

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Helping the Baby to Grow Up 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 Part 1

In Chapter 1 of **1 Thess.** we saw a church born. Not a deformed or crippled church but a church which continues to serve as a model of “what a church should be.”

We are now moving on in our study to Chapter 2. In this chapter we will not see a church born but rather a church nurtured. In this chapter we will again be given insight into the Apostle Paul, not so much however as an evangelist but rather as a pastor seeking to bring these new infant believers to completion.

Just as God uses people to bring the Gospel to the lost, so He uses people to nurture babes in Christ to lead them to maturity. The church at Thessalonica was born through the faithful preaching of the apostle and his helpers, and the church was nurtured through the faithful pastoring of Paul and his friends.

This pastoral nurturing is described by Paul in chapter 2. If you are here and feel any degree of responsibility to help or assist others in their growth whether that might be a family member, a friend, or even one of your children these verses that we will be studying will be of tremendous importance to you.

Paul uses three different pictures to help us understand this nurturing process. The first picture is that of a faithful steward.

FAITHFUL STEWARD

Webster defines a steward, “as one who manages another’s property or financial affairs; one who administers anything as the agent of another or others.”

Using this definition it becomes clear that every one of us who are here this morning should therefore consider ourselves a steward of the Lord. There is nothing that you or I have that is not the Lord’s. Is this not true? What does the Scripture tell us? “**The earth is the Lord’s and all it contains the world and those who dwell in it.**” (Ps. 24:1). Whether you like it or not you are a steward. And we are to be using what the Lord has given us, as his agent, to accomplish his purposes. And high on the Lord’s list of what we should be doing with what he has entrusted to us is ministering to the needs of people. Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind and soul. And the second is like it, we should love our neighbor as our self.

We should as the Lord’s stewards whenever we have opportunity take what the Lord has given us and lovingly seek to minister it to others.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

And of all the things that the Lord has given us there is no more precious possession than the Gospel of Christ. In **2 Cor. 4:7** it is referred to as a “treasure.” It is only through the Gospel of Jesus Christ that people are saved. It is only through the Gospel that people are able to pass from death to life. It is only through the gospel that people can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Certainly the Apostle Paul understood all of what I have just shared with you. And this becomes very clear to us when we read **VV. 1-6** **“For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, (2) but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. (3) For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; (4) but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts. (5) For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed - God is witness- (6) nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.** Paul had a very clear understanding that he had been entrusted by the Lord with the glorious message of the Gospel. And that he had a personal responsibility to minister that gospel. Whether we like it or not, as the Lord’s stewards we will be held accountable.

Every steward one day must give an account of his stewardship. If he is found unfaithful the parable of the unrighteous steward in **Luke 16** makes it very clear that he will suffer loss. And of course if he has done well he will be blessed.

The message of the gospel is a treasure God has entrusted to us. We must not bury it; we must invest it so it will multiply and produce “spiritual dividends.” Some Christians think that the church’s only responsibility is to protect the Gospel from those who would change it as Paul did in Gal. 1:6-9. But we also need to understand that we must share the Gospel; otherwise we are protecting it in vain!

What is the most important quality of a faithful steward. Faithfulness is the most important quality a steward possesses. **I Cor. 4:2** says, “.. **it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy**” or as the KJV and NIV read “**faithful.**”

When we see the characteristics of Paul’s ministry as a steward, we understand what faithfulness entails.

THE MANNER OF MINISTRY (VV. 1,2)

Let us first of consider the manner of Paul’s ministry in **VV. 1-2.**

“For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, (2) but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our god to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.” What was Paul’s manner of ministry? It was PERSEVERING. Certainly no steward could be found faithful if there is no perseverance. We must be able to keep on keeping on!! And certainly we see this with the Apostle Paul.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Let us look at **V. 1** “**For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain**” Paul is appealing to their knowledge which he will throughout this epistle. And what did Paul believe that they knew? That their coming to the Thessalonians “**was not in vain.**” The word translated “vain” is the word “KENOS” which means “empty.” Considering the context of V. 2 we would have to conclude that Paul is saying that their coming to the Thessalonians was not empty of “purpose.” Far from being empty-handed on arrival in Thessalonica, with nothing to say or bring, Paul had the courage to preach the gospel. This was even after he had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi.

Most of us would have taken a vacation or found an excuse not to minister. But Paul was courageous. And rather than quitting Paul entered into Thessalonica and continued to preach the gospel. And it says that he preached the gospel “**amid much opposition.**” This is an athletic term that means “a contest, a struggle.” Paul was striving to get the job done as God’s faithful steward. It had not been easy to start a church in Philippi where he had “**suffered and been mistreated.**” And it was not easy for him to start a church in Thessalonica “**amid much opposition.**” But he continued to persevere!! No matter what his circumstances.

We are stewards. The gospel has been entrusted to us. And very much at the heart of this is the matter of perseverance.

Can you say that perseverance in sharing the Gospel has marked the way you have lived your life. That you have continued to be a good steward of this treasure when you are ignored or when you challenged or even when you are verbally assaulted. Have you continued to press forward. I am not speaking to older believers. I am speaking to all believers. Young, old , new in the faith or veterans. Can we say in this regard that we have been faithful?

But though perseverance is at the heart of faithful stewardship this is not the only issue. Let us again look at the apostle and look at the message which he proclaimed.

THE MESSAGE OF HIS MINISTRY (V. 3a)

What was the message of his ministry? Let us read **V. 3** “**For our exhortation does not come from error**” When Paul speaks of “**our exhortation**” from **V. 2** we know that he is referring to Gospel. Not to any gospel but to the Gospel of God.

In order to be persevering we must be convinced of the truthfulness of our message. Paul was convinced. We will never be able to be a faithful steward of the Gospel of God unless we are convinced of the truthfulness of our message.

This is why it is so important that we continue to emphasize the gospel of Christ to all believers. We can never allow it to be put away from our minds or from our hearts. We must be repeatedly sharing it and reemphasizing it lest people forget it’s importance. And hopefully as we continue to meditate upon it, as we continue to mull it over in our minds and hearts we will be more and more convinced as to the validity of this wonderful truth. Believing the teaching of **Romans 10:17** that “**Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.**”

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

And what is the Gospel? It is simply this: For God so loved the world he sent His only begotten Son (Jesus) into this world to die for our sins and was buried and yet rose again on the third day, ascending to the right hand of the throne of God and is offering, even to this day, salvation to anyone who believes on His name. This is the gospel of God and it is the power of God unto salvation. And we can proclaim this message with confidence.

When we really truly believe that our exhortation does not come from error we are much better equipped to be persevering as a faithful steward.

Confident preaching does not necessarily lead to popularity. It can very easily lead to conflict which requires courage and boldness. The preachers responsibility is not to minimize conflict. The preacher's responsibility is to expose sin and offer the cure for it.

In the ministry there is always the pressure to compromise. There is always pressure to mitigate the message. There is always pressure to not offend someone. But we cannot do this because the gospel of God is the truth.

We have considered the manner of Paul's ministry and the message of Paul's ministry. Let us now look at the motive of Paul's ministry.

MOTIVE OF PAUL'S MINISTRY

Most of the time we have problems getting people to share. But there are dangers facing us in terms of faithful stewardship even when we are persevering in sharing that might rob us of being commended as a faithful steward. Let us continue to read.....

V. 3 “or impurity.....” Or in other words he was not guilty of uncleanness.

It is possible to preach the right message with the wrong motives. In fact Paul talks about such a group of people in **Phil. 1:14-19**. There were certain Christians in Rome who envied Paul's authority, who envied Paul's position, who envied Paul's ministry. There were jealous of him but when Paul was put into prison they thought that it was the perfect opportunity to build a personal following at Paul's expense. Not only can the gospel be used to gain a personal following but it can also be used for personal gain.

Paul alludes to this in **1 Thess. 2:5** when he says, “**For we never came with flattering speech, nor with a pretext for greed.**” Typically most people do not share the gospel for monetary gain but in especially in these present days the peddling of the Word of God for profit can be a very lucrative business.