **to supply what's lacking in your faith.** Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. ²³

What should be your personal spiritual goal? ²⁴ One way you grow is to get the genuine gospel message; not a watered-down version. ²⁵ You need **to crave it.** Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. ¹² ²⁶

Then proceed to the solid stuff! Hebrews, chapter 5, verses 13 and 14, **Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.**

There is a reward for the gospel teacher fulfilling these responsibilities. ²⁷

¹² | Peter 2:2-3.

II. What is a Gospel Teacher's Reward?

What is a gospel teacher's reward? ²⁸

Chapter 2, verses 19 and 20, **For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.** ²⁹ What becomes the teacher's crown ¹³ in the presence of the Lord? You! What does that entail? ³⁰

First, there is **the crown of joy**. ³¹ Imagine meeting someone in heaven that you introduced to the Lord. Imagine the gratitude!

Years ago my dad sponsored a young Yugoslavian man to the United States. He eventually became a nationalized citizen, got a college education and was employed very successfully. Years later dad and Mike met again. Mike was so grateful for dad's faith in him. He became devoted to dad for the rest of dad's life! ³²

¹³ στέφανος = that which surrounds your head, a crown, an Olympic wreath.

Then, there is **the crown of hope and glory**. There's the glory of being able to please the One Who died on the cross for you!

Now notice verses 6 and 7. **But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith.** ³³

In verse 6 there is that **personal relationship the teacher develops with the student**. Lord Jesus told the story of a shepherd who had such a personal relationship with his sheep that he left ninety-nine of them in the fold one night to hunt for one stray. After a considerable amount of effort he found it, brought it back to the fold and rejoiced with his friends about

finding it! ¹⁴ A fringe benefit of ministry is the close relationships teachers and students enjoy! ³⁴

In verse 7 there is the fact that **students encourage their teacher**. Every time a student tells his teacher he got something out of the message, it's a blessing!

There's a benefit for a teacher seeing the spiritual growth of his students through the years. One of my students was delivering a gospel message during a Sunday morning worship service. One of the points in his message was a concept I taught him years ago almost in my very words. He long ago forgot where he learned it, but it was one of his deep convictions. It thrilled my heart to hear it from him!

There is the joy that comes from studying God's word together, teacher and student. ³⁵

¹⁴ Luke 15:3-7 - Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Then, in verses 11 and 12, we read that both the teacher and the student must rely on the Lord together for direction and strength. **Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you.** May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.

All of us are tools in the Lord's hands learning to be more pliable. None of us can accomplish much on our own. We need one another and Him! ³⁶

So, what does a gospel teacher do? He spreads the gospel message, strengthens and encourages you, tells it like it is and supplies what is lacking in your faith.

Remember. You are the gospel teacher's crown!

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