

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

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

In Chapter 1 of **1 Thessalonians** 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 examining Chapter 2. In this chapter we are not looking at a church born but rather a church nurtured. In this chapter we are getting further insight into the Apostle Paul, not so much as an evangelist but rather as a pastor who is seeking to bring these new infant believers to completion.

What did Christ tell us to do? He told us to go into all the world and make disciples, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” This is exactly what we see Paul doing in chapters 1 and 2 of First Thessalonians.

Consider this thought for a moment. All of us in this room will be involved in all kinds of tasks during the course of our lives. Whether those tasks are done inside or outside the home, with the family or away from the family. Whether those tasks involve people or things. None of them will ever exceed the sheer blessedness of serving the Lord by going and making disciples and teaching them to obey Him. THIS IS THE TRUTH!!

Let us therefore equip ourselves for the work that Jesus has given us. Paul’s nurturing ministry amongst the Thessalonians can help us understand better how we can best minister to people. How best to minister to the people that God has brought into our lives.

Paul communicates the way he ministered to the Thessalonians by using three different images, three different pictures, three different portraits. **WHAT WAS THE FIRST OF THE THREE PICTURES THAT HE PRESENTS TO US?**

THE PICTURE OF A FAITHFUL STEWARD

Let us read **I Thess. 2:1-6** “**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 tells us that he had been “**approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.**” In other words he viewed himself as a steward. He therefore felt responsible to the Lord to minister the Lord’s Gospel in a manner that would be pleasing to Him.

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If we are ever going to effectively minister in the lives of people. Seeking to make disciples and teaching them to obey all that the Lord had commanded then we must view ourselves as the Lord's steward. We must come to the place in our lives where we feel personally responsible to minister the truth of God's word in the lives of others, particularly in respect to the gospel of God.

Hopefully the driving force of your life more than becoming rich, or pursuing pleasure, or anything else that this world might offer would be that you might be found faithful. Just as Paul proved himself faithful in his ministry to these Thessalonian believers. How did Paul prove himself faithful?

HE PROVED HIMSELF FAITHFUL IN RESPECT TO HIS MANNER OF MINISTRY

What was Paul's manner of ministry? He was persevering. We saw this in **VV. 1,2**. **“For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain** (or in other words empty of purpose). **(2) but after we had already suffered** (been beaten) **and been mistreated** (or in other words ridiculed) **in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you** (at Thessalonica) **the gospel of God amid much opposition”** (We were still even after all that we experienced at Philippi to engage the enemies of the Gospel in an intense contest or struggle).

Paul and his companions were clearly persevering, when less faithful stewards may have quit, Paul continued on. Perseverance is at the heart of faithfulness. How else did Paul prove himself faithful?

HE PROVED HIMSELF FAITHFUL IN RESPECT TO THE MESSAGE OF HIS MINISTRY

Let us read **V. 3** **“For our exhortation does not come from error**” What specifically was this exhortation? When Paul speaks of **“our exhortation”** he is specifically referring to the Gospel. We see this in **V. 2** where he identifies the “exhortation” as the “gospel.”

And what does he say about this **“exhortation”**? He said that this **“exhortation does not come from error..”**.... Or in other words he believed that the Gospel, that he was preaching, was true! He was convinced that the gospel, that he was preaching, was true!

Doesn't this make sense. How in the the world would we ever be able to proclaim the gospel amid much opposition if we didn't believe it to be true. Not just intellectually but personally, experientially. They knew the message was true because they had been personally transformed through it. Whereas they had been separated from God living a futile and vain manner of life they had come to experience life and life abundant.

This is how the church of Jesus Christ should be driven forward in power. Not by programs though programs can be good. Not by support groups though support groups can be good but rather through individuals who are personally convinced of the truthfulness of their 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 conclude that it is not so very important.

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Quite to the contrary. It is not only through the Gospel that we are able to come to experience experience peace with God but also peace with ourselves. The Gospel not only is the gateway to spiritual health but to personal renewal on every level. When we come into contact with people and they have various personal problems, know this and mark it well, that the solution to those problems in contained in and through the gospel of Christ.

And what is the gospel? We do not have to guess. Paul gives to us the answer to this question in **1 Cor. 15:1-11** “**Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, (2) by which also you are saved if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. (3) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (4) and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, (5) and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. (6) After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; (7) then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; (8) and last of all as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. (9) For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. (10) But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them yet not I, but the grace of God with Me. (11) Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.**” Have you believed? Have you placed your trust in the person and work of Jesus as it is revealed in the scripture? If you have then you have been born again. And the gospel should not be something we simply give intellectual assent to but rather have come to personally and experientially know to be true. And it is from this deep rooted conviction that we as God’s faithful stewards are to be bringing this message to others.

For me to be a faithful steward I must not only continue to keep on keeping on proclaiming the message but I must proclaim it as one who is convinced that our exhortation is not “**coming from error.**”

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.

HE PROVED HIMSELF FAITHFUL IN RESPECT TO THE MOTIVE OF HIS MINISTRY

We must understand that even though we may be sharing the message of the gospel and doing so with the personal conviction that our exhortation is not coming from error we may still not be considered to be that good and faithful steward if we do so from wrong motives.

Look at **V. 3** “**For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity**” Or in other words he was not guilty of uncleanness or preaching the right message with the wrong motives.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO USE THE CLOCK OF SPIRITUALLY TO SATISFY THE LUST OF THEIR FLESH

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In 2 Tim. 3:1-6 “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. (2) For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, (3) unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, (4) treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; (5) holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. (6) For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses” There are men who have a form of godliness but deny it’s power who appear to use their cloak of spirituality to cover the lust of their own flesh.

Not only this but it appears that there there are those who who will use the cloak of spirituality to not only cover over the lust of the flesh but also the lust of the eyes. They may give a pretense of the loving the Lord and being a faithful steward but their real love is money and what money can buy.

This is not only true today it was true doing the time of Paul. Notice Paul’s statement in **1 Thess. 2:5** “**For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed - God is witness.**” Their our people who use the ministry for financial gain and Paul realizing this was very sensitive about money matters. He did not want to give anyone a reason to accuse him of being a religious salesman. As an apostle, he had the privilege of receiving support. But he gave up that right in order to be free from any possible blame that would disgrace the ministry. All this is spelled out very clearly in **1 Cor. 9:1-18.**

Not only are there those who would use the cloak of spirituality not only to cover over the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes but also the pride of life. A biblical example of this problem is found 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. Paul’s had a single aim and that was to glorify Christ and get people to follow Him.

We can even see it in his response to those certain Christians who sought to cause him difficulty in his imprisonment. In **Phil.1:18** when he says, “**What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice!.**” He was able to rejoice, not in the selfishness of his critics, but in the fact that Christ was being preached! there was no envy in Paul’s heart. It mattered not that some were for him and some were against him. All that mattered was the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is a matter of historic record that the two great English evangelists, John Wesley and George Whitefield, disagreed on doctrinal matters. Both of them were very successful, preaching to thousands of people and seeing multitudes come to Christ. It is reported that somebody asked Wesley if he expected to see Whitefield in heaven, and the evangelists replied, “No, I do not.”

“then you do not think Whitefield is a converted man?”

“Of course he is a converted a converted man!” Wesley said. “But I do not expect to see him in heaven - because he will be so close to the throne of God and I so far away that I will not be able to see Him”

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Though he differed with George Whitfield in some matters and though many may thought that was George Whitfield was the more effective of the two evangelists yet Wesley had no envy in his heart.

Paul in **V. 3** is sharing with the Thessalonians that his preaching did not come from “**impurity.**” He in essence was telling them that he was doing what he was not being motivated by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes or the pride of life. He was doing what he was doing as a response to what the Lord in His grace had done for him. It was a ministry motivated by his love for the Lord and for others.

CONCLUSION

Paul provides an example for us to follow as we strive to be effective in our ministry with people. First of all we must view ourselves as a steward. We must come to the place in our lives where we recognize that all that we have has been entrusted to us by the Lord and we have a responsibility before Him to minister what we have been entrusted with to accomplish his purposes.

If we are going to be found faithful in our stewardship we have examined the following considerations.

1. The manner of our ministry - We need to be persevering in proclaiming the Gospel under all circumstances.
2. The message of our ministry - We need to speak our message with conviction personally and experientially knowing that our message does not come from error.
3. And finally we consider the motive for our ministry - We need to proclaiming the gospel with conviction from right motives. Our Gospel should be proclaimed not in order to satisfy the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life but rather as an outflow of our love for the Lord and others.