

Publishing Editor's column

THE APOSTLE PAUL succinctly summarises the conversion of the Thessalonians when he writes, “. . . ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:9,10). This turning, serving and waiting came about because they had “received the word of God which ye heard of us” (2:13). Paul, Silas and Timothy had spoken God's Word to them and they had received it as God's Word, which produced their changed life style.

This same process has been true and continues to be true for all believers. God's Word is powerful to enlighten the mind, to show the correct basis for living and to provide the certain hope of life eternal at Jesus' return. This is assured because our God is living and true; in evidence of this He has raised Jesus from the dead, as He had foretold through His prophets.

Jeremiah, in an incisive analysis of the futility of idols—the product of the mind and industry of man—describes idolatry as a “doctrine of vanities” (10:8) and “the work of errors . . . [that] shall perish” (v. 15). All the conceptions of man unenlightened by God's Word are of no account before the Creator of heaven and earth, for “the LORD is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting king” (v. 10).

Maybe Paul had this chapter from Jeremiah's prophecy in mind when he wrote to the Thessalonians. Significantly, this consideration of the superiority of God and His ways moves Jeremiah to say, “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (v. 23).

The reaction of the Thessalonians to the gospel confirms the rightness of Jeremiah's insight; for they, having turned from idols, were serving the living God and waiting for His Son from heaven. They had taken to heart the teaching of Jesus and the apostles and allowing that to direct their steps. So it should be for us today.

Paul was unable to visit the Thessalonians personally to encourage them. He was concerned that the persecution that they had experienced might have weakened, or even extinguished, their faith. Timothy's visit revealed that they had remained faithful. Even so, Paul considered

it necessary to urge them to be eagerly expecting the Lord's return.

Although he knows that they “know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief” (1 Thess. 5:2-4), he still counsels them to be ready and not to be diverted by life's pressures, and so be unprepared.

What about us today? How aware are we that we serve the living God, the Maker of heaven and earth?—the One Who “doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” (Dan. 4:35)? Indeed, the recent grounding of all aircraft in the UK and Europe by volcanic ash in the atmosphere has vividly illustrated God's power instantly to control or frustrate man's plans and activities.

Is our waiting for His Son from heaven still the priority in our life? Is there still a keen interest in the signs of the times and the prophetic Word?—or have we allowed the pressures of this life and the inroads of worldly thinking to sap our interest? Jesus warned his disciples during his ministry that this was a possibility: “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares” (Lk. 21:34). The antidote is to be “sober”, as “children of light”, who have put on “the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:5,8).

Although “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31), we are also encouraged to be faithful and watchful, because it is “your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Lk. 12:32). This assurance Paul gives to the Thessalonians, and also to us, when he says, “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him” (1 Thess. 5:9,10).

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