**Last Sermon in Bakersfield**

**Paul Ministry to the Thessalonians**

The church in Thessalonica was founded by Paul about AD 50 on the second missionary journey.

It was the capital of Macedonia.

This letter is written from Athens in AD 51 or 52. He sent Timothy (when I could bear it no longer” (to not have news of them) 1 Thess 3:5

In Acts 17:1-10 Paul’s second missionary journey. Paul spent about three weeks in Thessalonica—the capitol of Macedonia—between Philippi and Berea.

There was a riot and Paul was driven out of town.

Let us look at Paul’s ministry to the Thessalonians.

1 Thess 2:1-6 Paul tells them that whatever he did for the Thessalonians, it was not out of any sort of selfish or self-promoting interest.

1 Thess 2:7a

Paul was able to form intimate relationships with the Thessalonians in just a few weeks. Jan and I have been with your for 3.5 years. The only church Paul stayed with that long (almost) was Ephesus.

What does this tell you about Paul? Paul was a passionate lover of people who opened himself up. We cannot get close without opening ourselves up.

This is not my strength (but I am working on it)

Paul says that “We were like young children among you.”

Paul is not talking about throwing temper tantrums or behaving immaturely. Paul is talking about being humble, vulnerable, open, trusting, affectionate and even playful.

Who can you think of who is like this? What a great quality.

Are you child-like (in the right way) in your relationships with other disciples?

Open to forming relationships quickly, no pretentions, humble, teachable, vulnerable, willing to trust, able to bounce back…

1 Thess 2:7b-10 Paul describes his ministry as being like a nursing mother?

Not just a mother… a nursing mother.

Nurturing, affectionate, like a mama bear.

Biased? Giving undeserved favor? Yes! Cleaning up your messes? Concerned about your well-being?

This is a church where your boo boos are taken care of. Spiritual and otherwise.

Paul had both qualities!

I think of Vanessa Morris. I think of Cecelia Pina.

v. 8 Paul says “We were delighted to share our lives as well.”?

Share life together—tragedies, victories, fun times, even the day-to-day normal times together.

When Paul left Thessalonica they knew the intimate details of his life. They laughed together. They cried together.

This describes the Bakersfield CoC to a large extent.

We take care of the sick. We have birthday parties, Valentine parties, chili cookoffs. Our campus group is the most fun group on campus.

But it could be more.

Remember how long Paul was in Thessalonica!

This is the kind of church I want to be part of.

v. 9-10 This is part of Paul’s description of his ministry being like a nursing mother. I think of Yesenia, Nora and Jan.

But then there is 1 Thess 2:11 Paul says that his ministry was like that of a father.

Like a child… Like a nursing mother… Like a father.

What are the qualities of such a ministry?

Straightforward. Willing to set boundaries. Strong in trying circumstances.

Willing to call people out for doing wrong. Going after dangerous people.

Paul was all three, but which (like a child, like a nursing mother, like a father) depended on the situation.

If we are to imitate Paul here, what will our ministry to/with one another look like?

We will call each other higher in our relationship with God.

We will call each other higher in our Christian character.

We will defend each other from spiritual enemies, and not let sin go on without saying something about it.

Paul was like a father to the Thessalonians. They felt spiritually protected.

I have tried to take that role while here. Who will step up?

1 Thess 2:13-16

Paul preached the Word of God to them.

They were a Bible-based church.

They were a Jesus church.

Neither the Jews in Thessalonica, not the Gentiles were appreciative of this. But Paul kept right on preaching the Word.

In the words of Paul in 2 Tim 4:1-5 Let us continue to preach the word, whether it is popular or not.

1 Thess 2:17-3:5

Paul had a deep emotional connection with the Thessalonians.

v. 17 Leaving them was like being orphaned.

Jan and I are going to feel like orphans up there in Merced.

So do us a favor, and come visit us so we will not feel that way.

For Paul, traveling from Athens to Thessalonica would have taken at least a week.

We are 3 hours away.

v. 17 Paul had intense longing to be with them. He had a deep, an abiding, a lasting connection with them.

What kind of ministry produces these feelings?

One in which we share life’s greatest moments together.

I remember meeting Egypt on campus.

I remember baptizing Jerry.

I remember Jan studying with May.

v. 19 Bakersfield church: You are our joy, our glory and our crown.

Paul was very proud of the Thessalonians.

I feel this way about all of you here this morning! You do me proud.

I am very proud of you.

But we are moving on. It time for the birds to leave the nest. I look forward to hearing great things from you.

3:1 Paul could not take the two weeks minimum to come visit them, so he sent his right hand guy Timothy.

So, let’s keep in touch. OK?

1 Thess 3:6-10

We fully intend to hear good news from you, and to share the good news from our “Athens” in Merced.

v. 6 We leave, expecting to look back to many pleasant memories of climbing Tehachapi Mtn., going rafting with the leadership group, Bible talks with 20+ students on campus, baptisms, breakfast at the Old River Grill, launching silly candle rafts into the Kern River, times at Starbucks, picking oranges at the Gomez, the bridal shower for Joelle, and so much more.

v. 7 When we are tired and even a bit lonely in Merced, we will be encouraged by you.

v. 8 Why? Because you will be standing firm in the Lord. Yes?

v. 10 We will continue to pray for you. Please keep us in your prayers (and that includes Joelle and Josh as they start a campus ministry in LA.

So, as I leave, I want to encourage you to have these kinds of relationships among you.

Like children

Like nursing mothers

Like a father.

We will see you again soon.