

November 28

1 Thessalonians 1-5

Important things to note:

First, Paul mentions their *"work of faith," "their labor of love,"* and *"their steadfast hope in the Lord Jesus Christ."* Three things that Paul wanted to develop in every single believer in each of the churches. God wants us to be people of great faith, great love and great hope.

The next thing: letter is anchored to the thought that the return of Jesus Christ is one of the most powerful motivating forces in the life of every true believer.

The third thing - his ministry style. Christianity is always more easily "caught" than "taught." The only way to shape the life of another person is to invest your own life in them.

That is how it is supposed to work. You become a Christian and you imitate those who are walking just a few steps ahead of you. Then, after a little while, you have taken a few steps yourself down the road of discipleship, and you begin to realize that there is someone just a few steps behind who is imitating you.

Now I need to ask you two tremendously important questions. Number 1 - Who are you following? - That is, who is your mentor in the Lord? And Number 2, who are you mentoring? These are critical questions.

Who's discipling you? If the answer to that question is "no one", then just perhaps another question has just been answered - the one relating to why you haven't grown as far or as well as you know you could or should have in the Christian faith. You see, disciples are accountable to their mentors in the very same way that an apprentice is accountable to his master craftsman. He or she is expected to be learning, growing in their walk, and if they do not grow, they are held accountable for explaining why not.

The New Testament never promises - never insinuates - never hints or even declares - that Christians will be exempt from pain, suffering, persecution or trial. In fact, it says just exactly the opposite - *"All who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecutions."*

While Christians should expect to suffer - especially at the hands of unbelievers - there is one thing from which we will be totally delivered, and that is from the "wrath" of God.

Several observations:

1. Christ will return - physically, visibly and triumphantly at the end of the age.
2. The fact that Christ is returning is meant to be a primary motivating force in the life of every single believer, causing us to strive after holiness and

righteousness in our lives.

3. When Christ does return, all His saints, dead or alive, will be gloriously raised up and caught up to be with Him and will stay with Him then forever.
4. The "parousia" will come suddenly so that unbelievers will be unprepared. Believers need to keep themselves in readiness so that they will not be surprised.
5. The parousia will not occur until after the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is appearing.
6. The present work of the Holy Spirit is to restrain the influence of evil and of the Antichrist in our world.