

Not In Vain

1 Thessalonians 2:1 -7

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~ The rapture of the church creates a living, imminent hope in believers. We labor in love in this world for one reason: we love Christ. The rapture is not something to argue about. It is a doctrine to get geared into our everyday living – or all-night living – whichever is applicable to you. Our Spiritual Safari believes and teaches that Jesus will be returning to the earth after the rapture, and after the Great Tribulation period, with the church that has become His bride to rule and reign forever with Him. There are four major eschatological interpretations, and every person who holds the differing views usually claim to trust and obey Christ as their Savior. So, the real question is: how does your doctrine affect your life? I really don't care which theological interpretation you hold – my question is: how is it helping your work for the Lord in the real world? If it's not helping it, and encouraging the lost man and fellow Christian, then you need a new one. Find something that will properly motivate you in Christ. We must make that discovery if we ever hope to be a satisfactory definition of a Christian with pure motives as a true witness for furthering the Gospel cause of Christ....

1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

~ Vain means empty and without results. Paul didn't establish a church on novel theoretical propositions of self-help. Paul never wrote a book called 'How to Say No to Idols.' When Paul preached, he preached one subject: the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Obviously, it shook many people, and caused them to fear the Lord — and many came to a saving knowledge of Christ at that time. Churches came into existence that taught sound doctrine – like the doctrine of the rapture and election. Paul was teaching something that actually worked and made a difference in the life of the individual, as well as in the world community. That teaching to the world community cost Paul something: and that something was everything. The world does not want the man who is giving out the Word of God, my

beloved – you can just write that down. The world hates those men. If you are of the world, the world will love its own. If you're not one of them — you're out! As a result Paul was treated shamefully....

2 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 agony.

3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

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.

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

~ That shameful entreaty didn't slow Paul down; and it didn't cause Paul to tone his message down, either. Even after a terrifying experience at Philippi, Paul never said "... now I think I'm going to change my approach and use a better tact, so people will like me and listen to me." Paul was no secret-believer with something to hide, either. Paul spoke out again exactly as he had done at Philippi. It would have been very easy for Paul to rationalize this away, and use an approach that would have made friends and influenced people. It's easy to soft-sell the Bible – anyone can do it, really. Declaring the Gospel had cost Paul horrible treatment; but it never seems to have affected him spiritually. Paul entered in among them and presented the Gospel — the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ — as his central theme, in every sermon recorded in the Book of Acts. Interestingly, I believe Paul preached his best sermon by the way he lived his life in Thessalonica. Not the writing or the exposition; not in profession — in practice. Not with words from his tongue, but with the testimony of a holy life. Not in a synagogue, but in the homes of others. One of the biggest mistakes Bible teachers make today is showing up in one area of the Bible with a great Gospel message that is very clear; but then show up in another area and, suddenly, they have no earthly idea what message they're giving.

Uncleanness in verse three means sensuality. See, Paul wasn't deceiving these people in any way, shape, or form. His motives in what he was doing were wholly right. He wasn't sticking around just to see if he could get an offering. He truly loved these people. Even so, he never toned his message down to suit anyone, and he never pulled any punches - even though his writings do not appeal to the old nature on any level. Well, read this sentence very carefully, friends: I can look up into Heaven right now and tell the Lord that I have taught the entire Word of God to the entire world the best I possibly know how. I have brought you Creation, the Mosaic Law, the Historical books, the Poetic books, the Gospel accounts, Epistles - and prophecy in this Spiritual Safari. All of it. That's a pretty good record of complete Bible teaching. There is no ulterior motive in me. If I knew how to give the Gospel and further the cause of Christ better - or even just differently - then that's what I would do. I'm just doing what I can with the grace I have been given. I hope it builds all of us up; because that's my motive. I sure do love this section of Scripture.

"Allowed of God" in verse four means to be tested and approved. That's what Paul was. Paul wasn't a novice at what he was doing. He wasn't seeking popularity with anyone because he wasn't trying to make a name for himself. Paul preached for what God would think of him - not what men would think of him. Well, when you go through the Bible, blue litmus paper is placed down on your life - as God did on mine - and I'm here to tell you: mine stood the test. If it hadn't, you wouldn't be reading this report. Friends, we would be consumed in an instant without the mercy and grace of our holy God.

You safari readers should understand that anyone who tells you not to read their reports isn't going to flatter you. Well, I'm feeling nice today - but there's a whole lot that could easily be said here. There is no cloak of covetousness over Paul; and that permits him to speak very frankly in our next several reports. There are some men that have to be buttered-up and flattered all the time. They won't want to keep reading this Spiritual Safari. That person is a curse on the Christian church, too. The ego that can come along with flattery is a bigger problem than money problems in a church. The cloak of covetousness comes in many styles and colors, friends - some covet honor and fame or position; there are many things besides the love

of money that can be a root of evil – but, in the end, it’s all idolatry with covetousness....

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.

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children
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