

“More of That”

1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

1/23/22 Epicenter/BAC

Rev. Brian T. Smeal; pastorsmeal@gmail.com

All Scripture quoted from ESV unless otherwise noted

You can be part of any community or group or organization or church or family or club and still feel very much like an outsider.

- To feel like an insider, you’ve got to get involved in the things that the community has in common

What does it mean to be an insider in the church community?

- Sad fact – you can attend a church for years and still not really feel like an insider
 - To have a sense of belonging in any community – and that includes the church community – means participating in the life of that community

Accept and apply the Word of God

- The Word of God is infinitely more valuable and precious than any human composition
- *God’s Word is based on authority, not on opinion*
 - 1 Thess. 1:5 – “[The] gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.”
 - 1 Thess. 2:13 – “...when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.”
 - When have you seen God’s Word at work in your life?

The Word of God is more than some dusty old religious rulebook. It is...

- ...living and active – sharper than a double-edged sword [Hebrews 4:12]
- ...2 Tim 3:16 – “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”

Endure Opposition

- 14 – ‘imitators of the churches in Judea’ as they were enduring opposition

Sometimes problems are part of the plan

- Do you want to be on board a flight when the captain faces a problem for the very first time or would you rather be on a flight whose captain had faced and overcome problems previously?

God has a way of making things right

- 2 Corinthians 4:17 – “For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison”
 - A problem is not a problem if it’s part of God’s plan

As you face challenges to your faith and opposition to your beliefs, hold your ground, and hold onto the hope of deliverance through Jesus Christ

- 1 Corinthians 16:13 (NIV) – “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.”
- Genesis 18:25 (NIV) – “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

Connect with Christian Community

- 17-18 – Paul, Silas, Timothy “Torn away” – a real sense of loss
- “Absence makes the heart grow fonder” the saying goes
 - Sometimes absence makes the memories hazier and you forget the real value of connecting with a Christian community

We live in a world that’s more connected than ever, but unfortunately, many of these connections are superficial at best

- Maybe you’re thinking, “I’d settle for that.”
- Connecting to community is an active experience, not a passive expectation
 - How long’s it been since you picked up your phone?

Paul is the outsider here

- He, the outsider, is reaching out to the faith community
- It seems so easy to sit by and wonder why no one is calling, or why no one is emailing
 - Satan whispers, “Because no one cares. You’re not important.”
 - THAT’S A LIE!

Celebrate one another

- Requires you to be not-self-focused
 - We are all guilty of being self-focused at times

An amazing thing happens when you celebrate one another

- Not only do you focus less on your problems
 - You also focus less on problems in general

When you start to look for problems, you’re going to start finding problems

- When you start to look for celebration and victory and joy and success, guess what you’re going to start finding?

It's okay to celebrate victories secondhand

- Last week – Bills defeated the Patriots 47-17
 - A Patriots loss is not the same as a Steelers win, but it's the next best thing!

Celebrate each other's victories

That means you've got to share your victories

- "I went 3 days without smoking"
- "I went 2 weeks without a drink"
- "I went Monday without looking at porn"
- "I've been at my job for 10 years"
- "My 43rd wedding anniversary was last Tuesday"
- "I read my Bible for the first time in months"

What's your victory story? Share it!

- How can we celebrate with you if we don't know?

When you share your story, you share your life

- Let's do that.
 - Let's get to know each other better
 - Let's get to know God's Word better
 - Let's work toward having the sort of church family that, like Paul with the Thessalonian church, we long for more of; we crave more interaction with
- What will you do (a) this week, and (b) from now on, to make this church community something that would make anyone say, "I want more of that."
 - Ask God to help you answer that question.

DIG IN!

Here are some farm-fresh questions that will help you to personalize and apply this morning's message.

1. **Why is the distinction between the 'word of men' and the 'word of God' so important? What difference does it make that you are sharing God's truth, not just man's opinion?**
2. **How does it help you to know that, as a Christian, you are part of a long line of people who have faced what you are facing?**
3. **If you were an airline pilot, what destination would you most want to fly to? Why?**

4. **How would you describe Paul's opinion toward the Jews, based on today's passage? What does Romans 9:1-5 say about his opinion toward them?**
5. **Do we know what specific circumstance or situation prevented Paul from returning to Thessalonica? To what does he attribute his inability to return?**
6. **What do you love about your church family? (Attach as many extra pages as necessary)**
7. **What have you learned through your personal time of Bible reading this week?**