
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 2:3

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Our study picks up from where we left off in our last article. Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus are still writing about their initial work in Thessalonica. The text we are going to study in this article is this: *“For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile”* (I Thessalonians 2:3).

An exhortation is: “Imploration, hortation, solace: - comfort, consolation, exhortation, intreaty” (Strong’s # 3874). There are multiple times wherein the Greek word translated as “exhortation” [παράκλησις] in this text is translated in the KJV as “comfort” (Acts 9:31, Romans 15:4, II Corinthians 1:3-4, II Corinthians 7:4, and II Corinthians 7:13). So, Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus are reminding the saints in Thessalonica about how they came at first and delivered comfort to them.

The word translated “deceit” [πλάνη] is an interesting word to study. One dictionary says: “Fraudulence; subjectively a straying from orthodoxy or piety: - deceit, to deceive, delusion, error” (Strong’s # 4106). Another dictionary says: “1) a wandering, a straying about; 1a) one led astray from the right way, roams hither and thither; 2) metaphorically, 2a) mental straying, 2a1) error, wrong opinion relative to morals or religion, 2b) error which shows itself in action, a wrong mode of acting, 2c) error, that which leads into error, deceit or fraud” (Thayer). In other verses the word is translated as “error” (Matthew 27:64, Romans 1:27, James 5:20, II Peter 2:18, II Peter 3:17, I John 4:6, and Jude 1:11), “deceive” (Ephesians 4:14), and “strong delusion” (II Thessalonians 2:11). So, Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus did not deliver comfort in a way that would cause the people of Thessalonica to err or be deceived. Idolatry provided such false, erring comfort (Zechariah 10:2). These brothers in Christ were distinguishing their teaching from that which was associated with false religion.

We then read the word “uncleanness” in this verse. That term is translated from the Greek word “ἀκαθαρσία” which is defined as: “impurity (the quality), physically or morally: - uncleanness” (Strong’s # 167). This term is consistently translated as “uncleanness” in the KJV (Matthew 23:27, Romans 1:24, Romans 6:19, II Corinthians 12:21, Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 5:3, and Colossians 3:5). Later in this epistle, this was written: *“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness”* (I Thessalonians 4:7). Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus were stressing that when they came to Thessalonica initially to preach the Gospel they did not come with any impure motives.

We need to also look into the word that is translated “guile” [δόλος]. The dictionary definition of this term is: “(an obsolete primary probably meaning to decoy; compare G1185); a trick (bait), that is, (figuratively) wile: - craft, deceit, guile, subtlety” (Strong’s # 1388). This term is translated in the KJV as “subtilty” (Matthew 26:4 and Acts 13:10), “deceit” (Mark 7:22 and Romans 1:29), “craft” (Mark 14:1), and “guile” (John 1:47, II Corinthians 12:16, I Peter 2:1, I Peter 2:22, I Peter 3:10, and Revelation 14:5). Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus are telling these brethren that their initial time teaching in Thessalonica did not include any craftiness.

Now, let’s think about what we have studied through thus far in this article. Teaching the truth brings comfort (Romans 15:4) and hope (Colossians 1:5). These men had to declare their integrity for a reason. False teachers and false doctrine can also bring messages that make people “feel good” (so to speak). In a context about false teachers this was written: *“For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage”* (II Peter 2:18-19).

The false prophets of old were guilty of bringing a false peace to the erring children of Israel. Notice: *“Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar: Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it? Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the LORD”* (Ezekiel 13:10-14). Did you notice that those prophets “seduced” God’s people? This is why Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus are reminding their brethren that they did not come and do such when they first met.

In the second epistle to the church in Corinth we get some insight as to why Paul made such an effort to set himself apart from those that taught error. He wrote: *“But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works”* (II Corinthians 11:12-15). Remember, we are not just supposed to try what is taught to us, but also to examine the teachers as well (Matthew 7:15-20). Think on these things!