

Title: THE GOD FACTOR, 1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12  
(Chatham, NJ; 10/26/14, AM) [Pt & Pc – Exegesis with Comparison and Contrast]

Theme: In a world of conflict and disapproval, God makes all the difference, and furthermore He is the glue that holds our relationships in the proper perspective.

Purpose: To encourage us by reminding us that God helps us through conflict and disapproval, and His way of living keeps relationships thriving and healthy.

Introduction:

1. The church is a breeding ground where we grow and learn how to deal with the outside world with grace and love.
2. Paul's ministry models behaviors that demonstrate how to behave in the church and are adaptable to the larger community.
3. In a series of contrasting statements, we can see that belief in God empowers us.

#### I. God in the Midst of Conflict (1-2)

- A. Two cities, two conflicts (2)
  1. Shamefully treated in one: Philippi
  2. Put in jail and attempted to sweep it under the rug
  3. Conflict in Thessalonica: mob rule, thugs
  4. The Jews drove him out of town and followed him to Berea
- B. Conflict is the way of the world
  1. Psalm 1 sets the righteous against the unrighteous
  2. Good versus evil; right versus wrong
  3. Like a thunderstorm that erupts when hot, moist air mixes with cool, dry air
  4. Sgt. Collier (Brad Pitt) in "Fury" speaks to a new member of his tank crew, a clerk unfamiliar with battle who is appalled by Collier's unethical actions, "Ideals are peaceful; history is violent."
  5. When one conflict ends, usually another begins
- C. God is the missing factor
  1. Paul boldly proclaimed God in the midst of conflict, 2
  2. Though the Prince of Peace himself is often attacked, He provides the only real solution to the conflict between good and evil
  3. Paul didn't back away from the conflict, he ran towards it
  4. Conflict is the natural state of sinful humanity
  5. God enters it with us

#### II. God in a disapproving world

- A. Paul's appeal, 3-4
  1. Not from error, impurity, or deception
  2. Many ancient philosophers sought integrity in similar ways
  3. However, their foundation wasn't the same as Paul
  4. The Apostle has been approved by God, 4
  5. So he speaks to please God, not man (John 5:44)
- B. Glory from God, 5-6
  1. Thus no flattery, greed, or seeking man's approval
  2. Paul didn't lie just to gain votes
  3. He didn't tamper with God's word, 2 Corinthians 4:2
  4. He must have known about Christ's words to shout from the rooftops
  5. He invoked God as a witness: a bold thing to do

6. But it was God that he was trying to please, not others
7. In a disapproving world, God is the one that counts.

### III. God in dysfunctional relationships, 7-12

- A. Like a mother and a father
  1. Nursing mother – gentle (remember Phil. 4:5 and 2 Corinthians 10:1)
  2. Teachers must reflect the same characteristic, 2 Tim. 2:24
  3. Father, 11 & 12 – exhorted, encouraged, and charged to walk worthy
  4. A mother's gentleness coupled with a father's exhortations makes for a well-rounded approach to ministry
  5. As in a family, both approaches are needed
- B. We shared ourselves, 8
  1. "Affectionately desirous of you" 8 – the congregation became more than a project; they became emotionally connected
  2. They shared themselves, 8
  3. Important for two reasons: first, we are relational beings made for communities
  4. Second, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care
  5. Depth in a relationship comes with openness
- C. Our conduct becomes your conduct becomes worthy of God, 10-12
  1. You were witnesses of our lives, 10
  2. So is God
  3. We want you to live in a manner worthy of God, 12
  4. Does your lifestyle evoke an explanation?
  5. Many people see this long before they will listen to a sales pitch about Christianity
  6. Do people want what you have not what you have to offer?

#### Conclusions:

1. God enters a world of conflict and fights with and for us.
2. Obtaining His approval comes before the approval of people.
3. This gives us a center of gravity to live above the reproaches of men.
4. God does not shy away from human relationships.
5. In the person of Christ and in the flesh and blood of fellow Christians He heals us.