

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Helping the Baby to Grow Up 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 Part 3

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.

It was this specific work that gave purpose to Paul’s life. In **Phil. 1:21-24** Paul said, “**For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (22) But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. (23) But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; (24) yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.**” Paul saw his life in this world as a life that was to be concerned with “fruitful labor.” You ask what is he referring to? He is referring to going and making disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all that the Lord had commanded. This work was what gave meaning to Paul’s life.

This is why the church has been left in this world. We are here to be involved in fruitful labor. We are not here to enjoy ourselves. We are not here to entertain ourselves. We are not here to indulge ourselves. Though all these things may happen to some degree in our lives this should not be the purpose of our lives.

Our lives must be defined by the commission which Christ has given us. And if it is not then the Lord might as well just take us to heaven, for certainly as Paul said that would be far better. Hopefully each of us here this morning understand this and are, therefore, seeking to be more effective in this endeavor. And if this is so, then what Paul shares with us concerning his ministry amongst the Thessalonians should be of great interest.

As we examine **1 Thess. 2: 1-6** we will see that Paul paints for us three different images or pictures of how he viewed himself in doing the work that he felt called to do. The first image was that of a steward.

THE PICTURE OF A FAITHFUL STEWARD

Let us read **1 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.**

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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.

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.

We must have this on our minds continually. When we are with your families, friends, neighbors, fellow workmates, or perfect strangers. There should not ever be a time in our lives when we do not see ourselves as a steward of God and an ambassador of Jesus Christ.

Hopefully all of us here this morning have begun to see ourselves in this way. But now the question is, “Are we a faithful steward?” Paul certainly was a faithful steward. What do we see in this passage that proved his faithful stewardship?

HE PROVED HIMSELF FAITHFUL IN RESPECT TO HIS MANNER OF MINISTRY

And what was the manner of his ministry? He persevered in ministry. 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 willing even after all that we experienced at Philippi to engage in an intense struggle with the enemies of Christ at Thessalonica.)

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

How did he prove himself faithful in respect to the message of his ministry? He was convinced that the message he was proclaiming was true. We saw this in **V. 3** **“For our exhortation does not come from error.”** He was convinced of this not just intellectually but personally. He himself had been transformed by this the message that he was preaching. It was this personal conviction that drove him to proclaim the message as faithfully and fervently as he did. And the same will also be true of our lives if we truly believe the message that we are proclaiming is true. We will never be faithful steward unless we, as Paul, possess such a conviction. How else did Paul prove himself faithful?

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

Look again at **V. 3** “**For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity.....**” Paul did not proclaim the gospel in order to satisfy the lust of his flesh, or the lust his eyes, or pride of life. He shared it because he was under compulsion. **I Cor. 9:16** says “**For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.**” He was not doing this to meet some fleshly need in this life he was doing it as a natural outflow of all that the Lord had done to him and for him through the gospel of Christ. How else did Paul prove himself faithful?

HE PROVED HIMSELF FAITHFUL IN RESPECT TO THE METHOD OF HIS MINISTRY (VV. 3-6).

The Apostle Paul proved himself faithful because he not only did the right thing for the right reason but also in the right way. We have often heard the expression that there is a right way of doing things and a wrong way of doing things. This is not only true in secular matters but also in spiritual matters. And this is particularly true in respect to the work of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let us read **V.3** and see if this is not so. “**For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit.**” The word translated “deceit” in the NAS is the Greek word DOLOS which originally meant “a bait”, and from that “a trap.” In other words, Paul and his companions were making no attempt to trap people in making so-called professions of faith.

There is a tremendous emphasis in the church today for churches to become larger, bigger, and “better.” mega- churches are becoming much more common today than ever before. It would be very easy for churches, given this climate today, to be ever so subtly drawn into the growth frenzy and unknowingly be guilty of practicing deceit by inducing so called conversions for example, either by concealing the cost of discipleship or by offering fraudulent blessings.

COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

When Jesus called people to himself He was very clear concerning the cost of following Him. In **Matt. 10:34-39** is just one of many statements by Jesus that refers to the cost of following him. What does this passage say? “**Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. (35) For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; (36) and a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household. (37) He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me, (38) And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. (39) He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it.**” What is the cost of following Jesus? It is our life. Grace may be free, but it is not cheap.

It is very interesting for me to read various church advertisements and see what they are offering. They say to you, “Do you want to find a church experience that is fun, then come to our church.” “If you want to escape those long tedious boring sermons come to our church.”

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Can you imagine Jesus approaching the multitudes in His day in this way?

“Are you tired of those boring synagogue services. Do you want an old message presented in a more refreshing way then follow me! Do you want to a sanitized nursery facility with the best toys available then come follow me!”

I feel that churches are not being up front about what they are all about or at least what they should be all about. If you choose to join Valley Bible we do not want you to think that you have joined a country club where every possible desire that you might have would be met . Rather we would like you to know that we are a group of disciples that are truly desiring all that Christ would have us to be and to do. We also want you to know that we certainly have not arrived. We are not presenting ourselves as a perfect church, but we are striving for this and there is a cost to this. There is a price to be paid and it is your willingness to give up your very life in the pursuit of the will of God for your life.

OFFERING FRAUDULENT BLESSINGS

“Another piece of bait that churches will throw out is if you come to God you will be blessed with health, wealth, and prosperity.”

Virtually every false religion ever spawned by man worships a god whose function is to deliver some sort of cargo. That is, human religions invent gods for utilitarian reason; the deities exist to serve men, rather than the other way around. Word Faith Theology has turned Christianity into a system no different from the lowest human religions -- a form of voodoo where God can be coerced, cajoled, manipulated, controlled, and exploited for the Christian’s own ends.

There was a person who received in the mail the following brochure which included “a bar of prayer-blessed soap.” It said, “We are going to WASH away all BAD LUCK, SICKNESS, MISFORTUNES AND EVIL! Yes, even that evil person you want out of your life! Jesus helped a man wash blindness from his eyes. I want to help you concerning Hexes, Vexes, Home Problems, Love, Happiness and Joy!”

Jesus came into this world to give us life and life abundant. But nowhere in the scriptures are we led to believe that health, wealth, and material prosperity in any way has been guaranteed to us, at least in respect to this present life as a part of the deal.

Paul is saying that he never baited or trapped anyone into becoming a so-called Christian. He explained to them the cost of that decision and gave them realistic expectations of what life would be like this side of glory. Paul didn’t want to gather the masses or multitudes around him or into church buildings. All he wanted was to build Christ’s true church with genuine disciples.

Never did the clarity of Paul’s message become altered in order to make it more attractive to people. Look at **V. 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.** There must have been certain individuals accusing of him of playing to the crowds. But he is saying that this just is not so. He makes this point by making three very specific denials.

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HE DINIED THAT HE WAS A FLATTERER

Look at **V. 5** “**for we never came with flattering speech.**” Flattery implies manipulation - it is flattery designed to achieve the flatterer’s ends. Giving someone a sincere complement in order to minister to that individual is one thing but to lavish sincere or insincere complements upon people to achieve your own selfish ends is quite another thing.

HE DENIED THAT HE WAS A GOLD DIGGER

Look again “**nor with a pretext for greed.**” It may have been common knowledge that Paul received gifts from Philippi. This may have led some to conclude that he had come to Thessalonica hoping for some more of the same. Later, this same motive is suggested again with reference to his collection for the Judean churches, and Paul again denied it in **2 Cor. 9:5; 12:17f.**). At the end of the verse he calls God as his witness in these matters that greed played no part in their missionary service.

HE DENIED THAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR THE PRAISE OF MEN

He denies that he was looking for the praise of men either from the Thessalonians or anyone else. “**Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others.**” If this was not desire what was it? His desire was simply that God would be glorified through the gospel.

2 Cor. 4:7-15 “**But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; (8) we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; (9) persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; (10) always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. (11) For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh, (12) So death works in us, but life in you. (13) But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, “I Believed, therefore I spoke,” we also believer, therefore also we speak; (14) knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. (15) For all things are for you sakes, that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.**”

What a wonderful heart. And we must keep in mind that it wasn’t as if they could have easily drawn the attention to themselves as apostles of Christ. How could they have done this? By asserting their authority. Look at the end of **V. 6** “**even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.**” They could have used their position to exalt themselves but they were men fully focused on service. What did Paul say in **2 Cor. 4:15** “**For all things are for your sakes, that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.**”