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1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

Last week we began a study of the book of **1 Thessalonians**. We said last week that Paul had preached the gospel in Thessalonica, but as we found out from **Acts 17**, Paul and Silas had paid a price for that...they had been forced to leave Thessalonica for the preaching of the gospel.

We saw last week that they journeyed on to Athens and Corinth. Paul left believers in every town in which he preached and he left a little bit of his heart in every town as well. Paul became concerned about the believers he had left in Thessalonica and he sent Timothy to see how they were getting along.

He was concerned that they had fallen away...

He was concerned that the persecution that would surely come upon them would prove too much for such a young group of believers...

But, Timothy brought back a glowing report. He told Paul that the believers in Thessalonica were indeed growing...**they were keeping the faith strong in the midst of strong and severe persecutions.**

And it was this report from Timothy that prompted Paul to write the Thessalonians...

He wrote to **commend them for their faith...**

He wrote to **confirm them in truth...**

He wrote to **condition them to a holy walk...**

He wrote to **comfort them for the future...**

Paul was a **preacher**. Paul was an **evangelist**. Paul was a **missionary**...and Paul was also a **discipler**! Paul took his role many steps beyond just presenting the gospel and making believers out of unbelievers. Paul had a heart to teach these folks...to ground them in the faith...to exhort them to live in a way that pleased the Lord...to make sure they knew sound doctrine...

And let me just say this...Doctrine is so important. Doctrine is teaching. And you'll never know false teaching when you hear it if you don't know true teaching. And we find doctrine taught in **1 Thessalonians** and in all the epistles of the **New Testament**.

Paul's ministry among the Thessalonians was not long, but it had a profound impact on them and I believe we're going to see today why that was true.

By the way, I had a note in the margin of my Bible that it was the second chapter of **1 Thessalonians** that the pastor preached at one of our seminary student's ordination. It is a great chapter for ordination services, and we'll see that this week and next week, **but as we look at the lesson today, I want us to understand that although there's not an ordained minister of the gospel in this room, this chapter has application in our lives as well.**

It's true that there are folks who have been called by God to ministry as their vocation. We often call that "full time Christian service", don't we?

But, aren't we **all** servants of Jesus? And as such all of us are in full time Christian service. There is no such thing as "part time" Christian service, is there? I mean, we may not work at the church every day...or on the mission field every day, but we are still to be serving the Lord every day...

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On the job, in our homes, in the market place...no matter where we are, no matter what time of the day or night...we are to be serving the Lord...

So, I want us to ask the Holy Spirit today to seal these truths to our own lives so that we won't think of this as some dusty, crusty, old letter written to some folks who lived many, many years... But, I want us to understand that it was written for **our teaching** and **our reproof** and **our correction** and **our training in righteousness**.

We're not reading someone else's mail, Beloved! This letter was written for us! As we study this epistle, please remember that!

The first thing I want us to see today is a successful ministry and at least *four things* that characterize a **successful ministry**. And again, I want to repeat that you have a ministry and I have a ministry. By the way, do you know what the word "minister" means in the Greek? It means **servant**. And the word **service** comes from the word "ministry." So, if it makes you feel better to think of this in those terms...feel free! So, with that in mind, let's look at four things that characterize successful service...

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8...

I don't believe Paul ever got over the fact that God loved him enough to save him. I mean, Paul was overwhelmed with the fact that God saw a mean-spirited, Christian-hating man traveling down the Damascus Road on his way to persecute God's children and God just reached down and saved him!! I believe Paul's salvation continued to be an incredibly overwhelming thing to him and **I believe it should be to us as well**. Don't ever get over the wonder of it! Don't ever take it for granted!

But, let me tell you **something else** that continued to overwhelm Paul. Paul continued to be amazed that God would entrust the gospel to him...and may I say to you this morning that God has also entrusted the gospel to us?

Have you ever thought about the fact that apart from the grace of God the gospel is just one generation from being extinct? Apart from the grace of God, the gospel would be on the endangered species list. What I mean is...

If there is ever one generation that says, "We do not accept the responsibility of being entrusted with the gospel," the gospel would cease to exist.

Think about it...somebody told you about the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. That person had been told by somebody else. And that person they heard it from had heard it from someone else. Maybe it went back to their grandfather and then their great-grandfather and their great-great-grandfather and it could finally be traced all the way back to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, James, Silas, Barnabas, Timothy and others.

We said last week how grateful we all should be that those first century Christians took Jesus at His word and went into all the world and preached the gospel...

Having said that, however...let me hasten to say this...

God will always have His remnant.

Jesus tells us that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His church.

God will always have His godly men who will successfully minister the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And God calls His gospel an everlasting gospel!!

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A successful ministry (service) is characterized first of all by

1) **Boldness**

verse 2... "boldness in our God to speak..."

We must be bold. Now, being bold is not being **obnoxious**. Boldness doesn't mean being **holier than thou**. **Boldness doesn't mean looking down our noses with disgust at the unsaved.**

Being bold simply means we are determined to speak for Christ.

See, it doesn't take any boldness to speak for Christ in a room full of Christians. It takes boldness when you know that the gospel will more than likely offend people. And I want to tell you...it's completely against my nature to offend people. I mean, if I had my way, we would all agree of everything...(and wouldn't that be boring?!!)

But, you know...the gospel **does** offend folks! The **cross** is an offense to folks! The **Lord Jesus Christ** is an offense to folks! And Paul tells us if we're going to have a successful ministry, we must speak the gospel in boldness.

But, don't miss three very important words... **"in our God."**

See, this boldness doesn't come from you and me. In fact, it would never come from me...wimp that I am... Boldness doesn't come from witnessing classes, as good as they are. I believe we each need to get alone with God, and earnestly ask Him for holy boldness and I truly believe if we do that, He will give it to us!

I believe if we say,

"Lord, I don't want to be rude. I don't want to be obnoxious.
I don't want to be unkind. I want to be bold to speak the gospel
even though I may be ridiculed. Please give me Your boldness."

I believe He will do it!

2) **Integrity** **verse 3... no error, no impurity, no deceit...**

What does integrity mean? What does it mean to be a man or woman of integrity?

It means to be upright and honest. It means that your life backs up your words.

But, according to THE AMERICAN COLLEGE DICTIONARY it means something else. It also means **"to be sound, to be unimpaired."** You've heard the expression... **"in keeping with the integrity of the text..."**

What I'm trying to say is this...

We must speak **boldly**...we must speak with **integrity**...we must speak **soundly**. And the only way we will do that is by **knowing and believing God's Word.**

Look at **verses 3 and 4**...Paul said

He didn't speak from **error**.
He didn't speak from **impurity**.
He didn't speak from **deceit**.
He didn't speak from **flattery**.

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He didn't speak from **greed**.

And all we have to do to see how **not** to do this is turn on our televisions, don't we? I mean television abounds with men and women who are not ministers of integrity. But, there were false teachers and false prophets in Paul's day and there will always be those who call themselves ministers of the gospel, but who have no integrity.

In the meantime you and I are to know God's word so well that when we share it we will do it **soundly and with honesty and uprightness**.

And let me just say this to you. **This takes discipline. This takes commitment.** I believe you can ask the Holy Spirit for boldness, but I don't believe the Holy Spirit is going to make the truths of God's Word jump into our minds and hearts without a little effort from us!

I mean, the Bible is a supernatural Book, but it's not a magical book. We must be **diligent to study to show yourselves approved unto God, a workman who doesn't need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of God.**

We should share the gospel with **boldness**, with **integrity** and with

3) Gentleness verse 7... "as a nursing mother..."

Gentleness is what will make your boldness effective.

Paul said he was as gentle "as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her children."

I think it's a beautiful sight to see mothers with their little children. I've enjoyed watching Pam with Chase. God just gives mommies a way of gentleness, doesn't He?

Being bold and mean isn't going to get it, folks. But, being bold and gentle will.

Well, the last characteristic of a successful ministry or service that we're going to consider today is

4) Affection

Jesus said, "The world will know you are My disciples if you love one another." And the world will pay a little more attention to us if we show some affection and love when we minister the gospel to them.

We don't have to love the world or the things of the world, But they will sense very quickly if we look at them with disgust or disdain! And they certainly won't listen to us!

Jesus said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling."

Jesus identifies Himself in many ways in Scripture. And here He identifies Himself as a mother hen... **"just come under my wings."**

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Psalm 91 tells us God will cover us with His feathers and we can take refuge under His wings.

We're to speak the truth, but we're to speak the truth in love!

When I think of Paul, so often I think of a determined, gritty, intelligent, dedicated man who traveled from place to place and was unafraid of being beaten or ridiculed for the sake of the gospel... I don't often think of Paul as being an affectionate man. But, he was! And we're to follow his example.

He loved the Thessalonians with a mother's love. These folks were very dear to him. And the folks God puts in our path must be dear to us, as well, and we must be very loving toward them.

Those are just four characteristics of a **successful ministry** that we see in the example of Paul's life. But, Paul exhorted the Thessalonians (and us) to a **worthy walk** in this chapter...

In the time we have left, let's see some characteristics of a worthy walk...

Verses 9-12...

In **verse 7**, we say Paul portrayed as a loving **mother** and in **verse 11**, we see him as a **father**.

Paul felt like a father to these folks. He had led them to Christ. They were his children in the faith. And the desire of Paul's heart was that they walk in a manner worthy of the One who had called them into His kingdom and glory.

And that should be the desire of our own hearts, as well. How? How do you and I walk that way? What are the qualities that characterize a worthy walk? How can you and I walk so that our children and grandchildren can tell there is a difference about our walk and it's such a good difference that they will want to walk that way, too?

And, according to this passage it is

1) **a devout walk** (a holy walk – KJV)

We must be devout in our walk...devoted to the things of God. You've heard folks criticize others for being "religious fanatics", haven't you? But, these same folks are avid football fans or baseball fans or golf fans. They are devoted to their weekly card game or their other hobbies.

God has called us to devotion to Him! God has set us apart for Him! When we're walking a worthy walk we have a sign on our heart that says "Reserved for Jesus."

I don't have the right to **do anything** He doesn't want me to do. I don't have the right to **go anywhere** He doesn't want me to go. I don't have the right **to read or watch** anything He doesn't want me to read or watch. That's holiness...that's devotion!

Secondly, Paul used the word

2) **an upright walk** (justly – KJV)

This word means righteously. We're not to walk **self-righteously**, but we **are** to walk righteously. And since all **our** righteousness is as filthy rags, I believe this means we must walk clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ...doing that which is good and not doing that which is evil.

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Thirdly, Paul used the word

3) a blameless walk (unblameably – KJV)

This doesn't mean no charges will ever be brought against us. Paul had lots of charges brought against him. The Lord Jesus had charges brought against Him. **Walking blamelessly means there is no true and real evidence against us.** Folks might trump up some charges and evidence against us...but if our walk is blameless, all the evidence will prove to be false.

Paul goes on to say he is **exhorting, encouraging and imploring** the Thessalonians to walk in a manner worth of God...

WHY? What does my walk have to do with anything?

Well, you and I know that people will watch our walk much more closely than they will listen to our talk.

It is said that Gandhi came from India to America many years ago and he studied the Christian faith and he was impressed with the person of Jesus Christ. But as he left our country, this is what he said,

"I would have become a Christian...except for Christians."

What an indictment against the Christians of America!!

Paul told the Philippians that our citizenship is in heaven. How do we know how citizens of Russia live? By observing them. How do we know how citizens from England live? By observing them. How do we know how citizens from France live? By observing them.

Mary, how are your friends from the Netherlands finding out how Americans live? By observing us!

How do folks know how Christians live? By observing us! What do they see when they observe us?

Today we've seen how our ministry can be successful and how our walk can be worthy...now let's leave here today and serve our Heavenly Father with **boldness** and **integrity** and **gentleness** and **affection**. **And may we walk in a manner that is worthy of the God who has called us into His kingdom and glory.**