

“THE CONTAGIOUS CHRISTIAN”

PART 3

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON BEING A LIGHT IN A DARK WORLD BY LIVING AND SHARING YOUR FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

OBJECTIVE: TO ENCOURAGE BELIEVERS TO DO THE WORK OF THE EVANGELIST IN ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO LIVE FOR THE LORD JESUS.

KEY SCRIPTURE

1 PETER 2:9-10

EVANGELISM IS TELLING PEOPLE THEY MATTER TO THE FATHER - THE LOVE OF CHRIST IS SO AT WORK THAT IT IS CONTAGIOUS.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S GREAT ABOUT THIS? WE CAN BE OURSELVES. GOD KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING WHEN HE MADE US. HE GAVE YOU THE EXACT PERSONALITY HE WANTED YOU TO HAVE AND HE WANTS YOU TO USE IT TO IMPACT THOSE AROUND YOU.

ONE OF OUR MAJOR PURPOSES AS CHRIST FOLLOWERS IS TO INFECT OTHERS WITH THE LOVE OF GOD THAT WE HAVE IN OUR HEARTS AND LIVES. WE WANT TO INFLUENCE THEM IN POSITIVE WAYS THAT WILL MAKE THEM WANT TO KNOW CHRIST.

"A CHURCH IS CONSIDERED EVANGELISTICALLY EFFECTIVE IF JUST 1 PERSON IN 20 IN THAT CHURCH LEADS A PERSON TO CHRIST IN A YEAR. THIS WOULD MEAN THAT A CHURCH OF 100 PEOPLE WOULD SEE FIVE PEOPLE COME TO CHRIST IN THEIR MINISTRY IN ONE YEAR IF THEY WERE EVANGELISTICALLY EFFECTIVE. BASED ON THIS THEORY, ONLY 3.5% OF U.S. CHURCHES ARE EVANGELISTICALLY EFFECTIVE."

WHAT MAKES A CHURCH CONTAGIOUS? WHAT MAKES THEM EVANGELISTICALLY EFFECTIVE? WHAT MAKES A CHURCH ONE OF THE "3 AND A HALF OUT OF ONE HUNDRED?"

THE APOSTLE PAUL WROTE A LETTER TO A SMALL CONGREGATION IN AN ANCIENT GREEK CITY THAT WAS MAKING A WORLDWIDE IMPACT FOR JESUS CHRIST. IF THERE WAS EVER A CONTAGIOUS CONGREGATION, IT WAS THAT LITTLE CHURCH IN THESSALONICA. IF EVER THERE WERE CONTAGIOUS BELIEVERS, IT WAS THEM. THEIR LOVE FOR JESUS WAS CONTAGIOUS, INFECTIOUS, SO MUCH SO THAT THEY WERE KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE ROMAN EMPIRE. IN EVERY PLACE, SAID PAUL, THEIR FAITH IN GOD HAD SOUNDED FORTH SO THAT PAUL HAD NO NEED TO TALK ABOUT THEM! **1THESSALONIANS 1:2-5**

THEY WERE CONTAGIOUS BELIEVERS—THEY CAUGHT THE LOVE OF JESUS AND THEN URGENTLY AND INFECTIOUSLY OFFERED IT TO ANYONE WHO WAS WILLING TO CONSIDER IT.

THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH TEACHES US THREE THINGS ABOUT BEING CONTAGIOUS BELIEVERS: FIRST, CONTAGIOUS BELIEVERS ARE INFECTED BY JESUS; SECOND, CONTAGIOUS BELIEVERS ARE INFECTIOUS FOR JESUS, AND THIRDLY CONTAGIOUS BELIEVERS ARE INCURABLY DEVOTED TO JESUS.

1. CONTAGIOUS BELIEVERS ARE INFECTED BY JESUS! (1-4)

THE APOSTLE PAUL DESCRIBES THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS IN THESSALONICA AS CHOSEN IN VERSE 4. THE NKJV TRANSLATES THE SAME WORD AS ELECTION. WHEN I WAS IN BIBLE COLLEGE, I WAS TAUGHT THAT THERE WERE TWO SCHOOLS OF THEOLOGY. ONE SCHOOL WAS THE CALVINIST SCHOOL. THIS TAUGHT THAT GOD HAS PREORDAINED ALL WHO WILL EVER BE SAVED. SALVATION IS ALL GOD, AND NOTHING OF MAN.

THE SECOND SCHOOL IS THE ARMINIAN SCHOOL. THIS TEACHES THAT SALVATION IS MAN RESPONDING TO GOD WITH HIS FREE WILL. THE EMPHASIS IS ON MAN'S CHOICE. PEOPLE ASK ME, PASTOR WHAT ARE YOU? I'M A CAMUNIAN!

THE TRUTH IS, THEOLOGIANS HAVE BEEN DEBATING THE VIRTUES OF THESE TWO SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS, AND WE WILL STILL BE DEBATING IT UNTIL JESUS RETURNS.

PAUL HERE IS NOT CONCERNED WITH DEBATING ALL THE IMPLICATIONS OF HOW OR WHEN GOD CHOOSES. HIS PURPOSE IS TO REMIND THE BELIEVERS THAT IT IS GOD WHO CHOSE THEM. ACCORDING TO THE FULL GOSPEL COMMENTARY, THE OT PROVIDES THE FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF DIVINE ELECTION. GOD CHOSE ABRAHAM AND HIS DESCENDANTS IN ORDER 'TO MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN TO THE REST OF MANKIND.' ISREAL, GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE, WAS CALLED TO ENJOY GOD'S FAVOR AND TO BE A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS, REVEALING GOD'S MERCIFUL SALVATION TO THE WORLD.

PAUL IS DECLARING TO THE THESSALONIAN CHRISTIANS THAT, JUST AS GOD CHOSE ISREAL, GOD HAS CALLED EACH OF THEM, AND THEIR LIVES CONFIRMED THEIR CALLING TO BE A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS.

THE IMPORTANT THING FOR YOU TO KNOW IS THAT YOU ARE SAVED! DO YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN? HAVE YOU BEEN TRULY BORN AGAIN? YOU MIGHT ASK, HOW CAN I KNOW? I PRAYED WITH BILLY GRAHAM ONCE! I FELL DOWN AT A BENNY HINN MEETING ONCE! WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE TO KNOW THAT I AM TRULY CONVERTED?

TO BE SAVED IS TO UNDERSTAND THAT SALVATION BEGINS WITH GOD. PAUL REAFFIRMS THIS IN 2 THESS. 2

13BUT WE OUGHT ALWAYS TO THANK GOD FOR YOU, BROTHERS LOVED BY THE LORD, BECAUSE FROM THE BEGINNING GOD CHOSE YOU[A] TO BE SAVED THROUGH THE SANCTIFYING WORK OF THE SPIRIT AND THROUGH BELIEF IN THE TRUTH. 14HE CALLED YOU TO THIS THROUGH OUR GOSPEL, THAT YOU MIGHT SHARE IN THE GLORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. (2 THESS. 2:13).

THE POINT IS THE ENTIRE PLAN OF SALVATION WAS BORN IN THE HEART OF GOD LONG BEFORE MAN WAS CREATED, OR THE UNIVERSE WAS FORMED. THE CROSS WAS NOT DEVELOPED ON A WHIM. GOD PLANNED YOUR LIFE AND THE PLAN FOR YOUR

SALVATION WELL IN ADVANCE. WOW! DO YOU UNDERSTAND HOW MUCH GOD CARES FOR YOU?

THAT IS WHY WE ALSO SAY THAT SALVATION INVOLVES GOD'S LOVE. GOD'S LOVE MADE CALVARY POSSIBLE. I HEAR PEOPLE BEMOAN THAT THEY FEEL UNWORTHY OF GOD'S LOVE. WELCOME TO THE CLUB. IT'S FOR THAT REASON JESUS CAME TO DEMONSTRATE THE DEPTH OF GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU.

CONTAGIOUS BELIEVERS INFECT THE WORLD WITH GOD'S LOVE BECAUSE THEY ARE BECOMING MORE LIKE JESUS.

B. CONTAGIOUS BELIEVERS EXPERIENCE DEEPER LEVELS OF JOY BECAUSE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

NOT ONLY ARE CONTAGIOUS BELIEVERS INFECTIOUS BECAUSE THEY ARE BECOMING MORE LIKE JESUS, BUT THEY ARE CONTAGIOUS BECAUSE THEY EXPERIENCE DEEPER LEVELS OF JOY BECAUSE THE HOLY SPIRIT IS IN THEIR HEARTS.

PAUL SPEAKS WITH ADMIRATION AND WONDER ABOUT THE THESSALONIAN BELIEVERS: "...IN SPITE OF PERSECUTION," PAUL SAID, "YOU RECEIVED THE WORD WITH JOY INSPIRED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT."

AREN'T YOU ATTRACTED TO JOYFUL PEOPLE? I KNOW I AM. "JOY," SAID LEON BLOY, "IS THE MOST INFALLIBLE SIGN OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD."

PEOPLE WANT MORE THAN MERE HAPPINESS; THEY WANT JOY AND THE ONLY PLACE THEY'RE GOING TO SEE IT IS IN CONTAGIOUS BELIEVERS. AND ONLY CONTAGIOUS BELIEVERS KNOW HOW OTHERS MAY COME TO EXPERIENCE IT.

PEOPLE NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE—AND THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE!

WE DO NOT FULLY APPRECIATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BEING A CONTAGIOUS BELIEVER. PEOPLE NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE CHRIST HAS MADE IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN, AND THAT

MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE. PAUL TOLD THE THESSALONIA BELIEVERS THAT THEY, “7BECAME AN EXAMPLE TO ALL THE BELIEVERS IN MACEDONIA AND IN ACHAIA. 8THE WORD OF THE LORD HAS SOUNDED FORTH FROM YOU IN EVERY PLACE YOUR FAITH IN GOD HAS BECOME KNOWN, SO THAT WE HAVE NO NEED TO SPEAK ABOUT IT.” THAT’S AN AMAZING THING TO SAY!

PAUL SAID OF THE THESSALONIANS, “THE LORD’S MESSAGE RANG OUT FROM YOU NOT ONLY IN MACEDONIA AND ACHAIA – YOUR FAITH IN GOD HAS BECOME KNOWN EVERYWHERE.” THE GREEK WORD FOR “RANG OUT” OR “SOUNDED OUT” IS WHERE WE GET THE ENGLISH WORD “ECHO.” WE ECHO GOD’S TRUTH AS WE HEAR IT FROM HIM. AN ECHO ONLY REPEATS WHAT IS ORIGINALLY SPOKEN. GOD HAS PUT HIS VOICE IN US TO ECHO HIS LOVE.

THE THESSALONIAN’S KNEW WHAT REAL LIFE WAS ALL ABOUT. OF ALL THE CHURCHES THAT ARE MENTIONED BY NAME IN THE N T, THERE ARE ONLY TWO THAT RECEIVE COMMENDATIONS FROM PAUL, AND JESUS, WITH LITTLE OR NO CRITICISM.

ONE CHURCH WAS THE PHILIPPIANS. IN SPITE OF GREAT POVERTY, PAUL SAYS THEY REMAINED TRUE AND FAITHFUL TO GOD. THE SECOND IS THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH. THEY HAD TO ENDURE INTENSE PERSECUTION FOR THEIR FAITH AND WERE CONSTANTLY BEING BOMBARDED WITH THE TEMPTATION TO JUST GO ALONG WITH THE WORLD AND IT’S GODLESS VALUE SYSTEM.