

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this series about sharing from our quiet times you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will share from what they have learned from their quiet times. Every day during the past week we had a quiet time from a passage in the New Testament. Once a week we come together to share what we have learned. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. We will share the important truths and lessons from our quiet times and try to answer some difficult questions.

Today's topic is: A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM 1 THESSALONIANS 1-4.

(S) **SHARING FROM 1 THESSALONIANS 1-4**

This past week we have read, meditated and prayed from 1 Thessalonians 1-4. Now we will use our quiet time notes to share truths and lessons from the assigned passages and discuss some questions.

Sharing quiet times from 1 Thessalonians chapter 1.

(T) We want to share from 1 Thessalonians 1:4-7 about imitating the example of Christ and the apostles. We read, "We know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia."

In the city of Thessalonica there were people who tried to undermine the faith and the assurance of the new Christians in that place. These people were false preachers and false teachers. But the apostle Paul reassured these young Christians. He said that what happened to them was nothing less than the work of God. It was God, who had chosen them to believe. It was God who through his Holy Spirit had changed them. This was not the work of mere men. How could the apostle Paul know that the conversion of the Thessalonians was a genuine work of God? In verse 4-7 there are three good reasons why people can *see that their conversion was a work of God*.

First. The way God worked through the preaching of the gospel.

There was conviction and power in the preaching of the gospel. The apostles and their fellow workers preached the gospel *with power* and *with the Holy Spirit* and *with deep conviction*. The Holy Spirit worked in the *speakers* and caused them to speak with conviction. The speakers sincerely believed in the message they preached and in the presence of God in their midst. But the Holy Spirit also worked in the *listeners* with power. He demolished all their arguments against God. He demolished their false beliefs about 'god'. He built up faith in the living God, the God who revealed himself in the Bible and in Jesus Christ. He changed them mightily from serving a useless 'god' or idols to serve the living God. The people knew that the conversion of the Thessalonians was a genuine work of God, because they could see how God worked through the preaching of the gospel.

(S) Second. The way God worked through the example of self-sacrificial service.

There was a real example of self-sacrificial service. The Christians knew how Paul and his fellow workers lived among them for their sake. The false apostles and false teachers made a trade of their teaching. They demanded money for their teaching and service! However, the people at Thessalonica saw that the true workers of God never demanded money for their preaching, teaching and service. Instead, they worked hard to support themselves, besides working hard that people might be saved. They saw their seriousness, devotion, enthusiasm and willingness to suffer. They saw how all the time these missionaries pointed away from themselves to Jesus Christ. The people knew that the conversion of the Thessalonians was a genuine work of God, because they could see the example of unselfish and even self-sacrificial service of the workers of God.

Third. The way God worked through the example of the new Christians.

The new Christians followed in the footsteps of the workers of God. The Thessalonians not only accepted the gospel, they also became imitators of the missionaries and through them, imitators of Jesus Christ. After some time of learning, they in turn became a model for other people to follow. Christians must first become *imitators* before they can become *examples*! A person who is unwilling to imitate the example of his teachers, cannot become an example for others. The word 'example' or 'model' literally means *the imprint of a stamp and the pattern for imitation*. The Thessalonian Christians became an example of what Christians are and an example of what Christians do. They themselves turned away from their wrong idea about 'god' and turned to the God of the Bible. They served the living God and in their turn

preached the gospel with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction to other people. They themselves became an example or model or pattern for many other people to follow.

I pray that I may preach the gospel with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. I also pray that I will be an example or model or pattern of what a Christian is and what a Christian does.

Sharing quiet times from 1 Thessalonians chapter 2.

(T) We want to share from 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 about being like a spiritual mother and a father. Paul's approach to new Christians was just like a parent to their children. Paul says, "We were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. ... We dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory." Paul and his fellow workers did not treat them like a military commander or a school teacher, but like a parent!

First. Paul treated Christians like a mother.

He was gentle. He was easy to speak to, approachable, mild and kind. He would rather suffer injury than inflict it. He would not be easily provoked to react negatively. He would not quickly take the things they said or did to him as personal attacks. Instead, he would endure their provocation, their weaknesses and their failures. Moreover, he cared for them just like a nursing mother cares for her baby: he showed his affection to them and protected them. He shared with them the best news in the world, the gospel, and he shared with them himself, his time, his energies and his talents. Just like a mother, Paul was gentle!

I pray that I will always treat people with gentleness, just like Paul.

Second. Paul treated Christians like a father.

When they were timid, he encouraged them. When they were suffering, he comforted them. He continuously urged them to become what God wanted them to become! He stimulated them to live lives in harmony with their relationship to God, that is, *holy, righteous and loving* lives. He continuously motivated them with the fact that God had called each one of them to his kingdom and his glory. God wanted to rule in their hearts as King and show his characteristics of love and righteousness in their daily lives. Just like a father, Paul was an encourager!

I pray that I will always encourage people, just like Paul did.

Sharing quiet times from 1 Thessalonians chapter 3.

(T) I want to share from 1 Thessalonians 3:10 about supplementing the deficiencies of the faith of young Christians.

Paul had sent Timothy to the Thessalonians to find out how they were doing. Timothy came back with a very good report. Then Paul expressed his desire to come to them himself. He says, "Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith."

Beside all his work to support himself and his missionary work, Paul found time to pray. He prayed during the day and during the night. His desire was to continue to help them to grow. The word *to supply* literally means *to complete* or *to supply what is lacking*.

The Thessalonians were still very young Christians and still had deficiencies in their faith. The rest of the letter gives us a clue what these deficiencies were. Although they had grown a lot, there was room for improvement. Paul urged them to exert themselves more in how they lived to please the Lord and in loving one another (4:1,10). They were confused about the second coming of Christ and needed more teaching and encouragement in that area. Some of them were idle or undisciplined and needed warning. Some of them were timid and needed encouragement. Others were weak and needed help (5:14). The deficiencies in their faith included deficiencies in their *objective faith or teachings of the Bible* as well as deficiencies in *the subjective exercise of their trust in the Lord*.

Like Paul, I want to continually supply what is lacking in the faith of the Christians I am helping to grow. And I also want to receive teaching and encouragement from other genuine Christians.

Sharing quiet times from 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.

(S) We want to share from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 about the resurrection at the second coming of Christ.

The Christians at Thessalonica were ignorant about what would happen when they died and after they died. Ignorance usually leads to restlessness and insecurity. So Paul taught them about the death and the resurrection of believers in Jesus Christ.

First. The souls or spirits of dead people cannot talk or do anything to people on earth!

Death is called a falling asleep. This does not mean that the soul or spirit of a dead person is unconscious of everything until the resurrection. Although the soul of a dead person is *unconscious with respect to the world that it has left*, it is very *conscious with respect to the world where it went*. In Ecclesiastes 9:5-10 we read, "The dead know nothing. ... Never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun. ... In the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom." Thus while the human body lies in the grave, the human soul or spirit is totally unconscious of what happens on this earth. The souls or spirits of dead people have no knowledge of people or events on earth! The souls or spirits of dead people cannot make contact or communicate with people on earth. The souls or spirits of dead people have no wisdom to give advice to the people on earth. The souls or spirits of dead people cannot do anything good or bad on earth! People who believe that the spirits of dead people have influence on this world are deceived by evil spirits or demons. Evil spirits have never been human beings, but are fallen angels. 2 Corinthians 11:14 says that even the most powerful evil spirit, called Satan, and all his demons *masquerade* as messengers. They *pretend* to be someone else than they really are!

(T) Second. Between death and the resurrection the soul or spirit of the dead go to a definite place!

In Luke 16:22-26 we read, "When the beggar died, angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side." Thus while their human bodies lie in graves, the human souls or spirits of evil people are tormented in the fire of hell. The spirits of evil people and the spirits of believers can see and talk, but they cannot communicate with people on earth and they can also not cross over to one another's side (Luke 16:26-31). There will never be a second chance for unbelievers after death! While their bodies lie in graves, the souls or spirits of believers in Jesus Christ are carried by angels into the presence of God.

In Luke 23:43 Jesus says to a criminal who believed in him, "I tell you the truth, *today* you will be with me *in paradise*." In Philippians 2:23 we read that Paul says, "I desire to depart and be *with Christ*." In 2 Corinthians 5:8 we read that Christians "prefer to be away from the body and *at home with the Lord*." In Revelation 6:9-11 and 7:13-17 we read that the souls of those who died in Jesus Christ are *before the throne of God* and they serve him day and night in his temple.

(S) Third. The command of Jesus and the trumpet call announce the second coming of Jesus Christ!

Verse 16 says, "The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God." Jesus Christ himself will shout the command that the time of his second coming, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgement and the renewal of heaven and earth has arrived. In John 5:28-29 Jesus Christ himself says, "For *a time* is coming when *all who are in their graves* will hear his voice and come out - those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned." At that same moment, the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call will be heard. The shout and the trumpet call are the signal for the dead to be raised. In 1 Corinthians 15:52 we read, "The trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable".

(T) Fourth. The souls of all Christians who died before the second coming will return with Christ to the earth.

In verse 14 we read, "God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him." And in Colossians 3:4 we read, "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." The souls of all Christians who have died before the second coming will return with Christ to the earth at his second coming.

(S) Fifth. The bodies of all Christians who died before the second coming will be the first to rise from the dead.

In verse 16 we read, "The dead in Christ will rise first." Their bodies will be raised from the dead, and at the same time their souls or spirits will be reunited with their resurrected bodies.

(T) Sixth. The bodies of all Christians who are still alive at the second coming will be changed in a flash.

In verse 15 we read, Christians "who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep." In 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 we read, "We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will all be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality." The bodies of Christians, who are still alive at the second coming, will be changed in a flash to be exactly like the resurrected bodies of those Christians who had died.

(S) Seventh. All Christians will together ascend to welcome Jesus Christ in the air.

In verse 17-18 we read that, after the bodies of the dead have been raised and the bodies of the still living Christians have been changed, the Christians with their transformed spirits and transformed bodies will be caught up *together* in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and to be with the Lord forever. At the second coming there will be complete impartiality: the surviving Christians will have no advantage above Christians who had already died. Suddenly and swiftly they will together be snatched up in the clouds to meet the Lord.

The expression *to meet* the Lord in the air was used in connection with the official welcome given to newly arrived dignitaries outside the city before everyone return to the city (Acts 28:15). It describes the welcome given to Jesus Christ as he comes in majesty with thousands of angels to punish the enemies of Christians and to save all Christians. The emphasis is not on where Christians meet the Lord, but on the fact that they will never be separated from him! That is the reason for encouragement for all Christians, both those who have already died and those who are still alive!

(T) Eighth. After Christ's second coming, there will be no second chance for people to be saved!

The suddenness of the second coming, the swiftness of the resurrection and changing of Christians and the snatching up of Christians meeting Jesus Christ in the air, means that there will be no opportunity for conversion anymore. The coming of Jesus Christ is absolutely decisive! At his second coming Jesus comes, not to convert, but to judge. Therefore, *now*, before the second coming of Christ, is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation! (2 Cor 6:2). If you, listener, have not accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour, then accept him now!

(S) ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Divide 1 Thessalonians 5 and 2 Thessalonians 1-3 into seven passages. Every day have a quiet time from one passage. Record the meditations of all your quiet times in a notebook. Once a week meet with a friend or with a house fellowship or discipleship group and share from your quiet times.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".