

Fitness for ministry 2

Three principles from last week and Colossians 3

Three strategies this week from 2 Thessalonians.

³ We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.

Notice what it says straight up.

We ought always to give thanks to God for you

Strategy 1. Give thanks v3 - credit where it is due.

Giving thanks is grossly underrated.

It is an underrated form of team building,

it is an underrated form of encouragement,

it is an underrated form of unification,

it is an underrated form of support

and it is an underrated form of obedience to Christ.

Here we are told give thanks for. Notice it says we "OUGHT ALWAYS" Maybe Paul wasn't getting it together here either.

Notice what the thanks is for.

Growing faith and love increasing.

So does that mean that we ignore the common courtesy of saying thanks when people do things for us. Absolutely not. I think we need to develop a gratitude attitude. Give credit where it is due.

BUT

Recognize things to give thanks for. Recognise people's spiritual growth, recognise people displaying love, recognise what they do for God.

Thanks to the worship band this morning

Thanks to the people on the computer and sound desk

Thanks to those who maintain the lawns

Thanks to those who cleaned the building.

The list could go on and hopefully it will as we remember to recognise what people do.

Yet I want to give thanks for you lot. Your spiritual growth, your development in ministry skills, your development in receptiveness to the Holy Spirit. As a pastor, I am proud of you for your development, so I give thanks. Sometimes I also tear my hair out. MMm

Look at this bit

⁴ Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.

⁵ This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—

As I mentioned last week I have the pleasure to be able to boast about you to other ministers about what you are doing and how this church is developing.

I have a question: Do you tell people how great the people of this church are?

I heard a sad story last year from a person who had just moved into the area.

Someone said to them after the first time they came to church here "You don't really want to come here we are pretty dysfunctional at the moment." I reject this comment.

You have displayed to me a real development of heart. Sure there have been problems in the past, but now is different. You are different. God has made it so.

The next bit of the passage is a bit tough.

⁶ since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you,
⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from
heaven with his mighty angels
⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not
obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.
⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and
from the glory of his might,
¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who
have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

Wooa, who is this talking about?

Those who afflict the church.

So does God take vengeance on those who afflict His church? Yes in His own way.

What if we afflict the church ourselves.

God will deal with us in His own way.

This is not only a statement of God's care for His people but a warning for His people to treat each other right.

So what do I want you to take notice of here?

Strategy 2. Listen to good advice v10

The compliment is to those who listen to the testimony of the apostles and believed.

A testimony to them – they listened, testimony from God to them – they listened.

We need to develop the habit of listening to good advice.

My grandfather Summerfield told me once. "Carefully listen to everyone's advice then work out if it is good advice. Toss it if it isn't, keep it if it is."

A wise old bloke was Joe.

As an aside: the best advice of course is biblical advice – read it, listen to it, adhere to it.

There's one more strategy:

¹¹ To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power,

¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Strategy 3. Pray constantly

Always pray for you. I have really taken this passage to heart. I have always had lists of people to pray for, but I have noticed working here in the office, it is very difficult to have time set aside to pray and pray for you. Funny isn't it, our church, I work here, but cant get time to pray for us here. So I have changed my system. I walk and pray or I ride and pray. I go for a walk some afternoons during the week with the express purpose of praying. Over a couple of days I pray for everyone in the church directory and people who have come since the directory was produced.

Year ago I used to pray as I swam laps of the swimming pools, one person per lap.

What I am saying here is make it your habit to pray. It doesn't come naturally to me, so I have to put things in process to help me pray. Walk, set time aside.

Another thing that was suggested to me years ago by a Guy Rev Colin Jones was to pray for people as you think of them. So when someone rings, I will often just stop a few minutes after the call and pray for them or you if it is you ringing.

But notice the prayer.

that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power,

¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him,

It is not an abstract prayer. It is very deliberate.

As I have gotten to know each of you my prayer times have gotten longer as I can pray specifically for you.

Notice the last bit there.

so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him,

NOW that is a purpose in prayer.

I do pray that each of us will glorify God

I do pray that God will glorify us.

Remember last week I mention glory was kind of like honouring and dignifying someone.

Maybe our giving thanks to and for each other is part of God's process of that. MM Food for thought.

So 3 principles last week

3 Strategies this week

So next week

3 processes.