

Pleasing to God

Key Verse: *“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.”*
—*I Thessalonians 2:4*

Selected Scripture:
I Thessalonians 2

WHEN WE LOOK BACK AT the attitude of Apostle Paul in which is viewed his role as a teacher, we need to look no further than to his letter to the Romans. In particular, we call attention to the way that he began this epistle. “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.)” (Rom. 1:1,2) It is evi-

dent by these words that they were penned by a divinely inspired apostle, and the Early Church carefully cherished this epistle, just as we continue to do today. Paul’s life, after his conversion on the road to Damascus, was one of brotherly love, sacrifice, devotion to God, and encouragement.

Upon being released from prison at Philippi, Paul, Silas, and Timothy traveled to Thessalonica. As was his custom, he went first to visit the Jews. Not only were the Jews acquainted with the prophecies and looking for their fulfillment in a Messiah, being better prepared for the message of the Gospel, but additionally it was part of the divine will that the offer of the Gospel would first go to them. As we know from historical accounts, the synagogues were often opened for people such as Paul to

show what they knew of the teachings of the Scriptures. It was due to these opportunities that Paul was able to meet with the Jews on three Sabbath days. It was also between these times, according to his own narrative, that he labored with his hands for his temporal necessities. "Ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God." (I Thess. 2:9) It was also during this stay of from three to six months that he received help from his brethren in Philippi on two occasions.

The results of his labors would form the nucleus of a flourishing church, to which two of his epistles would be addressed. The apostle's attitude toward these brethren may be taken as a standard for his general attitude toward all of the Lord's own dear ones. He did not deal with them as a lord, or master, over them, or as subordinates, using his own words, "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children." (vs. 7) He admonished, comforted, and instructed them, "as a father doth his children." (vs. 11) Paul lived an unblamable, unselfish life amongst them, giving them in turn the Gospel, and with it his very life.—vss. 8,10

The method of Paul's teaching is expressed in the statement that he "reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead." (Acts 17:2,3) He appealed to the Scriptures, offered explanations of their meaning, and pointed out their meaning found in its fulfillment in the experiences of our Lord. In addition to teaching about the scriptures that spoke of Messiah's kingdom, and the position of Israel as his people to bring blessings to all the families of the earth, Paul reminded them of the sufferings of Christ. (Luke 24:26,46) He encouraged them in the way of sacrifice, and showed the importance of leading a life pleasing to God—"For ye are our glory and joy."—I Thess. 2:20 ■