

# 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12: For Those Who Share the Gospel

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Date: 17 April 2005

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- [ 0 : 00 ] for the reading of God's Word. 1 Thessalonians 2, 1-12 For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain.
- For though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.
- For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.
- For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed. God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, that we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.
- But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.
- [ 1 : 13 ] For you remember, brothers, our labor and our toil. We worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct towards you believers.
- For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.
- This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. Good afternoon.
- We are in the midst of a great book, a series in 1 Thessalonians, and we're glad to be able to share from our hearts too, or with you on this afternoon.
- From what we read in Acts chapter 17, 1 Corinthians chapter 1, we get a very clear impression that God was at work in ancient Thessalonica.
- [ 2 : 25 ] Paul and his ministry team had pulled off the Ignatian way, proclaimed God's truth, lived among God's people for a relatively short amount of time, very brief, matter of months at the most.
- But that ancient city was forever changed because of their ministry there. And I would ask you on this afternoon, what Christian worker doesn't long to see God work just like we see him, have seen him in Acts 17 and in 1 Thessalonians 1.
- We want to see that kind of work replicated in our cities and in our neighborhoods. Gospel proclaimed, God's spirit at work, people turning from religion, turning from idols, turning from self to serve the Lord and his agenda in this world, to wait for his son from heaven even as we work in this world.

When we come from 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 to chapter 2, we actually see a shift in our letter. The shift goes from a focus more on gospel ministry, ministry to those who had been recipients of the gospel to gospel workers, from gospel ministry to gospel messengers.

The gospel had arrived because God's preacher and his team had come to town. They had arrived with them. The focus is on the nature and the quality of their ministry in Thessalonica.

[ 4 : 22 ] That's what we see in chapter 2. Notice the language in the book, in the chapter. Look at verse 1 where Paul speaks about our coming to you.

In verse 3, he speaks about our appeal. Our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or an attempt to deceive.

Verse 9, he speaks about, again, their ministry among them, our labor and our toil. And finally, in verse 10, he speaks about the blameless nature, righteous nature of our conduct among you.

Fruitful gospel ministry, chapter 1, faithful gospel workers in chapter 2. Now, what we see in chapter 2 actually is more descriptive than prescriptive.

We don't hear any commands to do what we see the apostles do and Paul's ministry team do, but yet, it does have great application for all of us as Christian workers and particularly those of us who make our living of ministry.

[ 5 : 45 ] I would hope that God would allow you and many more to remain members of Holy Trinity Church in this particular city.

There are four congregations in the city, but if for some reason God calls you to relocate and some of you will, the profile of what you see here needs to be somewhat of a checklist of sorts if for some reason God takes you away from Holy Trinity, these are the kind of ministers, pastors, that you would want to sit under.

And of course it's our aspiration, David and myself here on the south side, but all six of us in the city to be the kind of men of God ministering in this kind of way to those that God has placed under our care.

Let me give you just a little bit of background to help us come to grips with what's here. What we have is Paul really wanted the believers in Thessalonica to be in touch with the genuineness of his care for them.

It seems like that there were some in Thessalonica, perhaps false Jewish prophets or other false accusers, who sought to undermine the gospel ministry there, casting a cloud of question in regards to the ministers.

[ 7 : 19 ] So Paul thought it necessary for him to clear himself or to sort of clear the air of these charges that may have been swirling around regarding him and his team.

Some were saying they're in it for their own gain. They're taking advantage of God's people. So we hear the somewhat defense of Paul in chapter 2 as it relates to those charges that had gone out concerning them.

Indeed, there was in that day, as in our day, those who were peddling impotent, polluted philosophies that promised more than they can deliver.

People who were in it then, as well as people who were in it now, for profit. And thus we hear this voice in the New Testament constantly warning God's people about false teachers and those who would appear to be angels of light, but in fact are instruments in the hand of the evil one.

People who were in it for profit, who pull the wool over the eyes of the gullible and unsuspecting, while at the same time padding their pockets, making much gain of God's people.

[ 8 : 44 ] So in the process of defending himself, Paul highlights some characteristics. The right for all of those who would give themselves to gospel labor, and particularly those of us who make a profession of it.

So here's what I want you to see from the text on this afternoon, chapter 2, that fruitful gospel ministry, chapter 1, needs faithful gospel workers.

Fruitful gospel ministry, and we see that in chapter 1, needs faithful gospel workers. that was then, but it's the same thing now.

And guess what? All of us are part of God's ministry team in this city. You may not have a professional calling, so to speak, but if you are a called child of God, gospel ministry goes with your description.

There are three things that I want you to see as far as they characterize these faithful gospel workers. Fruitful gospel ministry needs faithful gospel workers who are, in verses 1-4, bold in their witness.

[ 10 : 06 ] Look there with me. For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. But though we had already suffered and been shamefully entreated at Philippi, as you know, and notice this, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.

We had boldness, huh? Paul points the attention of his readers to his coming to Thessalonica.

There are a couple of ways to take this word not in vain in verse 1. It can be rendered in the most natural sense of his coming to them was effective.

It was beneficial. It was profitable. Their conversion to Christianity in essence was Paul's exhibit A. But there's an intriguing alternative to how we can render this word in vain, or the word that's translated in vain.

another way to render it is they did not come empty handed. So the word is translated in Mark chapter 12 verse 3.

[ 11 : 29 ] We won't get that. But here is the incident of where the owner of a vineyard, he sends his servant to collect the proceeds from the vineyard. They beat him, and guess what they do?

They send him away empty handed. The same word kenos is used in Luke 14 and 19 where in Mary's magnificent where the rich are sent empty away.

They're sent away empty handed. In this case, the interpretation would be that Paul came to Thessalonica as a giver whose hands were full and not one coming to, in fact, receive.

Does this not square with what we see in verses 3 and 4? Paul had come to Thessalonica to give what had been entrusted to him by God.

What had been entrusted to him by God? Look at verse 4. Just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak.

[ 12 : 46 ] Not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. Is not this interpretation consistent with what we see in verses 8 and 9?

So being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share not with you not only the gospel of God but our own selves because you become very dear to us.

For you remember brothers our labor and toil. We work night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you while we proclaim to you the gospel of God.

Indeed there were those in Thessalonica ready to give even though he came to Thessalonica ready to give even though his giving had not been fully received in Philippi Acts chapter 16 persecuted there put in stocks beaten but he came ready to give what had been entrusted to him.

Those who have something to give friends should be bold in their witness. We must be you and I as those with the gospel of God we must be confident in what has been entrusted to us.

[ 14 : 08 ] We must understand what it is that God has put into our hands that has given us what he has entrusted us with.

The gospel. Friends, this is not some strange elixir that's being peddled around. It's the gospel. It's the gospel of God.

He is the source of the gospel. And it's the gospel about his son. How he in his mercy, in his grace has sent his son to be the payment price for your sins and mine.

You and I must recognize what's in our hands and not be ashamed of it. What's in your hand? The Lord asked Moses in Exodus chapter 4. Stand.

And I asked you on this afternoon what's in your hand. understand it. Come to grips with it. You are not empty handed.

[ 15 : 12 ] Don't be ashamed of what's in your hand. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation. chapter 1.

To everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Paul went to Thessalonica with the gospel and that was enough.

He went to give it to them to proclaim it and to share boldness because of what had been trusted into him but boldness in spite of the disrespect that he had while he was in Philippi.

even though shamefully mistreated at Philippi. You ever experience that? You want to give out the gospel, you want to share the gospel and people disrespect you.

And who likes being disrespected? Well, let me tell you what it's like. It's like the running back that gets on the football field every week and these 200 pound, 300 pound gorillas they bump up against him regularly.

[ 16 : 25 ] They get disrespected. You know what? That's what they get paid for. They get paid to be disrespected. It goes along with their description of what they do. And even so you friends, we can't be donned by a little disrespect.

Now, Paul and Silas were disrespected big time. And I think of the writer here, you have not yet resisted against blood, striving against sin, huh?

We have not really had it that hard, have we? Huh? Could get worse for us, huh? You can expect to be disrespected. Let me move on.

Are you confident enough, though, to give what you've been entrusted with, even though some people are going to refuse it?

fruitful gospel ministry needs faithful gospel workers who are bold in their witness. But not only that, look at verses 3 through 6, they need gospel workers who are pure in their motives.

[ 17 : 32 ] Pure in their motives. Paul points out things, beginning in verse 3, things that were really non-factors in his ministry. Look again at verse 3.

Our appeal does not spring out of error or impurity or attempts to deceive. Non-factors in his ministry. There was nothing underhanded about his ministry appeal to them to turn from the living God through the gospel.

There were no bait-and-switch tactics. He was not in it for what he could get or gain from them. What he did was for the glory of God and their earthly and eternal well-being.

His ministry was not rooted in error rather than being rooted in fanciful philosophies of man instead of relying on ways and means and methods of imposters.

Paul's appeal was based on the truth of the living God, nor was it based on impurity. His goal was in no way to exploit people out of their money or in any other kind of way.

[ 18 : 38 ] He did not employ immoral kind of tactics, nor an attempt to deceive unlike others in that day and commentator Hendrickson describes them as roaming philosophers, jugglers, sorcerers, fakers, swindlers.

Paul was none of those things and guess what? He pointed out, he said, you know these things. I remind you of these things. They knew his character and his testimony amongst them.

On the contrary, he had God's approval to spread the good news. It was before God that he was ministering. Additionally, there were things that were not a part of his practice, the way he operated.

Because of his mission to be God's servant in their midst, certain things were absolutely unneeded. Words of flattery, a disguise or a mask for greed, to seek the glory and honor and applause of man, unneeded.

Why did they do what they did? What was their motivation? It was to please God. They've been trusted with the gospel not for the praise of man, but for the glory of the living God.

[ 19 : 51 ] And so for us, friends, name recognition or glory seeking must not be the motivation for our gospel endeavors.

Numbers or other man devised measures must not drive us. We're not careful. We'll find ourselves being a bit chesty when our name gets out there.

Or for whatever reason, whether it's rapid growth or good preaching or quality music. When superlatives have a way and begin to be heaped upon you, watch out.

Huh? Why are we doing what we're doing? What's our motivation? Nothing less than the gospel. So our prayer is for gospel growth but for all the right reasons.

Because you and I are compelled by Christ and compelled by the gospel to make disciples by proclaiming the gospel, raising up and strengthening gospel communities by teaching them what Christ has told us.

[ 20 : 59 ] That's our mandate. Matthew chapter 28, 19 and 20. Gospel ministry needs faithful gospel workers who are bold in their witness, pure in their motives, and unselfish in their behavior.

Verses 7 through 12. Comes through clearly in this text. Unselfish as a nursing mother. And we have several around here, don't we?

I like this, Josh, this little contraption that you wear that holds little Matthew. I mean, they have so many devices these days to help people with their parenting.

And as nice as that is, it doesn't match when little Matthew is next to Mama Donna there, does it? Huh? I mean, it's a different kind of deal because God has placed within mothers like Suzanne and Donna and others of you.

This sort of natural instinct. Huh? So Paul uses this sort of universal picture that we all understand of gentleness that of a nursing mother.

[ 22 : 14 ] Huh? It's the mother who gives birth to the truth that subsequently feeds and cares for those that belong to her. And this is, that's such a unique and precious and special for both the mother and the child, forming a bond that will last throughout life.

So how lovingly precious were these Thessalonian believers to Paul. Rather than take from them, he nurtured them, just like a nursing.

mother would. Look at verses 8 and 9. So being affectionately, listen to this language, affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our own lives.

Huh? Unselfishly caring in their behavior, their own lives, because you become, and listen to this language, very dear to us.

For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil, we work night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you while we proclaim to you the gospel of God. Last week, David Jackman highlighted both the propositional and relational dimensions of the gospel.

[ 23 : 37 ] And we see that in verses 8 and 9. they gave them the gospel for sure, but they also gave them themselves. Why? Because they had become very dear to them.

So out of their love for God and the gospel, Paul and his team, he poured out his love on the Thessalonians. The kind of love, that kind of love, friends, is at the very core of the gospel and needs to be at the core of gospel ministry.

ministry. It's not just enough to give the gospel. And this is one of the things we should be aware of as we're engaged in 312 initiative, praying for three people over two years that God would bring one of them to Christ.

As we're praying for them, might God be nudging us closer to them? And might there be ways to invite them or allow them to enter into our lives? I love the one-to-one reading initiative.

And we wonder, boy, why haven't we done this kind of personal gospel work more? Because it gets us in the lives of people. So, the gospel message, but also conduct that is commensurate, that's at the core of gospel ministry, unselfish care, unselfishly caring in their behavior.

[ 25 : 03 ] Sharing the gospel out of love, but sharing ourselves also out of love. Hope for Chicago is Holy Trinity's ministry partner, and that ministry really helps us to share ourselves through the gospel.

The vision is to extend the love of Jesus Christ to every neighborhood in Chicago. Here's the deal. We really need to share it with our neighbors before the neighborhoods.

May God enable us to do that. The track record of the gospel team in Thessalonica was on record. Paul reminded them in this chapter, you know, you remember how we behaved ourselves among you.

Unselfish care is expressed through the hard work and godly conduct. We already read verse 9, he cared enough to work. There were witnesses that Paul engaged in hands-on kind labor so he wouldn't be a burden to them even as he proclaimed God's word to them.

He cared enough that he would conduct himself as God's representative among them. We see that in verse 10. You're witnesses, verse 10, of how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.

[ 26 : 20 ] He behaved as God's ambassador, a person sent on a sacred assignment among them. Unselfish care, even as an encouraging father, we see that in verse 11.

The image shifts. Not only had they witnessed Paul and his team's motherly nurture and God-honoring conduct, they had seen Paul's fatherly manner among them.

How it had displayed itself among them, it's likely that there was in a general way in his encouraging words generally and perhaps there were even individuals that he found himself encouraging among them.

The thrust of his encouragement was fatherly, that they should live for the glory of God. The text says, to walk in a manner worthy of God who's called you and to his kingdom and glory, probably present as well as future dimensions of his kingdom given what we see in the letter.

This is the kind, again, of pastoral leadership that we aspire to be here in this place. It was business as usual in roughly 49 AD when Paul and his team came to town.

[ 27 : 36 ] When they left, it was a different deal. For a relatively brief time, they preached and lived the gospel among them.

Isn't that what we're supposed to do? One of the great Clint Eastwood movies of the 80s is The Pale Rider.

And even in that western town, Carbon Canyon, it was business as usual until the preacher came to town.

Listen to this conversation that goes on in the movie that emphasizes the value of a preacher's words in life.

Seems a stranger came through, pulled them together. Ain't that right? Yeah. He pulled them together. One stranger did that? I expect you boys didn't explain to him just who we are.

[ 28 : 41 ] I expect that once you explain things to him, he'll decide to move on. There ain't much for a preacher to do here, right? You let a preacher come to Carbon Canyon?

We didn't invite him, he just took up with all. What's wrong with the preacher? When I left those tin pans at all but given up, their spirit was nearly broken, and a man without spirit is whipped.

but a preacher, he could give them faith. One ounce of faith and they'll be dug in deeper than a tix on a hound.

While the character was far from a gospel messenger, the dialogue does put things in perspective. In his own way, he proclaimed and how he lived among them and how it impacted them.

When the preacher rolled off, and I love that ending saying, preacher, we love you. When he rolled off, things had changed in Carbon Canyon.

[ 29 : 57 ] and because of the gospel message in Thessalonica, when Paul and his team left, things were never the same in Thessalonica.

What am I saying today? Even for you and me, and friends, I'll be 62 in July.

My days on this earth, I'm on the downside. I'm beyond the prime of life. I want to see the power of the gospel and its ability to transform.

And increasingly, even after walking with the Lord for over 40 years, I long to see what we see here in these passages.

And we understand there's somewhat of a cause-effect dynamic. Though there are spiritual things that only God can control, we do get a glimpse, and we can see this, that faithful, fruitful gospel ministry needs faithful gospel workers.

[ 31 : 14 ] people like you and me who are bold in our witness. We understand what has been entrusted to us in the gospel.

People who are pure in their motives. People who are unselfishly caring in their behavior.

gospel ministry in our day needs nothing less, nothing short of those very things. And may it be that one day when I go off the scene in whatever way, earthly relocation, because when it's time, Shirley and I already know where we want to be buried, our heavenly relocation.

I want the context that I've been involved with and in, and the people that I've been involved with and in, to be of this particular ilk.

May God help us, David, Helm, and me, on the south side to lead the way there. Shall we pray? dear Lord, praise you for your word and your workers.

[ 32 : 54 ] Praise you for these biblical snapshots, albums, as it were, and we can look and see Lord, things that we desire to emulate and to see gospel results for the glory of your name.

Lord, there are some things that are out of our control. We praise you, Lord, in chapter one that speaks about the power of the Holy Spirit. Lord, that's outside of us.

That's your domain, your realm. but on the other hand, proclamation boldly, living with pure motives, unselfishly caring in our behavior.

Those are within our reach. And may we, as your people, find ourselves and our lives firmly planted in these things.

Commend ourselves to you. We ask these things in Christ's name. Amen. Let's stand. May the mind of Christ, my Savior, live in me from day to day.

[ 34 : 07 ] Let's offer this last worship offering before the Lord.