

THE MODEL PREACHER PART 2

TEXT: I THESSALONIANS 2:17-20

INTRODUCTION:

1. Last week we looked at the ministry of the apostle Paul, and I said that in many ways Paul was the model preacher.
2. Paul's preaching "was not in vain" (2:1); i.e. it was not empty or without results. Paul had a very fruitful ministry. When Paul entered Thessalonica and started preaching, people got saved and things started happening – a local New Testament church was established in a very short time.
3. Paul's preaching was bold (2:2b).
4. Paul's preaching "was not of deceit" (2:3). There was no error, or trickery, or deception.
5. Paul's preaching was not of uncleanness (2:3). The Christians in Thessalonica were surrounded by idolatrous false religionists, who mixed religion with immorality. Paul preached against immoral uncleanness (cf. 4:3-7).
6. Paul was not a flatterer (2:5).
7. Paul's ministry was free from covetousness (2:5).
8. Paul was bold but he also was "gentle...even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (2:7).
9. Paul was a hard-working preacher (2:9).
10. Paul was a discerning preacher (2:14-18). Paul knew that oftentimes "religious" people are fierce enemies of the Gospel (2:14-16).
11. Because Paul had this spiritual discernment, he recognized Satanic hindrances (2:17, 18).
12. Satan cannot do anything that God does not allow. If Satan ("Adversary") was successful in keeping Paul out of Thessalonica, it was only because God had a reason for it.
13. Paul wrote in II Corinthians 12:7, "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me."
14. Paul prayed and asked the Lord three times, that this "thorn in the flesh" from Satan would depart, and the Lord said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Cor. 12:8, 9). God allowed this "messenger of Satan" to vex Paul.
15. Let us not underestimate the ability of Satan to vex Christians, and to wreak havoc in a church. According to Jude 9, even the great Michael the archangel did not want to tangle with him.

16. And we need to realize that Satan uses people -- sometimes even church members to hurt churches.
17. The other day a pastor from Chicago put this on the Internet -- "If you attend a Bible believing church, you can be sure that it is the will of the devil for you to turn against that church and do all that you can to damage it. The devil will even try to convince you that your self-absorption and pride are advanced spirituality, that your gossip and slander are simply concern and that your lies are a new level of truth. The pagan world is not doing even a fraction of the damage to true churches that divisive members (and former members do)."
18. I am not suggesting we should be afraid of Satan. James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
19. I am not suggesting we should be afraid of Satan. I am saying we should be aware of his tactics. Paul said in II Corinthians 2:11, "For we are not ignorant of his devices."
20. The apostle Paul said in Ephesians 6:11, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles (schemes, tricks) of the devil." We are in a spiritual battle!
21. This brings us to the last two verses of I Thessalonians 2, which deals with one more important characteristic of the apostle Paul -- he was a soulwinning preacher (2:19, 20).
22. Soulwinners will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ (2:19, 20).

I. THERE WILL BE VARIOUS CROWNS GIVEN AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST (2:19).

1. These crowns will be incorruptible (cf. I Cor. 9:24-27).
2. Some of the crowns referred to are: the crown of life (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10); the crown of righteousness (II Tim. 4:8); and the crown of glory (I Peter 5:4).
3. Backslidden Christians could lose their crown (cf. I John 2:28; II John 8).

II. THE CROWN OF REJOICING IS FOR SOULWINNERS

1. Paul was looking forward to the day when his life's journey would be over and he would be in the presence of the Lord along with all of the Christians he had won to Christ (2:19, 20).
2. This was his "hope" and his "joy" (2:19, 20).

3. I have said it many times -- everyone can give out gospel tracts. I was in a church in California a few days before Carl and Pam's wedding and the pastor said most of his members had made a commitment to give out at least one tract a day.
4. I was preaching in another church in California and they had a good number of members going out soulwinning on Saturday morning. That's why I wasn't surprised to see a good number of visitors in church on Sunday.
5. Our special Easter offering is for our missionaries. Christians can pray for this offering, and pray for our missionaries, and give of his substance for missions.

III. THE TIME OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT -- "at his coming"

1. It will probably be immediately after the rapture (I Thess. 2:19b; cf. I Cor. 15:58; James 5:7-9).
2. The bride "hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7) indicates that the judgment seat has already taken place before the marriage supper.
3. When that glad day comes and we will be in the presence of the Lord, will we have some trophies of grace? Sadly, some Christians will be empty-handed.

The hymnwriter wrote,

*Must I go, and empty handed,
Thus my dear Redeemer meet?
Not one day of service give Him,
Lay no trophy at His feet?*

*Must I go, and empty handed?
Must I meet my Savior so?
Not one soul with which to greet Him,
Must I empty handed go?*

*Not at death I shrink or falter,
For my Savior saves me now;
But to meet Him empty handed,
Thought of that now clouds my brow.*

*O the years in sinning wasted,
Could I but recall them now,
I would give them to my Savior,
To His will I'd gladly bow.*

*O ye saints, arouse, be earnest,
Up and work while yet 'tis day;
Ere the night of death o'ertake thee,
Strive for souls while still you may.* -- Charles C. Luther

6. The apostle Paul is here describing the time of the translation of the church, when Christ will come for His own to take them home to glory.
7. Paul asked, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?" (2:19). To Paul, his converts were his "glory and joy" (2:20).
8. "Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (2:19, 20).
9. It is wonderful to be saved, and to know you are on your way to heaven, but Paul was not content to just be saved himself. He wanted to bring as many people with him as possible.
10. Paul said the real joy that in his heart was the hope he had of standing in the presence of God with all of his spiritual children that he would bring with him, whom he had led to know Jesus Christ as Savior.
11. One of the greatest blessings of the rapture will be to be reunited with all of the believers we have led to the Lord (2:19, 20).
12. Therefore, Paul anticipated the judgment seat of Christ. He knew there would be a "crown of rejoicing" waiting for him (2:19).

CONCLUSION:

1. Regarding verses 19 and 20, Albert Barnes said, "The source of happiness to a minister of the gospel in the day of judgment will be the conversion and salvation of souls."
2. F.B. Meyer said, "The souls whom he had won for Jesus were to constitute his crown."