

The Legacy of Ministry  
1 Thessalonians 2:1-16

Introduction

1. Review of last week:
  - a. Paul established the church at Thessalonica on his second missionary journey
  - b. He was with Timothy and Silas
  - c. He was only there for three weeks before the Jews ran him out of town, and then followed him to Berea and then on to Athens
  - d. But, in spite of this a **“great multitude of God-fearing Greeks”** and a small number of Jews accepted the Gospel
  - e. They faced tremendous persecution by the Jews after Paul left so he was concerned and sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to see how they were doing, and probably wrote 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians first and sent that with Timothy
  - f. After receiving a good report from Timothy, Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians
2. The main theme from last week’s passage—vs. 1-10—was that of imitation:
  - a. Paul thanked God for the quality of the Thessalonians faith, which was a reflection of what they had seen in and learned from Paul
  - b. He wrote about their work of faith, their labor of love and their steadfast of hope, in spite of the persecution they faced
  - c. He also thanked God because their faith had become well known to not just the surrounding region of Macedonia, but every place where the Gospel had been preached
3. Today, we’re going to look at another theme from the letter and that’s the theme of ministry

A. Paul’s ministry required boldness and perseverance (1-2)

1. Paul had a fruitful ministry among the Thessalonians (1): **“For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain,”**
  - a. According to Luke’s account in Acts, a large number of gentiles accepted the Gospel and a few Jews
  - b. In chapter 1 of this letter, Paul wrote that they had turned from idols to worship the true and living God
  - c. They had become imitators of Paul and Jesus and their faith became known around the world
2. However, Paul’s ministry was never easy (2): **“but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi,”**
  - a. At Philippi, Paul and Silas were arrested, dragged into the market place before the city leaders, stripped off their clothes, beat them with rods and then tossed them into the worst part of the prison, and placed them in stocks (Acts 16:16:19-24)
  - b. This was standard fare for Paul—see 2 Corinthians 11:23-12:10
  - c. Yet, in spite of this, Paul didn’t retreat (2b): **“as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.”**

- 1) It's no wonder he wrote that it took "**boldness**" to "**speak the gospel**" to the Thessalonians
- 2) Notice that Paul didn't rely on his own courage—it was his boldness "**in God**" that permitted him to continue in spite of the constant threats to his life
- 3) Listen to what he wrote Timothy regarding one particular time of persecution and imprisonment (2 Timothy 4:14:18): "**Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. 15 Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching. 16 At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.**"

3. This is the way ministry is—sometimes it requires boldness and perseverance

B. Paul's ministry was driven by a desire to please God, not men (3-6)
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1. Paul knew that ultimately God was the judge of his ministry
2. This stemmed from the fact that he recognized his ministry was something God entrusted to him
3. This was reflected in both the focus of his ministry and the motives behind it:
  - a. The FOCUS of his ministry was the Gospel (3-4): "**For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel,**"
    - 1) He had been "**approved by God**" – this means that he had been tested and found trustworthy
    - 2) He had been "**entrusted with the Gospel**"
      - a) 1 Corinthians 9:17
      - b) Galatians 2:7
      - c) Ephesians 3:2
      - d) Colossians 1:25
  - b. The MOTIVE behind his ministry was to please the One who had entrusted him with the Gospel (4b-6): "**so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. 5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed-- God is witness-- 6 nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.**"
    - a) His desire was to please God: "**so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts**"
    - b) He wasn't interested in flattering people: "**we never came with flattering speech**"
    - c) He wasn't interested in self-gain: "**nor with a pretext for greed**"
    - d) He wasn't interested in gaining the approval of men: "**nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others**"

Watching Rod Parsnip <grin> the other night---waiting for the demand for a \$1000 seed gift and it finally came
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4. Jesus and Paul both warned about people who would serve in the name of Jesus—especially teachers—but whose motives were purely about themselves, and not Jesus, and Paul wanted none of that in his own ministry

C. Paul's ministry was also motivated by his love for the people he served (7-12)

1. His love was reflected first of all in the **GENTLENESS** of his ministry (7): **"But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children."**
  - a) Paul states he was **"gentle"** among them, as gentle as a nursing mother.
  - b) The literal translation of this is, **"we became children among you"** but the Greek word for child is often used metaphorically as it is here.

Ken Bickel's wife called out by the legalistic preacher

Roger Peugh—taking me aside to correct my mean-spirited rhetoric

- c) The difference in the two illustrations above was in the second, Dr. Peugh was interested in my well-being and was therefore gentle in his rebuke
2. Second, his love was reflected in the **DEPTH** of his ministry (8-11): **"Having so fond an affection 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 very dear to us. 9 For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; 11 just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children,"**
  - a) Paul had genuine affection for those he served, so much so that he didn't just share the Gospel with them but his very life (8)
  - b) He was also willing to work day and night in order to minister to them (9)
  - c) He worked hard to set a proper example for them in his behavior (10)
  - d) He treated them like his own children (11)

Pastor Krenz—calling me his "son in the faith", paying for seminary like I was one of his own kids, letters filled with encouragement

3. Third, his love was reflected in the **GOAL** of his ministry (12): **"so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."**
  - a) At the heart of Paul's ministry was the desire to see people live and behave in a way that honors God
  - b) He repeated this charge in Ephesians 4:1, and in fact it is the central theme of his letter to the Ephesians
  - c) One of my favorite passages of Scripture is **Colossians 1:28-29** because it reminds me that my goal in ministry should be the same as the Apostle Paul—that I might help others to mature in their relationship with Christ

D. Paul's ministry changed people's lives (13-16)

1. Paul was an evangelist and preacher of the Gospel, and so it's no surprise that his ministry changed peoples' lives:
  - a. The Thessalonians accepted the Gospel they heard from Paul and as a result it performed it's work in them (13)
  - b. They had become imitators of God's people, even amidst the severe persecution they faced (14-16)
2. But, what about those who minister in other ways? What should they expect?
  - a. In 1 Corinthians 12 the Bible makes it clear that no individual or specific gift is more important than another—each gift is given for benefit of others and the building up of the body of Christ
  - b. This is repeated in Romans 12 where we are told that each one of us should serve the body according to our gifts and abilities as a way of devoting ourselves to one another
  - c. In Ephesians 4 we are told that as each member of the body of Christ exercise the gifts given to them, the entire body grows and matures
3. So, just as Paul's ministry changed lives, we are promised that ours will too

Conclusion
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1. So, what about you?
2. Ministry is hard work—does that stop you from ministering or motive you to minister?
3. Is your desire to please God,...or man?
4. When you minister, does it involve giving of yourself like Paul did or just using your gifts?
5. Is your heart to see people's lives changed?