

# 1 Thessalonians Ch2v1-7 - Authentic Church

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Preacher: Jonny Grant

[ 0 : 00 ] Yeah, thanks. Our reading today is 1 Thessalonians 2, verses 1-7.

It's page 1186 in the Red Church Bible. You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results.

We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God, we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition.

For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.

We are not trying to please people, but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed. God is our witness.

[ 1 : 13 ] We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority.

Instead, we were like young children among you. Thank you very much, Louise.

Let's keep our Bibles open there. I'm just waiting on some water. I wasn't prepared, so we'll wait for that or I'll be pausing and getting stuck.

So just a reminder, we've been looking at this letter of Thessalonians, perhaps one of the first letters that Paul has written to a church in Thessalonica in Greece.

And we've covered the first few sessions together. And if you've missed any of them, please have a look on our website. All the talks are recorded there for you to follow up.

[ 2 : 26 ] Thank you very much. Thanks. Well, let's pray together and ask for the Lord's help as we look at his word.

Father, thank you that you have given to us all that we need as we live for you and serve one another.

Thank you for this letter written centuries ago, recorded for us today in our time, so that we may be encouraged and built up in our faith and helping us to live and be the kind of church you call us to be.

Please help us by the power of your spirit. Amen. Amen. Well, on a trip overseas quite a while ago, I was exploring one of the local markets in order to get some gifts to bring home.

And on one of the stands, a very enthusiastic man insisted that I buy a bottle of his aftershave. So we haggled and so on, and eventually we agreed on a good price.

[ 3 : 59 ] And when I got home, I took off the silky wrapping, opened up the beautiful gift box. Pssh, pssh. It was a counterfeit.

It was just water in a bottle. No scent whatsoever. I had been tricked, taken for a ride. Now, when we pull back the wrapping of the church, when we get to the very heart and centre of the church, what do we find?

Are we authentic? Or are we counterfeit? Is our message that we proclaim in the ministries that we're involved in, are they real?

Or are they fake? But when the apostle Paul arrived in Thessalonica to preach the gospel, he encountered strong opposition.

And in fear of their lives, for the mob that were after them, they escaped to the next town round the corner to Berea. But when the dust had settled, it seems that some of the new believers had begun to question Paul's motive.

[ 5 : 17 ] If his message was authentic, and if his ministry was genuine, well, then he would have never left us. It seems he just arrived into town wanting to make a quick buck, and as soon as troubles came, well, Paul and his buddies headed for the hills.

So in part, Paul writes to defend himself, and as he does, he shows us today what an authentic church is like.

What our message and ministry is. That it must be true, and it must be clear. So two big ideas we're going to look at this morning.

Here's our first one, our message entrusted with the gospel. Look at verse 4. On the contrary, so despite what you think of me running away and leaving you on your own, on the contrary, he says, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.

Now we need to know what we have been entrusted with. So a few things. First, we've been entrusted with the gospel.

[ 6 : 45 ] The gospel is what we've been singing and celebrating about this morning. The good news about Jesus Christ God's chosen king who's come to rescue us from our sins and to establish his loving rule in our lives.

It's all about a person, the person of Jesus, who dies for you and me, taking the blame for our rebellion and who rises again from the dead, defeating death, giving us life and life eternal.

This is good news because it's not something that we do for ourselves, but it's all done by God for us.

And in response, we turn from ourself and we put our trust in Christ. this is the wonderful, beautiful gospel.

But this gospel that we have is God's. It's not a made-up message by Paul and his team. Have a look at the end of verse 2.

[ 7 : 54 ] But with the help of our God, we dare to tell you his gospel, the gospel of God. End of verse 8.

We were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well. Or look at the end of verse 9. We worked night and day in order not to be burdened to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

You see, it's not just an idea or a philosophy invented by any person or by any church. We don't just kind of sit around and say, let's come up with a message to tell.

No, this has been revealed by God. Verse 13. We also thank God continually because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God.

This wonderful message is the very word from God to restore broken lives and restore and renew this disordered world.

[ 9 : 20 ] And it is this gospel that has been entrusted. You see, the apostle Paul was just like us.

Sometimes we kind of set him high and above everybody else. Well, he needed the gospel too. He needed to trust Jesus for forgiveness of his sin. But he did have a special and unique calling.

That's what we read in verse 4. He says, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. Now, to help us understand this unique calling, have a flick forward to 2 Timothy.

So you get to 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, and then 2 Timothy. chapter 1. 2 Timothy, chapter 1.

Paul is now writing to young Timothy, who's pastor of a church, and we're going to pick it up in verse 11.

[ 10 : 38 ] So Paul is speaking, he says, and of this gospel, I was appointed a herald, so somebody who announces good news, an apostle, one who has been sent by God, and a teacher.

So he was uniquely set apart to announce and teach the gospel. He was given a special authority. His words, and his words that have been written down for us, are to be considered the very word of God.

So he can say, verse 13, what you heard from me, keep us a pattern of sound teaching. Now nobody else could say that.

I can't stand up before you today and say, you know, what you hear from me, keep us a pattern of sound teaching. I mean, the words of Johnny Grant. No, these are the words of God given to Paul.

What you heard from me, keep us a pattern of sound teaching with faith, in love, in Christ Jesus.

Guard the good deposit.

[ 11 : 50 ] What is the good deposit? The gospel, the good news. That was entrusted to you. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. You see, this same gospel message that Paul had received.

He has now taught to Timothy and Timothy must now guard what has been entrusted to him. Now how do you guard the gospel? Well, look at chapter 2, verse 1.

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and the things you have heard me say, so that same phrase again, the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

You guard it by passing it on to the next generation. And that's what has happened over the years and over the centuries. The gospel entrusted to Paul, uniquely given to him, has been written down for us and has been entrusted to the church today.

we don't put our own spin on it, we don't alter it, we guard it. And we guard it by declaring to believers and unbelievers the truth.

[13:16] Because all of us, all of the time, need the gospel of God. Let's go back to Thessalonians. So imagine with me for a moment that a cure for cancer has been invented.

It's a simple pill that when taken kills any and all cancerous cells. Now imagine that you've been given the task of guarding it.

Well, it would be foolish, wouldn't it, to put it under lock and key and then throw the key away? No, you want that cure released to make sure it actually gets into the hands of the very people who need it.

Likewise, wouldn't it be very foolish if you were to add your own ingredients to that in the hope of somehow making it better? No, you would ensure that it is not altered in any way so that it remains effective.

Well, we've been entrusted with the gospel, a cure for sinful, broken, rebellious humanity. It is God's kind, gracious, and loving response to our sin-wrecked lives.

[14:39] A message with a promise of forgiveness, the transformation of our life, and the hope of eternal life to come. that's what's been entrusted to us.

Or imagine you're the guardian of the Louvre Art Gallery in Paris. Your task is to bring the Mona Lisa on tour to all the capital cities of the world.

Every city that you enter, you put up the picture on display. Now, wouldn't it be very foolish of us to get out your brush and think, this needs a little bit of updating here.

I think I could do a better job. Maybe put a few earrings on or a moustache or, well, you know, whatever you like. And it would be foolish, wouldn't it, if you just kept a cloak over it, leaving it covered.

No, you want it on display for everybody to see, to marvel at its beauty. well, we are guardians of the most treasured and most precious gift ever.

[15:48] We are to display together the beauty and the wonder of who Jesus is, his death for our sins, his resurrection from the grave.

We display the glory of Jesus as we declare his gospel. Carigaline Baptist Church, we have been entrusted with the gospel of God.

This is our time. This is our generation. It is the means of salvation for the world. It is the very hope for this town of Carigaline.

It brings peace in our fears, comfort in our suffering, the assurance of life in the face of death. It is the cure for troubled souls.

Declaring the gospel together puts the beauty of Christ on display, who softens hard hearts, who opens up minds to those who do not believe.

[17:01] We have been entrusted with the glorious gospel, it is our time. It is our generation.

So, our message, entrusted with the gospel. Second, our ministry.

You see, if we've been entrusted with the gospel, our ministries must be faithful to the gospel. faithful. In second, in 1st Thessalonians chapter 2, what we've just read, we're going to see three marks of what it means to be faithful.

Here's the first one. That we would be willing to suffer, not twist the truth. Willing to suffer, not twist the truth.

Look at verse 2. We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know. So, before they got to Thessalonica, Paul and his team were in the city of Philippi.

[18:13] And there they shared the gospel openly, but it came at a cost. Here's what Acts tells us happened to them in that city. The magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods.

And after they'd been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison. Now, you would think, if that had happened, Paul would just go on to the next town and be quiet.

But no, it doesn't stop them, does it? Look at the rest of verse 2. But with the help of our God, we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition.

For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. Our message was true.

Our motivation was pure. Our witness was honest. Why would we go through all that suffering if the gospel we were bringing was all made up and just taking you for a ride?

[ 19 : 23 ] No, the very reason we suffered, was because they were faithful to the gospel. Now, none of us likes to suffer.

We might be beaten with rods, but we don't like to be kind of rejected and pushed aside because of what we believe and what we think. So the way to avoid suffering, if you want to avoid suffering, is to design your own gospel.

Come up with your own ideas. I mean, leave little bits out. Never ever talk about repentance and turning to Jesus.

And whatever you do, don't say anything about scripture being the authority. You'll upset people and they'll get really annoyed with you.

Or alternatively, you could try this. Why don't you add things into it? Tell people that if you follow Jesus, guess what?

[ 20 : 30 ] All your problems are going to disappear. You'll never suffer and everything will be wonderful every single day. And what really works, if you want to get more people to come to church, tell them it's up to you, you decide what's best for you and how you want to live.

No. That's trickery. That's using error to increase the numbers on a Sunday morning. That's designing your own gospel so that we avoid any pushback.

Together we must remain faithful to the gospel, willing to suffer and not twist the truth. How about this one?

Pleasing to God and not seeking personal gain. That's what it is to be faithful. Verse 5, on the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.

We're not trying to please people but God who tests our hearts. You know we never use flattery nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed. God is our witness.

[ 21 : 58 ] Now by nature, verse 4, we're people pleasers. We're all people pleasers. We say and do things so that people will like us.

I know of one pastor in a church who discovered that his monthly support had been stopped. And he went to the church and asked a bit about it and they said, well, numbers are down, people aren't very happy with you, and if you want your pay, if you want your support, you're going to have to change something.

And the temptation for him was to begin to please people so that people would like him and so that he would get his monthly support.

It's called, verse 5, using flattery, saying what people want you to say and doing the kinds of things people want you to do.

Of course, there are others who see ministry as a quick way of making money. They're tempted by greed. I've seen it on trips overseas.

[ 23 : 09 ] I've watched as a pastor has stood up and he's promised the congregation a special prayer for anybody who needed a job, guaranteed to get a job, heal your sickness, and to help those who are struggling with infertility.

And before he prays, they must put their envelopes, which are filled with money, into a wooden drum. and then he prays.

It's called, verse 5, putting on a mask to cover up greed. Now, we might think of these examples as extreme, but I think this is how we can all be at times.

Instead of pleasing God, we want to please people. and the reward when we please people, we're liked. We become popular, we get recognition, we gain more followers on Instagram.

It might be financial reward, but we're praised and we're talked about. No, we're to please God. We don't use flattery, we don't put on a mask.

[ 24 : 30 ] Verse 4, God is our witness. It's not what people think or what people say, but it's asking, will God be honoured?

Will God be worshipped? Will God be pleased with my service and all that I do? We remain faithful, pleasing to God, not seeking personal gain.

The third one of faithfulness to the gospel is being gentle to others and not abusing your authority. Do you see that in verse 6?

He says we weren't looking for praise from people, not from you or from anyone else. Even though as apostles of Christ, we could have asserted our authority.

Instead, we were like young children among you. Now, not trying to be technical or anything, but if you see the little phrase there, young children, at the bottom of your page in the Bible, you might get a different translation which says gentle, so that's why I'm saying gentle.

[ 25 : 48 ] Instead, we were gentle among you. Paul was an apostle. He'd been given this unique authority from God, so he could write to Timothy and say, what you heard from me, keep as a pattern of sound teaching.

He had this authority from God, but he never misused it or abused it. In fact, he was careful not to mistreat his position.

He was, as it says in verse 7, gentle among you. He could never be accused of being pushy or forceful or demanding or domineering.

He was considerate and tender and humble and kind. He never used his authority to bash people. He used his authority to serve people. Now, this is crucial for our day and our time and for this church. And particularly as we address everyone, I want the elders to pay attention, myself included as one of them.

[ 27 : 02 ] We've been given an authority, not the kind of authority like Paul, but we've been given an authority to care for this local church, for the people who gather.

And we care by feeding the people with God's word. We guard the people by watching out for false teaching. The authority we have is an authority to serve, not abuse.

And sadly, many pastors, and we hear about it in the news, we read about it, and elders who abuse their authority for personal and selfish gain. They speak as if everything they say is equal to God's word, that it has a power that must be obeyed.

well, we don't have that kind of authority. And I say to the church, if you hear us acting or living in that way, step in.

Our authority is the scriptures, and those scriptures are to be taught in gentleness, not being harsh.

[ 28 : 17 ] So, elders, all of us together as the whole church, we must be faithful to the gospel, gentle, not abusing our authority.

You see, the message we have, and the ministry we do, when we keep to the gospel, is authentic. authentic. And what is authentic, is effective. Look at how he starts in verse 1, chapter 2, verse 1.

You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results.

It was effective. He came with the full gospel, and the people that he reached were filled with Christ, because the gospel is the most precious of gifts, more valuable than hidden treasure, more beautiful than a rare diamond.

It's priceless, because it has the power to save. And so to have Christ is all that we need. For us today as a church, it's as simple as this.

[ 29 : 35 ] We have been entrusted with the gospel, and the community in which we are in are empty. and as we declare the gospel, so lives are filled, forgiveness of sin, freedom from shame, and fullness in Christ.

This is our time. This is our generation. God has entrusted to us his gospel.

Let us continue to encourage one another to remain faithful to it, so that many within this community will trust Christ and have the joy of salvation.

salvation. Let's pray. Our Father God, we thank you for the glorious hope of Jesus Christ.

Thank you that you entrust to us in our day this beautiful message, help us as we go into this week that we would take every opportunity, open doors that we may speak of hope and of Christ.

[ 31 : 12 ] Father, help us to keep on being faithful, trusting you that you will do your work through your people. We say thank you for our salvation today.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Well, we're going to sing together and after we sing, we're going to share around the Lord's table as we remember his death.

let your kingdom come, let your will be done so that everyone might know your name. Let your song be heard everywhere on the name.