

## Down Deep • 1 Thessalonians 2:3-8

### I. INTRODUCTION – Read vs. 3-8

#### A. Riding No Hands

1. Once upon a time, learning to ride a bike was an important part of childhood.
2. **Now** kids **ride** virtual bikes in video games.
3. But it used to be that climbing on a bike, learning to ride w/o training wheels was a big deal.
4. Once you mastered that, it was time to ride **without hands**!
5. You'd see older kids, cruising along with their hands at their sides. And you'd say, "That is soooo, coooool!"
6. So you'd climb on your bike—but not knowing what to do, you barely pedal, because you don't want to fall going fast.
  - a. Then you'd take your hands off the handlebars;
  - b. And sure enough, fall over.
7. The reason you fell was because you were going **too slow**.
  - a. By trial & error you realized the **faster** you went, the more stable the bike.
  - b. It's counter-intuitive, but you discover Speed was your friend;
  - c. It enabled you to ride w/o hands.
8. Later in high school physics you discovered why.
  - a. The wheels of the bike were like **gyroscopes** that kept the bike running true.
  - b. The motion of the wheels produce the momentum to stay in balance.

#### B. The Heart

1. Just as a spinning wheel provides momentum for balance, our **hearts** provide the **spiritual** momentum that determines our direction.
2. The question is What **force** has set our heart in motion?
3. That's we're headed in our study today. But first, let's take a closer look at what Paul writes here . . .

### II. TEXT

#### A. Vs. 3-4

<sup>3</sup> For our exhortation *did* not *come* from error or uncleanness, nor *was it* in deceit. <sup>4</sup> But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

1. In vs. 1-2, Paul reminded them of when his team had first arrived in Thessalonica.
  - a. They were bruised & sore from their ill-treatment in Philippi.
  - b. Despite that, they preached Christ **boldly** because they'd seen how God turned their suffering to astounding blessing. = That's what we looked at last week.
2. Paul, Silas & Timothy went to Thessalonica to share the Gospel.
  - a. Not out of selfish ambition, but because they were absolutely convinced it was true!
  - b. They weren't out to con anyone.

As today, the 1<sup>st</sup> Century had plenty of crooks

3. As today, the 1<sup>st</sup> Century had plenty of crooks **who used religion to con the unwary.**
  - a. They travelled around with their own concoction of enticing ideas.
  - b. Because listening to speeches was a form of entertainment, it wasn't difficult to gather a crowd.
    - 1) They didn't have TV, radio, or books.
    - 2) So for fun people listened to someone give a speech.
    - 3) If they liked what they heard, they'd give him a few coins & invite him back.
  - c. There was a steady stream of guys who played on the superstitions of people by mixing philosophy, religion, & ancient science up into a mishmash that sounded good.
  - d. When they arrived in a new city, they'd give an introductory pitch to what they claimed was an elaborate system of truth.
  - e. They ended by inviting anyone who wanted to learn **more** to join a series of classes.
  - f. And of course, those who took them had to pay; & they weren't cheap.
4. But it was all a con. What they taught was drivel, gobbledy-gook, a hocus-pokus they'd made up or borrowed from other frauds & false religion.

- a. Their goal was to get rich & gain the prestige of being the leader of devoted followers.
5. Paul could say to the Thessalonians,
  - a. “Remember how it was when we came to you.
  - b. We arrived from Philippi battered & bruised because of persecution for the Gospel’s sake.
  - c. And not long after we arrived in **your** city, our enemies hired thugs to beat us up again!
  - d. If we’re frauds, if we’re in this for wealth & the kudos of the crowd, we need to do something else because it’s not workin’.
  - e. We’re not getting rich. We’re getting whooped!”
6. Paul **wasn’t** a fraud & the Gospel **wasn’t** a con; it’s Truth!
  - a. It’s the message God **entrusted** to him; preaching it was his charge.
  - b. Paul’s motive wasn’t selfish ambition. It was **faithfulness**.
  - c. So when he spoke, he knew the message would enflame the hostility of some.
  - d. But **others** would be convicted of sin & their need of Christ.
  - e. The **Gospel** has the power to effect salvation. That’s what kept Paul tied to his mission.
7. As he says in v. 4, he didn’t aim to please man; his ambition was to please God.
8. Others might condemn him but it mattered not because he knew God saw his heart.
  - a. Spectators of Olympic events like gymnastics, diving, or figure skating are often confused because the one who wins a Gold medal isn’t as **flashy** as someone who takes the silver or bronze.
  - b. The reason is because the judges see things **differently** from the crowd.
  - c. They evaluate a performance on other criteria.
  - d. The audience wants razzle-dazzle; give us flips, twists, turns, & we’re applauding like mad.
  - e. Judges **appreciate** the difficulty of a routine, but what they’re looking for proper form, posture, placement, execution; dozens of things the crowd is **oblivious** to.
9. When the athlete steps onto a diving platform, mat or ice rink to start a routine, they don’t perform for the crowd; they do what they do for the judges?
  - a. If they play to the crowd, they may get applause but chances for a medal are slim.
10. Paul didn’t conduct his ministry for the approval of man. He did what he did **for & before** the Lord.

V. 5

## B. Vs.5-6

<sup>5</sup> For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness— God is witness.

1. Both God & the Thessalonians knew Paul’s team wasn’t in it for the money.
2. And they didn’t use the stock methods false teachers did for buttering up potential victims.
3. **Flattery** is stock in trade for con men.
  - a. You see, everyone loves a compliment. We dig it when people say nice things about us.
  - b. So frauds say something nice to get us to stop & listen Closer.
  - c. “You look marvelous, darling.” “What?” (We heard them, we just want to hear it **again**.)
  - d. Getting us to stop & listen is **exactly** what the con wants. So they spin out another juicy piece of flattery.
  - e. And once they have us waiting for more, they begin to pitch what they’re selling, suggesting **that’s** what will really make us hot stuff.
  - f. “Look at you, you’re well on your way to being something special. I can see you have excellent taste. So you don’t want to miss getting in on this.”
4. But what was Paul’s message? “You’re **lost**; a **sinner** destined for hell. I know that’s not what you **want** to hear but it’s what you **NEED** to hear. That’s the diagnosis for what’s wrong with you. Here’s the remedy, the medicine, God’s prescription – Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ & **You shall be saved**.”
5. Oh gang, be cautious of the stranger doling out flattery. He’s only playing you for a sucker.
6. V. 5 ends – “**God is witness**.”
  - a. Indeed He is. He sees – all. **Nothing** escapes His gaze.
  - b. In Eccl 12:14, Solomon said  
God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.
  - c. In Luke 8:17 Jesus said -

Nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known and come to light.

7. While the **omniscience** of God is **troubling** to many, Paul mentions it here as a source of **comfort**!
- He's **relieved** because God saw his heart.
  - Paul had been accused of a lot of bad stuff; malicious slander caused him much trouble.
  - He took consolation in God knowing the truth about him & trusted the day of vindication would come.

<sup>6</sup> Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.

8. Paul's ambition wasn't for glory; to be thought of as something special.
- Though truth be told, **he was**! Paul was an **apostle**!
  - Jesus appeared to him & called him to a special work of planting churches.
9. But Paul didn't appeal to **that** as the basis for their heeding him.
10. He **did** assert his apostleship in a couple letters to errant churches, but only because false teachers told lies about him that harmed their faith.
11. But in Thessalonica, he claimed no special treatment because, "I'm an apostle!"
12. Some people try to lead based solely on the authority of their position. Their attitude is, "I'm the boss; so do what I say."
- People will do what that kind of leader says, but they'll have little **respect for** or **confidence in** them.
  - What **produces** confidence & respect is **competence** -
  - When the leader shows he knows where he's going & how to get there.
13. Paul knew he was going to heaven & told anyone who'd listen how to get there.
14. What's more, he **demonstrated** he really was on the way. He was living the life.
- Jesus is the way, the truth & the life – the only way to heaven.
  - That's why Paul wasn't worried about persecution & the threat of death.
  - After all, the worst his enemies could do was send him to glory.
15. It was Paul's **faithfulness** to the Word of God that gave him authority, not his claims to being someone special.
- C. Vs. 7-8
- <sup>7</sup> But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children.
- Rather than **putting demands** on the Thessalonians, Paul's team **served** them!
  - That service was marked by the same kind of tenderness a mother shows her infant.
  - It's distressing to see the way some pastors & Christian leaders treat people.
    - Instead of being servants **to** people, they expect them to fawn over & serve them.
    - That's precisely the attitude Paul **eschewed**.
4. A few weeks after the Resurrection Peter went back to fishing.
- He had a hard time getting his head around the idea Jesus' forgiveness had restored him **& his call to lead the flock of God**.
  - Pulling into shore with empty nets from a night of fruitless work, he felt as big a failure as a fisherman as he was a disciple.
  - But Jesus was waiting on shore with a fire going & breakfast cooking.
  - As they ate, Jesus **gently** offered Peter a way to reverse his failure with an affirmation.
  - He told Peter **"Feed** my sheep. **Tend** My lambs. **Take care** of my flock."
5. He didn't tell Pete to **beat** the sheep, or **fleece** the flock.
- He was to Lead, Feed & Protect them.
  - Isaiah 40:11 reveals the heart of God for His people.  
He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm,

And carry *them* in His bosom, *And* gently lead those who are with young.

- c. There are times when a pastor has to apply a little “tough love” with a wayward sheep.
- d. But his **general disposition** ought to be gentle, tender.

<sup>8</sup> So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.

6. Paul & his team **lived with** the Thessalonians.

- a. They didn’t **sequester** themselves in special suites at the local Marriott & remained aloof,
- b. Coming out to climb in a limo which took them to the VIP entrance of the Thessalonian theater, where they sat in a special room eating kiwi & strawberry sorbet till it was time to come out and perform their Gospel extravaganza,
- c. Then get back in the limo & whisk back to the Marriott.

7. No, the Thessalonians **knew** what kind of people Paul, Silas, & Tim were because they hung out with them.

- a. They saw up close & personal that they lived what they taught. They practiced what they preached.
- b. And it had turned them into genuinely men of God, people of outstanding faith & love.

8. Even though they were only there for a month, they forged an affectionate bond.

### III. CONCLUSION

A. Approved

1. Let’s go back now & take a look at v. 4 again.

<sup>4</sup> But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

2. That word **approved** means to find something reliable by putting it to the test.

- a. It’s what the **Underwriters Laboratories** do to products submitted to them for certification.
- b. If you buy a product with a UL sticker on it, it means it’s been put to a set of grueling tests to make sure it’ll stand up to the conditions you’re likely to use it in.
- c. It’s not easy to acquire a UL seal. It’s a mark of superior quality.

3. Paul’s team had a **God’s seal of approval** on it.

- a. He demonstrated His approval of them & their message by marking it with the power of the Spirit.
- b. They gained God’s approval because He’d tested their hearts & found them faithful.
- c. That word “test” at the **end** of v. 4 is the same Greek word ‘approved’.
- d. So we can read it this way –

Being found reliable by God & entrusted with the gospel, we speak, not to please man, but to please God who has found our hearts reliable.

4. Paul, Silas, & Timothy had **proven & reliable hearts**.

B. The Heart

1. We’re studying Proverbs in our Mid-week study. This week we’ll be taking a look at the importance of guarding our hearts.

Proverbs 4:23 • Keep [Guard] your heart with all diligence, For out of it *spring* the issues of life.

- 1. In the Bible, the **heart** is the soul; our mind, emotions & will.
- 2. Solomon calls us to **bend every effort** to guard our hearts because from there our direction in life is set.
- 3. The heart is our **spiritual autopilot**.
  - a. A pilot of an airplane keys in the direction he/she wants to go then turns on the autopilot which keeps the plane on course.
  - b. No matter what winds buffet it, the autopilot brings it back to the right course.
- 4. For many years, the central mechanism of an autopilot was a **gyroscope**.
  - a. Like the spinning wheel of a bicycle I referred to earlier, the gyroscope provided the internal momentum for the autopilot to stay on track.
  - b. If you ever played with a gyroscope, you know how **hard** it is to turn it out of alignment.
  - c. And the **faster** its spins, the harder it is to turn it. [Dynaflax]
  - d. Hang on to that illustration; we’ll come back to it in a minute.

5. The **heart** is our **spiritual** autopilot.
    - a. It's the moral & spiritual **guide** that sets our course in life.
    - b. Whatever our heart is **set on** will be the deciding factor for nearly every decision we make.
  6. Consider this **Most** of our choices are **automatic**; we make them without much thought.
    - a. We don't bother going through a long, complicated process of analysis to decide if we're going to brush our teeth every morning.
    - b. We did that long ago & now it's become something we do because we've assigned it to the "Good idea" category.
  7. Imagine what a **nightmare** life would be if every decision, from big to the most mundane, had to be made by a fresh process of analysis. We'd never get anything done.
  8. Now, catch this The heart is our moral autopilot when it's time to make a decision.
  9. **How** we choose, **what** we decide, is determined by the **momentum** of our heart.
  10. What's our internal gyroscope been set moving by?
  11. Ultimately, it's one of 2 things – **Self** or **God**.
    - a. Either our momentum is the one we were **born** with, the one inherited from Adam & the Fall.
    - b. Or it's the new momentum of being **born again** by the Spirit of God.
  12. The heart of the matter is the matter of the heart.
  13. Either we live for self or for the Lord. It really **is** that simple.
  - C. Speed
    1. The Christian life is like riding a bike with no hands.
    2. You can't ride with no-hands **slowly**. The greater the speed, the more stable the bike.
    3. In the same way, the **more** consistently we live for God, the more decisions we make for His glory, the momentum builds to keep going.
    4. But That's true of living for self as well.
    5. PRAY = "Lord – as David prayed in Psalm 139
- <sup>23</sup>Search me, O God, and know [test] my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; <sup>24</sup>And see if *there is any* wicked way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.