mercy, peace, and love (Matt. 5:3-12). According to Jesus, Christians whose lives are guided by these principleswill have such a positive spiritual influence on humanity that they will become the “salt of the earth and the light of the world” (Matt. 5:13-16).

Man’s Problem: Sin

Of course, Jesus was not so naïve as to think that everybody would see the benefits of Christianity and follow Him to heaven. In fact, He declared in the same sermon that most people are on the broad way that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14). Human experience alone teaches us that “there is warfare in the human soul” (Barclay). Paul described this warfare as a conflict between the two opposing forces of flesh and spirit. “For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other…” (Gal. 5:17). To the church in Rome, Paul wrote, “So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me” (Rom. 7:21-23). This struggle between good and evil forces within every human being has been described by philosophers and theologians in all ages. Long before Paul’s time, the Roman philosopher and statesman, Seneca, wrote, “Men love and hate their vices at the same time.”

The Source of Sin: Walking According to the Flesh

What is the reason for this conflict, and why is the evil force so powerful? Since ancient times it has been assumed that human beings consist of two basic parts: a physical body and a soul that contains a life force that is the seat of human thought and feeling. The body has been seen as a prison from which the human spirit must be set free because it contains an evil and destructive power that works against every good human impulse.

The Old Testament and Gospels seem to view the composition of animal and human life in a similar way. Living beings are said to consist of two parts. One part is physical (body) and one part is spiritual (soul). Man was created as a “living soul” (Gen 2:7). The soul is the life force that controls the body and is capable of thought. It consists of the mind (which includes the conscience), the will, and the emotions. The body is said to be the outward and material part of man that can be seen and touched. This physical structure is only a shell that is discarded at death. The *real* person is that part of man that lives on after death.

We should understand that the Bible does not describe the body itself as an evil creation. It is true that heathens viewed the body as evil and the source of every worldly temptation. They felt that the soul was contaminated by the physical body and saw death as a release from the body so that one could

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**Gentleness**

Text: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

1. According to Paul, what are some wrong ways to share Christ with others (vv. 3-6)?

2. Give an example of how we might make an appeal to a non-Christian using tricks or flattery.

3. In contrast, what were Paul’s motives for sharing Christ with the Thessalonians? Why are pure motives so important?

4. How was Paul like a mother to the Thessalonians (vv. 7-9)?

5. In what ways can we share “not only the gospel of God but our lives as well” with those around us? What might this mean in terms of time, energy and vulnerability?

6. How was Paul also like a father to the Thessalonians (vv. 10-12)?

7. Why is it important for gentleness (v. 7) to be tempered with the qualities and goal mentioned in verse 12?

8. Looking back through the passage, how are the themes of evangelism and gentleness related?

9. In what practical ways can we encourage, comfort and urge people to live lives worthy of God?

10. Think of those around you who require time, energy and gentleness. How could you express your unique style of gentleness to those people?

*Ask God to help you be an example of gentleness and sacrificial love to these people.*

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