

## The Pastor's Heart

### 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12

“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, <sup>2</sup>not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. <sup>3</sup>Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of <sup>1</sup>sin is revealed, the son of perdition, <sup>4</sup>who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. <sup>5</sup>Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? <sup>6</sup>And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. <sup>7</sup>For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. <sup>8</sup>And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. <sup>9</sup>The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, <sup>10</sup>and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. <sup>11</sup>And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, <sup>12</sup>that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

**Chapter one of 1 Thessalonians introduced us to what every church should be. Chapter two introduces us to what every pastor should be.** It explains how the great Apostle cared for the new believers in the churches that he founded. **2 Corinthians 11:28 tells us that Paul considered "the care of all the churches" a greater burden than all the sufferings and difficulties he experienced in his ministry.**

Just as God uses people to bring the Gospel to the lost, He also uses people to nurture the babes, in Christ and help lead them to maturity. The church at Thessalonica was born through the faithful preaching of Paul and his helpers, and the church was nurtured through the faithful pastoring that Paul and his friends gave to the infant church. This helped them stand strong in the midst of persecution.

In these verses, Paul reminded them of the kind of ministry he had as he taught and cared for the young church. Three pictures of his ministry emerge.

First, we are able to see Paul as a steward of the Gospel. Look at verses 1-6, “For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.” Verse 4 tells us that Paul was convinced that he had been “put in trust with the Gospel.” In fact, Paul said this in Galatians 1:11-12, “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Paul looked on himself as a steward of God’s message.

A steward owns nothing, but possesses and uses everything that belongs to his master. In Genesis 39:1-6 we are told that Joseph was a steward in the household of Potiphar. That is, he managed his master's affairs and used all his master's goods to promote his master's welfare. Jesus reminds us in Luke 16:1-2 that every steward one day

**must give an account of his stewardship.** If he is found unfaithful, he will suffer loss.

**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"** to God's glory. Some Christians think that the church's only responsibility is to protect the Gospel from those who would change it (Galatians 1:6-9). **But we also must share the Gospel; otherwise, we are protecting it in vain.**

Paul gives us this insight in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." **Therefore, in Paul's mind, faithfulness is the most important quality a steward possesses.** He may not be popular in the eyes of men; but he dare not be unfaithful in the eyes of God, as seen in verse 4, "Not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts." **The pastor and/or Christian who "plays the grandstands" will lose God's approval.** When we see the characteristics of Paul's ministry as a steward, we understand what faithfulness means.

**Second, we are able to see the manner of his ministry.** Look at verses 1-2, "For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict." **Paul and Silas had been beaten and humiliated at Philippi; yet they came to Thessalonica and preached.** Most of us would have taken a vacation or found an excuse not to minister. **Paul was courageous, he was not a quitter.** He had a **"holy boldness"** that was born out of a dedication to God.

Paul's preaching was the cause of "much conflict." **In other words, when the apostle Paul came to town it was like a "whirlwind" had taken place.** Paul was a **"stormtrooper"** for the

cause of Jesus Christ. There was no “middle ground” when it came to the apostle Paul, you either loved him, or you hated him. **Why?** Because he always went against tradition to preach the truth of the Gospel.

**Third, we are able to see the *message* of his ministry.** Look at verse 3, “For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit.” The Greek reads like this, “So you can see that we were not preaching with any deceit or impure purposes or trickery.” Paul was writing to assure his hearers, that his message was not something that he, himself, had “made up,” but it was a message from God. Ladies and gentlemen, if the preacher has no message from God, he has no message at all.

**Four, we are able to see the *motive* of his message.** He says this in verse 3, “For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit.” The Greek literally reads, “nor of an impure motive.” Listen very carefully right here - It is impossible to preach the *right message* with the *wrong motives*. And I am convinced the reason that so many sermons today are not well received in our churches, is that preachers are using the pulpits to get *their* message across instead of *God's* message.

**Five, we are able to see the *method* of his ministry.** Look once more at verse 3, “For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit.” In other words, Paul did not use trickery to win converts. The Greek word translated “deceit” carries the idea of “baiting a hook.” **In other words, Paul did not try to “trap” people into being saved, the way a clever salesman traps people into buying his product.** Salvation does not lie at the end of a clever argument or a subtle presentation. Salvation is the result of Holy Spirit conviction based on the Word of God.

**Paul’s *method* was as pure as his *motives*: he presented the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit, and trusted God to bring a person to salvation.** Through the years, we have used a term

in our preaching and teaching that really is not a biblical term, and the term is “Soul Winners.” The truth of the matter is, we are not “soul winners,” we are “seed sowers.” **God has called us to sow the seeds of the Gospel by simply sharing what He has done for us through the finished work of Christ.** It is the Holy Spirit that wins a person to Christ. That is why Christ said in Acts 1:8, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” The word is “witnesses.” We are simply to tell what we know to be true in our own lives.

**Six, we are able to see Paul’s tender boldness.** Look at verses 7-8, “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.” The Greek words that Paul uses here that are translated “a nursing mother” portray that of tenderness and caring. As a nursing mother imparts life to her child, Paul gently feeds these new Christians on the “milk of the Word” that they might grow into adulthood. **As an apostle, Paul was a man of authority; but he always used his authority in love.** The young Christians sensed his tender loving care as he taught them the Gospel.

**Seven, we are able to see Paul’s deep concern.** Look at verses 9-12, “For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” Paul considered himself, a “spiritual father” to the believers at Thessalonica, just as he did toward the saints at Corinth, as seen in 1 Corinthians 4:15, “For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you

do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” **The Spirit of God used the Word of God in Paul's ministry, and many people in Thessalonica were born again into the family of God.**

Verse 11 is a very interesting verse, and reads like this in the Greek, “And you know that we treated each of you as a father treats his own children.” **As busy as he was, Paul still had time to pay attention to the members of this great church as if they were his own children.** While it is good for pastors and church staff to preach and/or teach to larger groups, we need to understand that **nothing – absolutely nothing – will take the place of loving people.** Our Lord was never too busy to speak to individuals, even though He preached to great multitudes.

**It was during this time of personal contact that Paul encouraged the believers.** You see, Paul was aware that Satan is constantly seeking to get Christians discouraged. And every Christian needs someone to encourage them in the Lord. The word that has been translated “exhorting” is the Greek word that means, “to call to one's side, to encourage.” **It does not mean that Paul scolded them. Rather, it means he encouraged them to go on with the Lord.**

**Eight, we are able to see the heart of Paul's message.** Look at verse 12, “That you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” In the Greek, the verb is in the present tense, and should read, “Continue to live worthy of God, who is continually calling you into His kingdom and glory.” Folks, the God who called us to salvation is constantly calling us to a life of holiness and obedience, as seen in 1 Peter 1:15-16, “But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, Be holy, for I am holy.”

**No wonder the church at Thessalonica prospered in spite of persecution, and shared the Gospel with others for miles around.**

**They had been born again, based on the Word of God, and nurtured right by a godly pastor who loved God and taught His Word.**