

1 Thessalonians 2

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[0 : 00] Thessalonians and chapter 2. We started to look at this letter that Paul has written, and looking at rather a long section, just the section that we read this morning from the beginning.

I'm not going to read through it again, just to read to the beginning and the end. Chapter 2 of 1 Thessalonians. For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. But 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. And then on to verse 10. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct towards you believers.

Now, we know it's always hard to take flack when what you're doing is right and honorable. And when people are misunderstanding your motives, your methods, where people are taking another view and hinting that what you're doing is either from a wrong motive, which is their view of what you're doing is totally incorrect.

[1 : 29] And it's many a time that happens in life, where people take the wrong view or they misunderstand what you're doing. And I'm sure all of us at one stage or another, to one degree or another, have experienced something of that.

Well, the Apostle Paul, his life was lived largely like that because wherever he went, people were misrepresenting what he did, what he said, how he lived, how he acted.

And year after year, to experience that must be hard going. Because everywhere he went, there were people who were finding fault, and there were people who were spreading malicious rumors about him, and people who were saying that he was in his work for himself, that he was out for his own glory, that he was out to lie in his own pocket, that what he was proclaiming wasn't true, that it was all about Paul.

And he was facing these accusations all the time. But Paul continued. He remained steadfast. And that's part of what we find throughout all his letters, but certainly we find it coming to the fore very clearly in this particular letter.

Paul is highlighting here that there will always be opposition to the truth. And sometimes you have to ask yourself, why is that so?

[2 : 57] And I think the bottom line is because men love darkness rather than light. There will always be an opposition to the gospel. There will always be an opposition to Christ because men love darkness rather than light.

There is a comfort in the darkness because when the light begins to shine in, the light will expose something of who we are and what we are.

And it can become very uncomfortable. And people don't want to face up to that. And they prefer that these things, that their consciences will remain dead and darkened and they be allowed just to live the way they want.

People don't want often to face up to the responsibilities that the word of God requires of us. And so Paul is here. Part of what he's doing in this letter is he is reminding the church of his ministry with them.

And he's reminding them again that he had, of course, suffered at Philippi in coming. But the great thing he says at the beginning, for you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain.

[4 : 09] And we know that that was true because lives were changed. The reality of what Paul was teaching became very clear within the community that people who were steeped in pagan idolatry, they gave up their idol worship and they began to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

But it wasn't simply following in the sense of, they'll say, well, instead of going to that temple, we'll now go to this little building here. There was a radical change within their whole lifestyle.

And that, of course, impacted and affected communities because people would take note and see that these people, the Christians, were starting to live in a totally different way with different standards and different aims and different philosophies and so on.

And that's why the accusation was leveled against the apostle and against those who were preaching. These are the men who've turned the world upside down. That's what people said.

The result of their preaching was so radical that people's lives were turned upside down. So that the whole ways and standards and philosophies of the day were just like being turned on their head and there was this new lifestyle.

[5 : 30] So Paul is saying, you yourselves, no brothers, that are coming to you was not in vain. And then Paul goes on to show the kind of ministry that he exercised, which was one of devotion and one of dedication.

He was totally committed to them. And that was one of the great things about the apostle Paul. He was not a quitter. And I think it was Napoleon who said kind of what he demanded of his soldiers. There is no event in a soldier's life that should stop them obeying. Napoleon demanded complete obedience. That's what he said. There is no, no event should ever occur in a soldier's life to stop them obeying.

And to a certain extent, that is how the apostle Paul lived his ministry. And there were many things that could have, at one day, he could have said, that's it.

I've had enough. I have suffered once too often. I have been misrepresented once too often. I have been bruised and battered once too often.

[6 : 40] I have too many scars on my back. I've been stoned. I've been left for dead. That's it. I'm out of this. I'm walking away. And at a human point of view, it would be very easy to say, enough is enough.

But that wasn't Paul's way. And he had this wonderful steadfastness about him. This, where he just kept going, despite everything that happened.

And he's highlighting that to the church here. He's reminding them of the way he was living amongst them and preaching amongst them. And Paul tells them then that the message and the method that they had, that there was no error.

That's what he tells us in verse 3. That there was no error or impurity or any attempt to deceive.

Paul is really saying here, everything I said was honest and true.

I didn't come with any deceitful aims or purposes in anything. See, at that time, there were, Paul wasn't alone in coming with the gospel.

[7 : 47] There were, there was a kind of day where there were lots of traveling philosophers and just, I suppose, to a certain extent. Still goes on all around the world today. People have their own ideas and systems of belief and people will try one way or another to influence you to go down this road or to go down that road.

Whatever. So, Paul wasn't the only person who was coming in. And there were many people who would be sometimes, in order to proclaim their own particular philosophy, they might have been the likes of jugglers or people who were good at tricks, you know, slate of hand.

And people would watch, a crowd would come around and they'd be influenced and they'd say, oh, my word, that's, and when, any time you see somebody who's really good at performing tricks, who's, you know, so you get these, today's street magicians, and if you've ever seen them, they're quite, they're extraordinary, but it's all slate of hand.

And you just say, you say, wow. And when somebody like that is performing, it's very easy then to be captivated and say, well, I'm going to listen to what this guy is saying. Well, Paul is saying, when we came, we didn't have any of these kind of things.

We just, we just preached. We just told people about Jesus. We just proclaimed the truth. There were no gimmicks. There were no additions. There were, there was no, nothing except the preaching of the truth.

[9 : 14] And we were absolutely honest in all that we did. And when Paul here talks of impurity, he means making money out of somebody.

In other words, the apostle wasn't targeting people and saying, right, I'm going for the rich. I'm going to, I'm going to target this people. I'm going to look at the, these are people obviously of means and

of wealth.

I'm going to target them. And I'll try it. If they get turned to the gospel, then I might be able to line my own pocket. Paul was saying there was nothing of that, that it was across the board, that he proclaimed the gospel to everybody.

And so that his motives were honorable and pure. And in a sense, we find that the apostle is saying in verse four, 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 heart. And in a sense, we have all been entrusted with the gospel.

[10:19] If you have come to receive this gospel as your own, to receive the gospel that speaks to us of Jesus, and you've come to receive Jesus, that gospel has been entrusted to you, to live it and to share it.

These two things. Because when you get the, when the gospel comes to you, yes, it's for you, but it isn't just for you to keep all to yourself.

It is for you to live, buy it, and it is for you to share with others. This is so, and that's how the New Testament church grew and spread. It was through people living the gospel and sharing the gospel. And so this word, this whole idea of being entrusted, it's really speaking to us of the stewardship of the gospel, where we are given something and we're living it in a way that is for the good of others as well.

Stewardship, sometimes, I suppose if you were to try and explain what stewardship is in its full sense, you would look at maybe the life of Joseph.

[11:36] And when Joseph was taken as a slave into Egypt and sold, you remember he went to this rich man, this very powerful man in Egypt called Potiphar. And Joseph was put in charge of Potiphar's household.

And Joseph ran that house as if it was his own. And he would have been using Potiphar's money as if it was his own, but it wasn't for himself. All the time, in all that he was doing, all the different decisions that Joseph was making in that household, he was doing them for the good and for the glory of his master.

Nothing of it really belonged to him. He was just looking after it. He was running the house for Potiphar and he was using all that was Potiphar ultimately for Potiphar's glory and good.

And in a similar sense, that's how it is with ourselves. We have been entrusted. We have been made stewards of this gospel. And as we live out this gospel, it is ultimately for the glory of God. We have been entrusted with it. We're not to bury it away like the man who was given the one talent. Remember there was a man who was given ten, another was given five.

[12:55] There was one given one and he went and buried it in the ground. Of course, the master was mad when he came back. And he said, you should have used that. And that's what the Lord expects of us, to use what he has given.

Whatever he has given, whatever gifts he has given to us in this world, to use them for his service. And that's part of what makes the Christian church so interesting.

We are not clones of one another. There are some cults and some sects that try to make everybody absolutely the same. But that's the beauty of the Christian life is just the variety and the diversity. people with all different kinds of abilities and gifts, but all working together for the one end and for the one cause. And that is why, whether a person is young or whether a person is old, whether a person is bold or whether a person is timid, whether a person is rich or whether a person is poor, wherever you are, whatever your circumstances, you still have been given abilities and gifts by God to use for him, for the spread of the gospel, wherever you are.

And every one of you today can reach people that nobody else can. You have friends, you have a social network, that you have a direct line to particular people where you are able to maybe speak to them in a way that they won't take offense.

[14:38] Maybe they will take offense from anybody else, but not from you. Because you have built up, whether it's a working relationship or a relationship through just as neighbors or whether it is a leisure or whatever, you've built up this rapport with somebody.

You have not only the ability, but also, I believe, a responsibility. Because this is a way the gospel is spread out. And so, the apostle is talking about this and how they lived it and how they shared it. And then Paul, it's really again highlighting the honesty and the integrity of his message. And flattery, of course, was something which he hated.

Verse 5, For we never came with words of flattery. I read a description of flattery. A flatterer is a person who manipulates rather than communicates.

A flatterer can use either truth or lies to achieve his purpose, which is to control your decision for his own profit.

[15 : 52] I think it's a great description of what flattery is. Well, the apostle is saying, when I came in here, there was no flattery whatever. Nor was it looking for ways of greed or anything like that.

And he was never looking to make a name for himself. Verse 6, Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.

And again, that is very, very important, that in the work of the gospel, no person should be out to make a name for themselves. If ever anybody goes into the ministry, if ever anybody is in the ministry with the aim of making a name for themselves, they're in the wrong work.

The only name that should be exalted is the name of Christ. That doesn't mean that there are, in the history of the church, there have been ministries that have made a name for themselves.

People, for instance, the likes of Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who became nationally known as such an amazing declarer of God's truth for a whole generation.

[17 : 09] But he never set out to do that, nor did he ever look for it. He remained one of the most humble of men. But because of his extraordinary abilities, he made a name for himself.

But he wasn't wanting. The apostle made a name for himself, but he never looked for it. And it was one thing, Paul remained this humble man and he was never, ever, that's what he's saying, I was never in this to make a name for myself.

It was always that the Lord, this is who would have the name. Now, of course, to begin, this certain, this, sorry, this first section tends to be a wee bit more negative because Paul is saying this is what we weren't.

But then he turns and he moves really to look at it more positively. And he says then in verse 7, or at the end of verse 6, we didn't come making demands as apostles, but we were gentle among you like a nursing mother taking care of our own children and so on.

So the apostle is saying, he's reminding them, this is how we actually were, like a nursing mother.

Now, you cannot picture any scene that is more gentle and more tender and more affectionate than a mother nursing her own child.

[18 : 28] And that is the idea that the apostle has here because it's this, this word where he says taking care, we were gentle among you like a nursing mother, taking care.

Now, that word taking care has the idea, literally it is to soften by heart. And it has the idea really of, it's like a bird covering or a hen covering her cheeks with her wings.

This idea of watching and caring and mothering and being gentle and being affectionate and being kind. and again, if we think of how the apostle was ministering, one of the things we know about parents' love and mothers' love is that it is completely selfless.

A mother, as she tends, or a father tends to their little child, is never thinking, right, I'm giving all this care and this love and now what I'm expecting in return is this, this, this, that doesn't, it never enters the equation.

A mother pours herself out because she loves. She's not looking for anything in return. It's just because this is the heart of love. And the apostle is saying, you know, that's how we were.

[19 : 57] We weren't looking for anything in return. I said, we just loved you. We loved you in the gospel. We gave ourselves because that's what love, love doesn't measure out, love doesn't count the cost.

And so we find that this is, this is a kind of attitude that, that Paul is speaking about here. And, that's why we see also the, the, the gentleness.

And of course, our mother at all the different stages is watching out the development and the care. And the apostle is talking about this gentleness with them.

So I could imagine that as this, as the believers had, or the, these people came to faith and they were taking their first steps in the gospel. It's obvious that some of them would slip here and slip there.

Now, what mother or father, if they saw their little toddler taking their first steps and stumbling, would go out, start beating them with rods? Got to be more careful. You'd say to yourself, that person should be locked up, not fit to be a father or a mother.

[21 : 07] And I think the church has to learn a lot, even from, even from the, the attitude of the word and the way that Jesus himself dealt and the way that the apostle here was saying, I was with you like a nursing mother.

I was with you, helping you, guiding you. So that when a person who is young in the faith takes steps and maybe does something wrong and maybe slips and maybe stumbles that you're there, what does the nursing mother do or what does the parent do?

Helps them back up and guides them on the way again. And that's the way the church should be. It is to help lift up and guide them, not to come down and batter and bruise, but to lift up and lead them on in the way.

And that's how the apostle was with them. And I believe that that is partly the reason why this church became a model church and became an influential church all round because of this great start that they had with the apostles' ministry.

And so, we find that Paul is there as a gentle and patient and caring in all his dealings. But again, we know with regard to our mother that a mother, particularly a mother who's feeding, she herself will have to eat well.

[22 : 32] Otherwise, she won't be able to feed the baby. We have these sometimes dreadful pictures that we see in news bulletins when there's a famine in parts of the world.

And it's probably one of the saddest pictures you see is a baby on the breast of a mother and the mother herself is dying. has nothing. She has nothing. Nothing for the baby.

And that is because the mother has had no food. She's had nothing to nourish her. And she can't pass anything on. It's a really, really sad, tragic picture.

And so, if we put that again spiritually, we see the importance in order to feed and to teach and to develop. It is very important that we ourselves are being nourished.

We cannot nourish. And it's the same for any Christian. You cannot nourish or help others unless you yourself are nourished. You have to be taking upon the bread of life.

[23 : 35] You have to be nourished in the gospel in order to pass on. Often heard it said, you are what you eat. And I suppose there's a lot of truth in that statement.

Well, it's certainly true spiritually. And then Paul goes on and he highlights how they worked tirelessly among them. And he says there that they were supporting themselves.

Verse 9, For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil. We worked night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you while we proclaimed the gospel.

Now, this is what Paul did at different times and in different places. Some people think that Paul says, no, you never take any remuneration.

You never take any money in the gospel. Well, Paul didn't say that. There were other times in established churches when he would take the money that was given.

[24 : 38] And the Lord Jesus Christ himself said, a laborer is worthy of his hire. But Paul always went by the principle. He would say, all things are lawful, but all things are not always expedient, are not always for the best.

So what Paul would do, Paul by trade was a tentmaker. So when Paul would come into a new place, he would support himself by working at his old trade of tentmaking so that he could support himself financially.

And the reason was very simple. He didn't want anybody to level the accusation that he was only in this for money. Now once that church was established and people realized the whole principle of giving and supporting, then it became different.

But in the initial stages, so that nobody would say, well this person is only here and he's preaching this in order to line his own pockets. Paul worked.

And that's why to this day we still talk about tentmaking ministries. Sometimes you'll come across that expression, tentmaking, which simply means that maybe a person will go to a, it's often talked about within our own church, sometimes they're looking at it and saying, are we at a stage maybe to go back into maybe smaller congregations and have a tentmaking ministry so that a minister in a small congregation that cannot support, that the minister would work part-time somewhere else in order to finance part of that work.

[26 : 19] And it's coming from this New Testament principle. So that's what the apostle was saying here that they were working there. And then he says in verse 10, you are witnesses and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you as believers.

The holy life was his life before God. His righteous life was his life amongst other people. people. And the two have to go together.

In fact, they crisscross because there's no point in being a holy person on a Sunday when you come to church and then a beast the rest of the week. It doesn't work.

It doesn't measure up. You see, Paul had this consistency where he was the same before God as he was before other people. He was the same before those in the church as he was in the furthest out part of the community.

There was a consistency about his life. And that is really why his message spoke. Well, may we seek to have something of that consistency as well.

[27 : 30] This is a message that is worth proclaiming. It's a message that is worth believing. It's a message once we receive that it's worth having. And it is a message that is worth sharing.

There is no greater message in this world. I know people are prejudiced against it. People have their own inbuilt thoughts, Christianity.

No. But people don't stop to think. People have worked out what a Christian is. And they have all their own ideas. And often their ideas are not biblical.

And their understanding is not biblical. Once a person comes to look at what the gospel is, what the gospel does, what the gospel achieves, we see that this really is the only message for us and for all society.

Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give thanks for this message, a message that we are familiar with and we pray that our familiarity with it will not in any way blind us to its necessity for our lives.

[28 : 42] We pray that our lives might be changed in the right way and that we might live a good life following the Lord. Help us, Lord, to go forward in life, embracing Jesus and living for him.

Go with us, we pray, and take away from us our sin. We pray for all those who are sick and those in hospital and those who are going through difficult times. We commit them to thy care.

Forgive us our sin now in Jesus' name. Amen. For our concluding psalm is Sam about Peace.- tel-content