



Building A Strong Church, With Strong With People

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 163–171.



1 Thessalonians 2:1–12 (NKJV)

1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain.

2 But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.

3 For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit.

4 But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

5 For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness.

6 Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.

7 But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.

8 So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.

9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.

10 You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe;

11 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children,

12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Chapter 1 of 1 Thessalonians introduced us to Paul the evangelist. This chapter introduces us to Paul the pastor, for it explains how the great apostle cared for the new believers in the churches that he founded.

Just as God uses people to bring the Gospel to the lost, so He uses people to nurture the babes in Christ and help lead them to maturity.

The church at Thessalonica was born through the faithful preaching of the apostle and his helpers, and the church was nurtured through the faithful pastoring that Paul and his friends gave to the infant church. This helped them stand strong in the midst of persecution.

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

Three Pictures Of His Ministry

- ✓ **The Faithful Steward** *(1 Thess. 2:1-6)*
- ✓ **The Loving Mother** *(1 Thess. 2:7-8)*
- ✓ **The Concerned Father** *(1 Thess. 2:9-12)*

The Faithful Steward

(1 Thes. 2:1–6)

Paul had been “put in trust with the Gospel” (1 Thes. 2:4).

1 Thessalonians 2:4 (NKJV)

But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

The Faithful Steward

(1 Thes. 2:1–6)

It was not a message that he made up or that he received from men. Paul looked on himself as a steward of God's message.

Galatians 1:11–12 (NKJV)

11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Steward Owns Nothing

- A steward owns nothing, but possesses and uses everything that belongs to his master.
- Joseph was a steward in the household of Potiphar (*Gen. 39:1–6*).
- He managed his master's affairs and used all his master's goods to promote his master's welfare.
- Every steward one day must give an account of his stewardship (*Luke 16:1–2*). If he is found unfaithful, he will suffer.

Don't Bury The Gift; Invest The Gift

- The message of the Gospel is a treasure God has entrusted to us. We must not bury it; we must invest it so it will multiply and produce “spiritual dividends” to God’s glory.
- Some Christians think that the church’s only responsibility is to protect the Gospel from those who would change it (*Gal. 1:6–9*). But we also must share the Gospel; otherwise, we are protecting it in vain.

Protect And Share The Gospel

Galatians 1:6–9 (NKJV)

6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,

7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Faithfulness Is The Most Important Quality A Steward Possesses

1 Corinthians 4:1–2 (NKJV)

1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

- He may not be popular in the eyes of men; but he dare not be unfaithful in the eyes of God. “Not as pleasing men, but God [test] our hearts” *(1 Thes. 2:4)*.

- The Christian who “plays to the grandstands” will lose God’s approval.
- When we see the characteristics of Paul’s ministry as a steward, we understand what faithfulness means.

The Manner Of His Ministry (vv. 1–2)

1 Thessalonians 2:1–2 (NKJV)

1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain.

2 But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.

- Paul and Silas had been beaten and humiliated at Philippi; yet they came to Thessalonica and preached.
- Many of us would have taken a vacation or found an excuse not to minister. Paul was courageous—he was not a quitter.
- He had a “holy boldness” that was born of dedication to God. Like the other Apostles before him, Paul boldly proclaimed the Good News (*Acts 4:13, 29, 31*).

We Must Contend

- His preaching was “with much conflict “This is an athletic term that means “a contest, a struggle.”
- The Greek world was familiar with athletic contests, and Paul often used this idea to illustrate spiritual truths.

1 Corinthians 9:24–27 (NKJV)

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.

27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Philippians 3:13–14 (NKJV)

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 4:7 (NKJV)

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

- He used this same word in Philippians 1:30 where he pictured the Christian life as an athletic contest that demanded dedication and energy.
- It had not been easy to start a church in Philippi, and it was not easy to start one in Thessalonica.

The Message Of His Ministry

(v. 3a)

1 Thessalonians 2:3 (NKJV)

For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit.

“For the appeal we make does not spring from error” (NIV).

- This message of Christ’s death and resurrection is a true message and is the only true Gospel.

1 Corinthians 15:1–6 (NKJV)

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,

2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.

6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.

- Paul received this Gospel from God, not from man. It is the only Good News that saves the lost sinner.

The Motive Of His Ministry

(v. 3b)

- He was not guilty of “uncleanness,” for his motives were pure. It is possible to preach the right message with the wrong motives.

Philippians 1:14–19 (NKJV)

14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:

The Motive Of His Ministry

(v. 3b)

16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;

17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

- Paul was very sensitive about money matters. He did not want to give anyone a reason to accuse him of being a religious salesman (*1 Cor. 9:1–18*).
- As an apostle, he had the privilege of receiving support. But he gave up that right in order to be free from any possible blame that would disgrace the ministry.

The Method Of His Ministry

(vv. 3c–6)

1 Thessalonians 2:3–6 (NKJV)

3 For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit.

4 But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

5 For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness.

6 Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.

- Paul did not use deceit or trickery to win converts.
- The word translated “deceit” carries the idea of “baiting a hook.”
- In other words, Paul did not trap people into being saved, the way a clever salesman traps people into buying his product.

- Spiritual witnessing and “Christian salesmanship” are different. Salvation does not lie at the end of a clever argument or a subtle presentation. It is the result of God’s Word and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 1:16 (NKJV)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

- Often we hear, “I don’t care what your method is, just so long as your message is right.”
- But some methods are unworthy of the Gospel. They are cheap, whereas the Gospel is a costly message that required the death of God’s only Son.
- They are worldly and man centered, whereas the Gospel is a divine message centered in God’s glory.

- Some Christians try to win friends and influence people by appealing to their egos.
- A true ministry of the Gospel deals honestly (*but lovingly*) with sin and judgment and leaves the unbeliever with nothing to boast of in himself. Paul's method was as pure as his motive: he presented the Word of God in the power of the Spirit, and trusted God to work.