

A MODEL FOR MINISTRY
1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

Introduction

Jim Zieger, our former Associate Pastor, sends you his greetings. He had traveled in from Pennsylvania for his regular cardiac checkup, so I was able to have lunch with him. He and Michele are doing well, but they miss being here very much, and we miss having them here. That is why on occasion they will make the more than two hour drive to be here.

Meeting with Jim reminded me of the difficulty they and many others have had in finding a good church after moving. Jim has said he got spoiled coming here, but all he is really looking for is a church in which the preaching is focused on explaining the Scriptures in their context and the people love Christ and one another. That is not always easy because so many pastors have been trained to be something other than Biblical preachers, and without that solid foundation, the people will not mature as they should in their walk with Christ and one another. Muddled preaching results in mediocre lives. It is not enough to want to minister to others, you must also have the proper motivations and set a proper example if you are to serve the Lord to His glory and accomplish His purposes.

We have been studying 1 Thessalonians because it is commended by Paul as a model church. They set a good example for all other churches to follow in their own reception of the gospel and then proclaiming it to others far and wide. They had, as stated in 1 Thess. 1:9-10, *“turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.”* The reality of that conversion was demonstrated in them becoming *“an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia”* (1:7). Thessalonica was a major port town that was also on the Egnatian highway, and they proclaimed to the east and west on that highway throughout Macedonia, and also south on ships into Achaia, but everywhere sailors who had been in Thessalonica went, they reported what had happened there (1:8). All of this happened despite the tribulation that came upon that church so quickly.

A major reason for this kind of response in Thessalonica was the example that was set before them in Paul and his co-laborers, Silas, Timothy and Luke. The Thessalonians had become imitators of them (1:6). We gain a greater insight into the example the missionaries had set by Paul’s explanation of their motives and ministry in chapter 2. You will do well if you also follow that example.

Review - 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6

In the last sermon in this series three weeks ago, I examined the missionaries motives for ministry explained in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6. Let me quickly review that because today’s sermon on verses 7-12 is based on that.

“¹ 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 contrasts their coming and motives to the religious hucksters that were common at that time that preyed on the ignorant feigning to be messengers from the gods while exploiting others for personal

gain. Paul and his companions came with a true message from God demonstrated by 1) their boldly proclaiming the message though they were opposed and had already suffered for it, 2) their earnest appeals concerning their message was without any error to mislead them, any impurity to exploit them, or any trickery to deceive them. Paul strengthened his argument by pointing out they did not come with any flattering speech or hidden agenda of greed because their motive was to please God, not men. They did not seek any kind of glory from anyone. They did not even use the right and authority they had as apostles to take a collection from them for their support.

All of these things demonstrated that they came with pure motives to deliver a pure message by pure means. That is a contrast to the religious hucksters that came with motives of greed with a message of error and impurity delivered with flattery and deceit.

Their Example to the Thessalonians - 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

As we continue in verses 7-12 Paul makes further contrast with the religious hucksters by pointing out how they behaved among the Thessalonians which further demonstrated their purity of motives, message and method. He does this by pointing out four areas of their example to them. 1) Their Example of Affection. 2) Their Example of Labor. 3) Their Example of Behavior. 4) Their Example of Exhortation. His case is made easy because they were witnesses to each of these, and Paul reminds them of this or calls them to remember in each case.

⁷ But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. ⁸ Having so fond an affection 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 very dear to us. ⁹ For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; ¹¹ just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, ¹² so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Their Example of Affection - 1 Thess. 2:7-8

Paul begins with a strong conjunction, “but,” to contrast what they did compared to what they could have done. There is some sense that this refers to what they could have done as apostles. I pointed out in the previous sermon that Paul makes the point in 1 Corinthians 9:1-18 that as an apostle he had the proper right to receive compensation for the work he was doing among them even referring to the fact that the Lord taught that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel (Matthew 10:10). But Paul and his companions did not exercise that right. However, I believe the strong contrast here in verse 7 is set against the charlatan hucksters that Paul described by contrast in verses 3-6. Those men exploited their followers with flattery and deceit that hid their greed. They came to get for themselves. Paul and his companions were the opposite. They came to give as shown in his illustration.

Paul states that they “proved to be gentle” among them. The verb here is from γίνομαι / ginomai which has a root meaning of having or acquiring certain characteristics (Louw-Nida) so is often translated as “become” or “became.” Many other versions translate this simply as “we were.” The sense is that in contrast to the religious hucksters, they were characterized by a very different quality. They were gentle, ἡπιοί / āpois in their midst. The word is translated as kind in 2 Timothy 2:24 and contrasted with being quarrelsome. This characteristic is then further described with the analogy of a nursing mother tenderly caring for or cherishing her own children. The term for caring for / cherish is θάλπω / thalpō which literally refers to keep warm. You would be hard pressed to describe something more gentle than a mother nursing her child and keeping the baby warm with her own body. That is Paul’s description of their behavior among the Thessalonians. In contrast to the religious charlatans who came to exploit by any means possible, they came to give and care for them as a mother would her own child.

(Let me briefly comment that there is debate about a textual problem in this verse revolving around whether the Greek letter ν / n belongs with ἡπιοι / āpioi or not. If it does, then the word become “infant” which is how it is translated in some versions. There is good manuscript support for both versions, but the context better fits it being gentle than infant for a nursing mother is gentle with her child and not like an infant herself).

In keeping with that description Paul next states they had a yearning affection for them. This is a rare word and only used here in the New Testament. According to TDNT it is “*to feel oneself drawn to something,*” with strong intensification of the feeling. A sense of the strong feeling is gained by noting this word has been found on burial inscriptions of the parents’ longing for their dead child. That is not the kind of “warm inward attachment” a false teacher has for his followers, but it is what the missionaries had for the Thessalonians.

It should be noted that this a middle or passive participle meaning that this is not something they generated in themselves. The direct implication is that their desires and actions toward the Thessalonians was placed there by God. That is what is meant by the phrase more commonly used today, “God placed it on my heart to . . .” It really is the only way to explain the common phenomena among missionaries that quickly develop a loving and sacrificial commitment to people they hardly know or they may only know about their need for the gospel. They leave behind family, friends and the comforts of home to often risk their lives to bring the gospel to people that might even be hostile to them. But God places it upon their hearts to pursue such an endeavor so that they will not be shaken. The same is true, though perhaps to a lesser degree of extreme sacrifice, for people taking up all sorts of different ministries within their own nation, culture or community. God places it on their hearts to serve Him in a certain way, and that is part of the mystical side of God directing the path of those that seek to follow Him.

Are you seeking to serve the Lord? Then ask yourself what God has placed on your heart? What burden has He placed upon you? Paul started with a burden to preach the gospel to those that had not heard. He described it himself as a compulsion (1 Cor. 9:16) to which the Lord had appointed him (Acts 26:16-20). It may start that way for you as well. There may not even be much emotion at all in the beginning other than a simple desire to be faithful to use whatever gifts God has given you to serve Him. But the emotion of having a strong desire to serve the people God has put before you also develops as you step forward in faith with God supplying what is needed as it is needed.

Paul goes on in the rest of verse 8 to state the result of that affectionate desire and the reason behind their behavior for they “*were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.*” They took pleasure in fulfilling their desires (εὐδοκέω / eudokeō) by sharing (μεταδίδωμι / metadidōmi) with the Thessalonians the two things they had - the gospel of God and their own souls. As itinerant missionaries they would not have had much in the way of material goods, but they shared what they had which was actually much more valuable.

The first is the gospel of God. Sometime the gospel is mentioned so often at churches that it is taken for granted and its significance is lost. Gospel, εὐαγγέλιον / euangelion, is good news, and this is good news from God. That would be striking to a pagan from the start because they generally lived in fear of their gods and goddesses. Their quest was to appease them so that they would not do bad things to them and instead do something good or at least leave them alone. Messages from the gods were usually about what the gods were demanding. The good news from the true God is radically different from all of that. It is a message of what God has given to reconcile man to Himself (John 3:16). It is a message of perfect love which casts out all fear (1 John 4:18). It is a message that removes God’s wrath so that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). The gospel of God is the message of good news that radically changed the Thessalonians so that they turned from their idols to believe and serve the true God out of love for Him instead of fear.

Paul’s letter to the Romans is his gospel tract. He starts his good news that the gospel is *the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes* (Romans 1:16) with bad news that all men are sinners that

fall short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). He specifically points out God's wrath abiding on the immoral unrighteous in Rom. 1:18-32, the moral unrighteous in Rom. 2:1-16, and the religious unrighteous in Rom. 2:17-29. Some people are obviously immoral by their behavior and desires, others have a veneer of morality because they are not as flagrant in their sin as the immoral unrighteous, but they actually practice the same things even if to a lesser degree. Then there are those that think of themselves as pious, but they are self righteous twisting what God has revealed in order to try and justify themselves. Until you are convicted by the Holy Spirit of your sin and condemnation, you will not look up to God for salvation. Paul then goes on to describe Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah promised by the prophets of old, who came as the second Adam to die as a demonstration of God's love in paying the redemption price of man's sin so that He would be the just and justifier of those who have faith in Him (Romans 3:21-31). Faith in Jesus Christ is reckoned by God to be righteousness so that the one that believes is justified. That faith brings about death of self and a resurrection to a new life in Christ which is beautifully pictured in baptism portraying our own identification with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. As slaves of righteousness, we are freed from our old master, sin, and given eternal life as a free gift (Romans 4-6). We will have troubles in this world (Romans 7), but we have a hope that transcends it since we look forward to Christ's return and our transformation and glorification (Romans 8). Nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:26-39). That is the gospel of God.

But notice the way that Paul states what they were pleased to impart to them. It was "*not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives.*" As traveling religious men, they would be expected to have a message from their God, though the gospel of God is far beyond any man's expectation. Paul states they went beyond what might have been expected. They also shared with them their own lives - literally, souls (ψυχὰς / psuchas). They were not aloof like was common for religious authorities that presented themselves as superior. They were personal with them and became involved which also requires vulnerability because people would then also see their weakness. If you are personal with others, your humanity will show and that requires humility. This is still necessary for anyone that is going to have a ministry that is effective according to God's standards, because God is looking at the hearts of people, not the outward facade.

Why did Paul and his companions do this? Because the Thessalonians had become very dear to them. They had come to love them, which reinforces what Paul said earlier about them having an affectionate desire toward them. There is no doubt that Christians can be prickly and difficult to love because we are saved sinners and not yet glorified saints, yet the love between fellow Christians goes beyond even love for family - or at least it should. We are commanded to love one another as He has loved us and by that all men would know that we are His disciples (John 13:24-25). If that is not true in your own life, then you need to consider the reason why and change it.

Their Example of Labor - 1 Thess. 2:9

In verses 7-8, Paul makes his case with direct statements about what they did and what they desired. He now offers three examples as proof of his claims because each are things they would have known as witnesses to them. He begins verse 9, *For you recall brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.*

Paul is not claiming they have forgotten their example, but he is asking them to recall to think about it again (μνημονεύω / mnāmoneuō), specifically their labor and hardship. Paul uses these two words together three times, twice in 1 Thessalonians. Labor comes from a word (κόπον / kopon) which means "beaten" and came to mean weariness as if one had been beaten. It came to be a common term for work that causes physical fatigue. Hardship (μόχθον / mochthon) refers to physical or mental toil. The combination means being tired both physically and mentally to the point of weariness. That is quite understandable since he notes that they had been working night and day expending themselves so that they would not be a financial burden to any of them and also proclaiming the gospel to them.

It was common in the Jewish culture of that time that even a man that was going to be a scholar was also taught a trade. That had a practical side since intellectuals often did not earn enough from teaching to support themselves, so they also worked a trade. We know from Acts 18:3 that Paul was a tent-maker and that he worked with Aquila and Priscilla at that trade when he was in Corinth. Tent-making was a good trade for Paul to have because he could find work wherever he might be, and that became his common practice. He was not against receiving support from established churches as he did from the Philippians (2 Corinthians 11:9; Philippians 1:7). However, Paul did not want to be a financial burden on those to whom he was preaching the gospel.

So Paul and the others worked hard at their trades to support himself. Luke was a physician (Colossians 4:14). We do not know the trades of Silas or Timothy. On top of that work, they also preached and taught the people, so on top of the physical labor there was also the mental toil involved with that.

That is still the common practice of evangelical missionaries around the world. They receive support from established churches that they might preach free of charge to those hearing the gospel in establishing new churches. Many missionaries, even those in small churches throughout the United States, work other jobs in order to support themselves and then do their church work on top of that.

Their Example of Behavior - 1 Thess. 2:10

The next example Paul reminds them about is their behavior among them. ¹⁰ *You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers.*” Paul cites two witnesses here. The Thessalonians saw what Paul and his companions were like outwardly, and God knew what the missionaries were like inwardly.

Paul’s claim here is that they were devout, upright and blameless in their behavior toward those in Thessalonica that were believing. Devout, ὀσίως / osiōs, a cognate of the word for holy, is fulfilling divine law or holy customs due to inward attitude. It is a characteristic of God that He calls us to imitate - be holy for I am holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). The Thessalonians would have observed the missionaries piety and God would know their hearts. Upright, δικαίως / dikaiōs, refers to being and doing what is right. It is used as a contrast to sin in 1 Corinthians 15:34 and describes moral living in Titus 2:12 and in this passage. Blameless, ἀμέπτως / amemptōs, is without blame, guiltless, innocent. They conducted themselves in a righteous manner in obedience to the Lord’s commands so that they could not be blamed for anything. Again their outward behavior would have been obvious, and God knew their hearts.

If you are going to serve the Lord, then you must take what Paul describes here to heart. The people you seek to serve will learn more about what it means to walk with Christ by your example of life than by anything you tell them. Why? Simply because those who are younger in the faith or are less mature will look to those who are supposed to be more mature as models of living out the Christian life. More is caught than taught, so don’t confuse your message by living contrary to what you say. This is true for parents with their children, it is also true in ministry regardless of what your spiritual gift(s) might be because your attitude will also be conveyed. Paul and his companions were effective because their lives matched what they proclaimed. What would others testify about you based on your example? It would be similar to what would be said of Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke, then praise God. If it is not what you would like, then you need to start making changes today. Examine yourself to identify the specific areas that need to change, make a plan to change them, then tell a friend who will encourage you and hold you accountable.

Their Example of Exhortation - 1 Thess. 2:11-12

The final example Paul sets forth is how they conducted their ministry. Paul again points out these are things they already know about them. They would remember them as witnesses or know from being told by first hand witnesses. ¹¹ *Just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring*

each one of you as a father would his own children, ¹² so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

There is a normal and natural difference in the way a mother and father interact with their children related to the roles each has been given by God. Back in verse 7 Paul had used the analogy of a mother's care for her children in explaining their own gentleness and care for the Thessalonians. A good mother sacrificially nurtures her children and ensures they are protected, safe, comforted and usually well fed too! A mother will have to correct her children and may have to be stern at times, but she is the one the children will go to when they are hurt or afraid and want to be comforted.

A father's role is different. Among his responsibilities is planning and preparing his children for the future so that they will mature and become godly men and women who will be a blessing in society. He should be tender toward his children, but he also must be firm to make sure the lessons are learned and character is developed. Paul uses the example of a father with his own children to explain an additional aspect of their ministry to the Thessalonians.

Paul points out that they know how they were exhorting, encouraging and imploring them toward a proper walk with God. Exhorting, παρακαλέω / parakaleō, is a compound word combining "alongside" with "to call." That idea gives it a fairly wide range of meaning from a coach shouting to an athlete to keep going, to reminding someone about great truths that will comfort them when feeling down, to earnestly requesting someone to take action.

Encouraging here, παραμυθέομαι / paramytheomai, is another compound word combining the word "toward" and "to speak to someone." This word is used in John 11 for those who gathered around Martha and Mary to console them. Paul uses it in 1 Thess. 5:14 in the sense of encourage as a means to help the fainthearted to become motivated again.

Imploring, μαρτύρομαι / martupromai, originally meant "to invoke someone as a witness about something," and it is used in the sense of testify in Acts 20:26, 26:22, Galatians 5:3, and Ephesians 4:17. It also took on the additional meaning of making an emphatic demand as used in this verse and hence translated as implore, charge, insist, testify and urge.

The specific action they had encouraged, implored and insisted on was that they walk in a manner of the God who was calling them into His own kingdom and glory. Paul made a similar statement in Ephesians 4:1, *Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore [exhort -παρακαλέω / parakaleō] you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.* The idea is that they were to live their life in a way that reflects that they have responded to God's calling to be part of His kingdom and living for His glory. That was the manner of life that Paul and his companions had demonstrated to them when they were there.

Paul gives a further description of this and the means by which it is attained in Colossians 1:9-12, "⁹ For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light."

The marks of such a life include pleasing God, bearing fruit in every good work, increasing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened by the Holy Spirit to be steadfast and patient, being joyous in giving thanks to God the Father, and looking forward to sharing in the glorious inheritance of the saints. The means by which it is attained is being filled with the knowledge of God's will in spiritual wisdom and understanding which comes by the Holy Spirit through God's word which is why Paul was diligent to pray for them.

All of that sounds fairly complex, but it simply reduces down to living out your life in the reality of believing the gospel. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the eternal son of God, born of the virgin

Mary, who lived a sinless life, then died as the substitute payment for your sin and then proved His claims and promises by rising from the dead, and then ascended to heaven where He is making intercession for you with the Father and is preparing a place for you in heaven from which He will return one day to take you back with Him to dwell with Him forever, then walking in obedience to His commands is the only logical thing you can do. He is God, you are not. He designed you and so He knows how you will function best and fulfill the purposes for which He created you. Why then do we need to be exhorted, encouraged and implored? The problem is threefold. The first is ignorance of what God has commanded, and the second is remnant worldly desires, and third is the pressure from the world to conform to it. We need to be taught, directed, uplifted and sometimes dragged along to live properly as a proper citizen of God's kingdom that seeks His glory.

Conclusions

Paul has made a solid case to the Thessalonians by calling them to remember what they had witnessed themselves about the behavior and motivations of the missionaries. They were nothing like the religious charlatan hucksters who came to exploit people with false messages from false gods. Paul and his companions came because they were compelled by the true God to proclaim to them the good news of Jesus Christ. They came without flattery or hidden agendas. They came at their own expense and earned their own way laboring night and day to the point of weariness to provide for themselves and proclaim the gospel to them free of charge. They came with the gentleness and care of a mother nursing her own child and the diligence of a father training his children to maturity. They came as men who were devout, upright and blameless in their behavior. It is wise for each of us to follow that example in our own lives and ministry because life is not about your own kingdom and glory, it is about God's kingdom and glory. Remembering that and living accordingly is the path to success in what matters the most - eternity.

Sermon Notes - 10/25/2020
A Model for Ministry - 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

Introduction

A Model Church

Review - 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6

True ministry vs Religious Hucksters

Their Example to the Thessalonians - 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

Their Example of Affection - 1 Thess. 2:7-8

“But” - The contrast

Their gentleness

Their yearning affection

Compulsion, Desire, Emotion

The Resulting Ministry

Good News from God vs Messages from Pagan gods

The Gospel of God

Sharing their Souls

Affection

Their Example of Labor - 1 Thess. 2:9

Recall

Labor & Hardship

Paul's Trade

A Model for Missions Work

Their Example of Behavior - 1 Thess. 2:10

Devout, ὀσίως / osiōs

Upright, δικαίως / dikaiōs

Blameless, ἀμέμπτως / amemptōs

The Importance of Example

Their Example of Exhortation - 1 Thess. 2:11-12

Mothers & Fathers

A Father's Role

Exhorting, παρακαλέω / parakaleō

Encouraging, παραμυθέομαι / paramutheomai

Imploring, μαρτύρομαι / martupromai

Walk worthy of your calling

Colossians 1:9-12

Living out what you believe

Conclusions

KIDS KORNER

Young Children - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Count how many times the word "example" is said. 2) Discuss with your parents how the examples of other people affect you.

THINK ABOUT IT. Questions to consider in contemplating the sermon or discussing it with others. Why is it hard to find a good Bible teaching church in which the people love God and one another? In what ways were the Thessalonians a model church? What contrasts does Paul make between himself and his companions compared to the religious hucksters of that time in terms of motive and manner of ministry? How does Paul's analogy of a nursing mother explain their gentleness and care of the Thessalonians? What is the gospel of God? What is the significance of them sharing their souls with Thessalonians? What was their labor and hardship? What was Paul's trade? Why did Paul work so hard to avoid being a burden on the Thessalonians? What are the characteristics of each of these behaviors: Devout, Upright, Blameless? How does the role of a father differ from the role of a mother? How do each of these words mean, and how do they fit the role of a father: Exhort, Encourage, Implore? What does it mean to walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you? What would that look like in practical terms? Why would Christians need to be exhorted, encouraged and implored to do that? What is the purpose of your existence? What then should be the main goal of your life in the present? What other goals would fit within that? If may need to change in your life? When is your plan to make those changes?