

Pastoral Example

And Church Encouragement

^{2:1} For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain.

² 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.

³ For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive,

⁴ 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.

⁵ For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed-- God is witness.

⁶ Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.

⁷ But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

⁸ 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.

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 to you the gospel of God.

¹⁰ You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.

¹¹ For you know how, like a father with his children,

¹² 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.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-10

The Opposite of 1 Thessalonians 2

THESE DAYS IT CAN BE downright depressing to think about celebrity pastors who are in the news.

- **Jesse Duplantis**, famous Health and Wealth TV Evangelist: “You know I’ve owned three different jets in my life. And I use them, I’m just burning them up for the Lord Jesus Christ. [God] said, ‘I want you to believe me for a Falcon 7-X.’ I really believe that if Jesus was walking on the earth today, he wouldn’t be riding a donkey.”¹
- **Joel Osteen**, pastor of the second largest Evangelical church in America on whether you have to believe in Christ or go to hell. “You know, I’m very careful about saying who would and wouldn’t go to heaven. I don’t know ... I don’t know if I believe they’re wrong. I believe here’s what the Bible teaches and from the Christian faith this is what I believe. But I just think that only God can judge a person’s heart. I spent a lot of time in India with my father. I don’t know all about their religion. But I know they love God. And I don’t know. I’ve seen their sincerity. So I don’t know. I know for me, and what the Bible teaches, I want to have a relationship with Jesus.”²

¹ **Jesse Duplantis**, on “Televangelist Asks His Followers For \$54m For Private Jet, *NBC Nightly News* (May 30, 2018). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiHghDYvpBU>.

² **Joel Osteen**, “CNN Larry King Live: Interview With Joel Osteen,” *CNN.com* (June 20, 2005), <http://www.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0506/20/lkl.01.html>.

- **Mark Driscoll**, founder of Acts 29: As allegations spread of plagiarism,³ “Mark Driscoll resigned his pastorate at his famous Mars Hill church in Seattle after his church board released a statement that Mark has ‘been guilty of arrogance, responding to conflict with a quick temper and harsh speech, and leading the staff and elders in a domineering manner ... Most of the charges involved attitudes and behaviors reflected by a domineering style of leadership.’”⁴
- **Bill Hybels**, founder of Willow Creek and the Seeker Sensitive Movement. After losing his pastorate due to numerous sex charges earlier this year, a grandson of Billy Graham who consulted with some former staff members accusing Mr. Hybels of wrongdoing says, “Those leaders feel almost invincible ... They don’t feel like the rules apply to them, because they’re doing great things for Jesus, even though their behavior doesn’t reflect Jesus at all.”⁵
- **Nadia Bolz-Weber**, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America “pastor” and founder of the Denver church *House For All Sinners and Saints* which becomes a mild curse word when turned into an acronym and has said too many unspeakable, unsavory,

³ **Jeremy Weber**, “Tyndale Releases Results of Mark Driscoll Plagiarism Investigation,” *Christianity Today* (Dec 18, 2013), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2013/december/tyndale-releases-results-mark-driscoll-plagiarism-investiga.html>

⁴ **Kate Shellnutt** and Morgan Lee, “Mark Driscoll Resigns from Mars Hill,” *Christianity Today* (Oct 15, 2014), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/october-web-only/mark-driscoll-resigns-from-mars-hill.html>

⁵ **Boz Tchividjian** in Laurie Goodstein, “He’s a Superstar Pastor. She Worked for Him and Says He Groped Her,” *New York Times* (Aug 5, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/05/us/bill-hybels-willow-creek-pat-baranowski.html>.

and unethical things for a group like ours hear, “*Preaching hopefully in some way is the word of God, speaking is not. So I thought, I wonder, we can look at Paul that way. You know like sometimes he was just going off on his snotty opinions, he has some authority to speak on it but that’s not necessarily the Word of God.*”⁶

One does not have to look far to find in our celebrity pastors everything from greed to deception to impurity to error to self-flattery to man-pleasing to harshness to immorality to untouchable personalities who don’t have time to be “bothered” by their own parishioners.

It **isn’t like all pastors** everywhere are like this. I know many who aren’t, and there are even some well-known who aren’t. The problem is, these celebrities are emblematic and symptomatic of a much larger problem. They are **emblematic** because they are representative of some serious problems. They are symptomatic because these problems pervade the church, even in unsung places. We hear about pastors falling into abuse and spiritual pride; they have domineering and self-important ministries; many are lazy with the word

⁶ Cited in many places, though I cannot find the original as the link is dead. See **Nadia Bolz-Weber**, “Who is Teaching ELCA Leadership,” *The Liberal Lutheran Church Today* (Jan 22, 2014), <https://www.elcatoday.com/witness-stone-blog/who-is-teaching-elca-leadership>

and brutal with the sheep. I don't know, maybe it's the whole culture that has become like this. But how did we get to such a place where the ministry has become so mocked and scorned by so many people?

You don't hear a lot of talk about the **things that are to accompany the preaching** of the gospel, especially in the behavior of our pastors. Perhaps it is due in part to the fact that we don't hear a lot of talk about the gospel itself all that much. In fact, some pastors never talk about it; whole Christian denominations do not even know what it is. You might think it would be better with the law, that is churches at least teaching some kind of morality. But even that has given way to this strange kind of self-help, never-say-anything-negative that will hurt someone's feelings or make them feel bad about themselves. That or just a whole lot of man-made legalistic laws. But basic morality? That too is heard far less in today's pulpits than perhaps at any time in history.

The astonishing thing that no one seems to realize is that when these things occur, and especially when we have pulpit after pulpit (or maybe it would be better to say stage after stage) of "preachers" whose lives do not exemplify the gospel, which includes not only godly living, but the ability to

be humble and repent (for they are not perfect), when we fill churches up with this, there is a **very grave danger**. It is a danger I think we are seeing at large in our own time. It is stated well by commentator Gene Green as he spoke about the Thessalonian situation. “**What was at stake was not simply the reputation of the Christian messenger among the believers but rather the Thessalonians’ continuation in the faith (1Th 3:5).**”⁷

That “**snotty opinionated**” Apostle Paul, using the words of one of the most vile people I’ve ever heard of entering ministry (see above), wrote about this early in his first letter to the Christians at Thessalonica (**1:5b** and **1:9–10**). As we will see, this man was anything but snotty. This theme was not a passing thought. Nearly the entire second chapter is taken up with it, and in fact it will continue to be important as he finds its relevance carried over into the lives of this church throughout the letter(s). One commentator calls the section we are looking at today a “**Thanksgiving**” to “**introduce themes that will be taken up later in the letter ... [But] it is frequently overlooked that ... Paul now writes in**

⁷ Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos, 2002), 114.

some detail about himself, not in defense, but to provide in his own person an example of the sort of life he will encourage his readers to live later in the letter.”⁸ Indeed, as we will see as we think about the behavior of the Apostles, this is not merely as an end to itself. Its relevance goes right on into those who sit there listening to what they have to say, and by extension, to you here listening today.

As we look at this section of the letter, I break it down into three or four main parts. First, you have the coming of the **message** itself (**1Th 2:1-2**), followed by the **motivations** (**3-4**) and accompanying **manners** of the Apostles as they gave the gospel to the Thessalonians (**1Th 2:5-10**). Finally, there is the **mandate** he gives to these Christians, a mandate based on his own example (**11-12**).

Message (1-2)

We begin in **2:1-2**, “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

⁸ Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 32B, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 133–134.

you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.” To summarize this and all that follows today, Beale explains why this part of the letter is so important. “Desiring to please God and desiring that others please God results in a bold and effective witness ... Both motives are given as reasons for the boldness and effectiveness of Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica (2:1–2), which then undergirds the narration of the Thessalonians’ own amazing witness in 1:7–8.”⁹

The focus here is at that initial moment when the Apostles came to Thessalonica from Philippi. He says that they had **already suffered greatly** and had been treated shamefully at **Philippi**. Luke, who was a travelling companion of these Apostles at this time wrote in his book of Acts all about this, and it is worth remembering. It is found in Acts 16.

It begins with Paul meeting a disciple named **Timothy** (**Acts 16:1**). This is the same Timothy who helped write the Thessalonian letters. As they were travelling, trying to figure out where to go next, it says they were “**forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia**” (6). They went another direction “**but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow**

⁹ G. K. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 63.

them” (7). As they move in yet another direction, Paul has a vision of a man urging him to come to Macedonia, and thus concluded that this is where God was leading them (8-10). These are all fascinating comments on God’s sovereign and unknowable will, but all I want to say about them here is that it means that what comes next was planned out very specifically by God himself.

They came to Philippi, a leading city of the district and a Roman colony (12). After being there several days, they went to a place of prayer on the Sabbath and met a woman named Lydia (13), and the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said (14). She and her household were baptized, and because she was rich, she invited the Apostles to stay with them as they preached the gospel (15). As they were doing this, they were met by a slave girl who was possessed by a spirit of divination who brought her owners a lot of money (16). She kept following Paul around proclaiming that “these are servants of the Most High God who were proclaiming the way of salvation” (17). Apparently, it was not a good thing, because Paul became extremely annoyed after many days of this, and he turned to her and exorcized the demon, commanding it to come out (18).

The owners quickly realized that their cash cow had been put out to pasture, and there would be no more money coming in from this little witch (19). So they created a huge disturbance, attacked the Apostles, beat them with rods, punched them many times, and threw them chained into a prison (20-24). This did not deter them, for they began singing and praising God with hymns (25). Suddenly, there was a mighty earthquake and all the doors of the prison were opened and everyone's bonds were loosed (26). The jailer, who was sleeping, woke and saw all the open doors and was about to kill himself (27), but Paul cried out that they were still here (28). The jailer rushed in and threw himself at the feet of Paul and Silas (29) and wanting to know how to be saved (29), he trusted in Christ at that very hour (30). They proclaimed the gospel to his household (32) and were baptized (33) with the same water that was used to wash the wounds of the Apostles (33).

When word got out what had happened, and that Paul was a Roman citizen and that this thing was quite unlawful, they let them go and they went directly to Thessalonica (36-40). This is the suffering and shame that they were met with in that great city. This was God's will for them there! This

suffering which brought the salvation of many people. And the Thessalonians knew all about it.

It is into this context that the words, “our coming to you was not in vain” and “you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel in the midst of much conflict” are to be understood. Think about that crazy answer about the Only Way that Joel Osteen gave to Larry King. It was so wishy-washy, so timid, so afraid that it became nothing but a jumbled pile of contradictions empty of any divine power. And, the only persecution he suffered that night was the pressing by King and from a caller that this was a really unfaithful answer (even Larry King knew that!). But this is also a man who has a dozen bodyguards, who lives in a gigantic mansion, who purchased the Astrodome for his church, and who is worth millions and millions of dollars. So there’s that.

His is the very opposite response to the one we see Paul invoke in the memories of this church. No, they were bold *as they were being beaten* with rods, struck with fists, put into prison, and had dangerous mobs seeking to take their life. They were unflinching. They did not compromise the Gospel, because it had been “entrusted” (1Th 2:4) to them by

God himself, and how dare they change that joyful word of good news simply because it might cost them something in this life?

This boldness in the face of persecution thus becomes the foundation for the way the gospel was received by the Thesalonians. It came with power. As those people saw what Paul and Silas and Timothy were willing to endure for it, it made the message that much more incredible in the eyes of the elect. It became a means by which many were saved.

Motivations (3-4)

This boldness, however, could have been done for other reasons, selfish reasons, wicked reasons. Andrew Young explains in a way that is helpful for what we will soon see: “[The Apostles] had not strolled into the city as relaxed and overfed tourists. They had entered still sporting the scars of woeful mishandling in Philippi ... Treatment like this would have been enough to stop any phony mission in its tracks.”¹⁰ Though the first two verses would have been plenty to remind these Christians that they were not in it for

¹⁰ Andrew W. Young, *Let's Study 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2001), 20.

their own physical gain, Paul feels a great urge to tell them more. Much more. He turns to **his motivations** for giving his “**appeal**” (1Th 2:3) for them to turn to Christ.

The word “**appeal**” (*paraklesis*) is sometimes rendered as “**exhortation**,” because it is a calling through words for the people to do something. But the word itself has some kind of idea of “**comfort**” (think *Paraklete*, i.e. the Holy Spirit), because it is good news. So now imagine this comforting appeal being given with the following motives.

First, “**error**.” This would have been important to the Jewish Christians. Remember, the Gospel is profoundly rooted in the OT Scriptures. The Rabbis knew their Scripture, and those who converted to Christ had to be convinced from the truth of the word about that Paul was saying. It was true. Not only that, but he was telling the truth about the things that actually happened in Israel just a decade or two earlier, when Jesus walked the earth. He was not making up fables or stories, and we today have Paul’s companion Luke who wrote Luke-Acts to continue to demonstrate this fact to all the ages. This appeal was based in truth, not error.

Second, there was no “**impurity**” (*akatharsia*). This fascinating word has a broad or narrow usage. Broadly, we find

it in the LXX in **Proverbs 6:16-18**. “For he rejoices in all things which God hates, and he is ruined by reason of impurity of soul” (**Prov 6:16 LXX**).¹¹ “The eye of the haughty, a tongue unjust, hands shedding the blood of the just; and a heart devising evil thoughts, and feet hastening to do evil, -*are hateful to God.*” Taking this term broadly does seem to fit with later exhortations about general behavior. However, Richard Phillips makes a great point that perhaps it is the more narrow understanding that is in view.

This probably refers to sexual impurity. The mainstream culture in which Paul ministered was sexually lax, to say the least, and at least some of the idolatrous cults employed sexual intercourse as a means of achieving an ecstatic union with God. Added to this were dynamic spiritual gurus who often succeeded in luring many women into their service. Since Acts 17:4 notes that Paul’s converts in Thessalonica included “*not a few of the leading women,*” the accusation of impropriety would be a convenient slander against his ministry.¹²

¹¹ The Hebrew reads more famously, “There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him” (Prov 6:16).

¹² **Richard D. Phillips**, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015), 57.

Take the opposite of this in today's mainline church, which is making huge inroads into Evangelicalism where any and all sexual behavior is not only tolerated, but celebrated. In fact, to say anything against it—in church—is to be the paragon of hatred. Makes me wonder what the “snotty opinionate” Apostle would have to say to a woman who was replaced in her Liberal Lutheran church (for reasons of her celebrity) here in Denver by a self-professed gay man who is “married” to a drag queen who goes by the name of “Fruit Bomb.”

Finally, there is the idea of “[any attempt to deceive.](#)” The Apostles did not do what happened regularly in the ancient world, even as it does today. Back then you had traveling religious charlatans who everyone knew were there just to hit them up for something. Well, apparently not everyone, for it became pretty big business. Not unlike today's hucksters who need 50 million-dollar jets as they fleece and deceive gullible sheep (and goats) into giving them whatever their hearts desire, even if it means putting elderly widows on fixed incomes out on the street.

All of [these motives are bad.](#) All of them exist. All of them exist today. Many are being taken by lies, immorality,

and deception all in the name of Jesus Christ. But perhaps the most pernicious kind of motive here is one the Apostles deny next: **Man-Pleasers**. “So we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts” (4). This one is so pernicious because even the best of pastors get taken with it, and they do not even know it. Why might a pastor work 100 hours a week doing nothing but ministry, putting his health on the line and his family on the ropes? I just talked to one this week who is currently totally burned out and really struggling. I pointed out that perhaps, in the midst of wanting to do the Lord’s work and seek his glory, that maybe there was actually man-pleasing going on there too. He admitted that was probably true. Philip Ryken puts the “perfect pastor” this way:

He condemns sins, but never upsets anyone. He works from 8:00 A.M. until midnight and is also the janitor. He makes \$60.00 a week ... and gives about \$50.00 a week to the poor. He is 28 years old and has been preaching for 30 years.... The Perfect Pastor smiles all the time with a straight face because he has a sense of humor that keeps him seriously dedicated to

his work.... He spends all his time evangelizing the unchurched and is always in his office when needed.¹³

Honestly, sometimes I think pastors put this expectation upon themselves more than the people do. They are the ones who have changed the entire job description, not the people. They are the ones who have turned this thing into an impossible task that burns them out faster than matches on a windy day. And it is to no one's benefit.

But there is **another kind of man-pleasing**, and it is one that refuses to preach the word as is. This seems to be Paul's main idea using it here. The Bible is full of all kinds of things that people do not want to hear from sexual absolutes, to God suffering, to our inability to even seek him, to the need for him to predestine and effectually call us, to a Jesus who exists as a warrior in the OT, to the doctrine of hell and eternal punishment. **The temptation** of the man-pleaser is to not speak truth. It happens with all kinds of self-justifying thoughts. **"They aren't ready to handle that one yet."** **"We don't need to start needless controversy."** **"We can't really know what the Bible means when it says that."** And so on.

¹³ Philip Graham Ryken, *Galatians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 175. Cited in Phillips, 55.

Beware the minister who seeks to please you, for it means he is not being faithful with what he has been entrusted by God, and he does not love you enough to tell you the truth. That doesn't mean he has to understand it all, but he does have to try. The one who tries to please God in these things is well aware that his God “tests his own heart” and that he will be held accountable in a way that you will not for the things he teaches and says.

Manners (5-10)

The inward motives turn next to outward mannerisms. “For we never came with words of flattery, as you know” (5). Flattery is not a motive, it is something that you do. Flattery is a kind of speech that is used to butter someone up. It is basically a form of lying. The dictionary defines it as “excessive and insincere praise, especially that is given to further one's own interests.” This is what lobbyists and politicians and fund-raisers do, not pastors. There are obvious temptations in ministry to do it though. If the pastor really needs that wealthy person to stay so that the church won't fold, he

won't lose his job, and his family won't starve, why not flatter them a little to make them think you like them.

The Apostles did not come to Thessalonica to flatter anyone. They couldn't care less about that stuff. What they wanted was to see men and women and children, slave and free, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor **repent of their sins** and turn to the living God in newness of life. Flattery with the gospel is one of the quickest ways to lead someone to hell that I can think of. Because it is an offensive message to those who are perishing, there can be no smoothing over of sin, no coaxing and cajoling people into truly trusting in Christ and doing what he commands, no hiding the suffering of the Servant without a compromise of the only message that saves. When you give people a false gospel, how on earth can they be saved? This is where we are at in many places in the visible church today. A bunch of people running around who have never been transformed because they've never been told the message that can do it.

You can see how this leads naturally to the next: “**nor with a pretext for greed**” (5). Times always seem to change in this regard. Back with the Depression generation, because of what they went through (with a war right after), there

were many pastors not only living in poverty, but expected to live in poverty. Today, it is not uncommon to see many pastors making 10 times as much as their people do. Neither is good. But clearly, the ministry can and has and is being used by many to make a buck, and how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven.

It is interesting that the first ends with “as you know” and this one ends with “God is witness.” They didn’t come here to get rich. That’s part of why God had these people hear the gospel under such dire circumstances. They needed to see with their own eyes that this was not a group of religious tricksters.

Along with getting rich, another great vice is that of seeking one’s own glory. “Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ” (1Th 2:6). This fascinating verse makes me think of the “superapostles” that Paul was dealing with at that very moment in Corinth. They were bragging about following Paul or Apollos or someone else. It’s not unlike the ridiculous question that gets asked on a regular basis in Reformed forums on Facebook: Who is the best: Piper, MacArthur, Sproul, Dever, or White. I don’t

know what it is about the current Reformed and Restless group of young people, but they seem almost **obsessed with celebrity**. This is not good.

Nor is it good for men to become celebrities, because as we saw in that one quote from Billy Graham's grandson, often these men feel like they are above everything, and that they even deserve to engage in sin. Boz would know, it happened to his own brother at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church when he was kicked out for adultery. This is the ultimate kind of seeking self-glory.

Paul seems especially to have been aware of this, perhaps because he was so astonishingly intelligent and because he was an Apostle. Take note: **“though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.”** *“There is no one else out there like us, commissioned by Christ himself, people. We are laying the foundation, and as such it would not have been out of our rights to demand your help, because it is your duty.”* Can you hear how easy it would have been for this to be said sarcastically by Paul? But God kept him humble. Think about what he said to the Corinthians:

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2Co 12:7-9)

Do you hear how glory and greed and flattery and all these things are so closely related as sins for the preacher? Paul’s **antidote**, quite honestly, **was suffering** for Christ. Perhaps we ought not be too surprised that we see so much of the opposite of this in our day when we all have it so very good relatively speaking.

Finally, all of these negative manners turns to something more positive. “**But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children**” (1Th 2:7). **Gentleness**, the opposite of the reason given at the time for pastor Driscoll being removed. Gentleness, one of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:23). A major theme of Paul’s positive ethics

in his letters. Oh, and Peter and James too. What more lovely thing is there than thinking of your pastor as someone who, when you are empty, angry, sick, or bitter responds to you gently? How many pastor's wives and kids in church have been ruined by the opposite of this from their husband-pastor? Tempers, rage, fury. This is what makes people hate the church.

Gentleness. How better to talk about it than with **the analogy of a mother**? Paul is, of course, a man. We men can get a bit heated, a bit angry, a bit enflamed at times. We can do it for good reasons: terrible theology, evil worship practices, general misbehavior. So he gives them the reminder that he acted instead like nursing mothers taking care of their infants. Held gently. Touched lightly. Caressed softly. Fed slowly. Burped ... ok, sometimes you have to burp them harder. But still, the image conjures up kindness and love of a precious kind. Take note of this mother image, because in a moment, we will see its opposite, and this is intentional.

Before that, we have this gentleness move into **affection**. “**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” (1Th 2:8). This gets at that idea of the pastor who someone feels is un-touchable. “Well, I wouldn’t want to bother him, he’s obviously busy.” No. Never! That’s the whole point of being a pastor. To share, to enter into relationship with, to help, to care for, to encourage, to teach, to share of himself. The pastor who is not like this has no business being in ministry. I don’t care how good of a speaker they are.

Our authors get specific for a moment. “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 to you the gospel of God” (9). This fascinating verse reverses the previous idea. People often think they are burdens to the pastor. Here, the pastors refuse to be a burden to the people! “I have become all things to all men” he says in another place because he will not let his own needs be a burden to those who cannot handle them. They are grown men. They can work to make ends meet if the situation demands it. This reversal also has a purpose for later on in these letters, as it becomes an example that is to be emulated. But that takes us too far into the future for now.

It is enough to see how this list of manners ends with three words: “holiness, righteousness, and blamelessness” (10). This “was our conduct toward you believers” and “You are witnesses, and God also!” Holiness refers to a condition. To be holy in the OT was to be set apart, different, sanctified, pure. This condition is defined by righteousness which refers to doing—to moral behavior, ethics, action. We’ve called it “manners.” Blamelessness seems to be an internal thing. We’ve called it “motives.” The point is, the totality of what they were, how they behaved, why they did the things they did was in accordance with the gospel of God. In other words, their message lined up with their methods. There was no contradiction, no hypocrisy, no left hand not knowing what the right hand was doing.

There are reasons that the gospel came with such power to those people. We saw last time that this was because of the suffering that accompanied the gospel. Now we see that it is because of the apostles themselves presented a gospel in a manner that is worthy of that gospel, so that Christ would not be mocked as the word was preached.

Mandate (11-12)

What then is left? The final two verses give us the “**mandate**,” and hence the purpose of this section. It begins with a shift from mother to father. “**For you know how, like a father with his children...**” (11). Let us stop here and consider how a father is supposed to be with his children. He is supposed to be just like the things we have seen. In these ways, there is an emulation of the heavenly Father himself. If you are one who had a horrible fatherly role model, look to the heavenly Father who is not like your own dad.

But the point here is that this kind of a model was actually emulated by the Apostles to the Thessalonian “children.” And here, the specific nature of their fatherly actions is summed up in **vs. 12**. “**We exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you...**”¹⁴ The word “**exhorted**” (*parakaleo*) really takes us **full circle**, for we saw the

¹⁴ Comparing the ESV with something like the NAS or the KJV you will notice that vv. 11-12 do not end in the same place. This is highly unusual, but keep in mind the verse breaks were inserted centuries after the letter was completed. They are not inspired. Here is an explanation for what happened. “These verses, which continue the discussion from vv. 9f., are best taken together because grammatically they form one continuous thought, which has led to differing divisions of the verses. *UBSGNT* separates the verses between *ἑαυτοῦ* (“his own”) and *παρακαλοῦντες* (“exhorting”), while the *RSV* and most other English versions include everything up to the purpose clause beginning with *εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ...* (“in order that you walk ...”) in v. 11.” Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), 105.

related word (*paraklesis*) in **vs. 3**. This gives us a kind of inclusio to the whole section, with the beginning and end being the same.

The exhortation is now followed with the two words “**encouraged**” and “**charged**.” The first is the idea of **finding inspiring ways to motivate**, like making a living without begging them for money, like behaving like God-fearing people as they present a message of grace. The second is often used in a **legal context** where someone swears under oath. This, of course, is a different kind of motivation, for you do not want to break your word before a Judge. But notice that all three revolve around the idea of motivations. We have seen the Apostolic motivations and now we are seeing this carry over to the motivations of the Thessalonians.

Importantly, it says, “**each one of you**.” The word “**each**” (*hekastos*) is in the Greek. In other words, this is not merely a group exhortation. Paul, Timothy, and Silas spent time with individuals doing these things. Why? Because groups do not get saved, individuals do. Groups are amorphous; individuals are concrete. Groups are not accountable; individuals are. There is no group identity politic here, where the individual is only identified as a group, which is

what Postmodernism has so viciously created in our day. It is the individual him or herself that stands before God. It is Rick and Tim and Dave, Kathy and Angie and Chris, Mike and Breanna and Luis and Rena and Henoah and Alice ... it is each of us who is exhorted, encouraged, and charged by God's word. So the question is **what will you do** with the mandate?

“Walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory” (12). This verse gives you **the what** followed by **the why**. “What” is walking in a manner worthy of God. The content of this has just been spelled out in the way that the Apostles carried on their business: boldly, but in truth, purity, and without deception; seeking to please God; without flattery or greed or self-glory; gently, affectionately; eager to share all that you have and are, carrying on with the labor and vocation God has called you to; in holiness, righteousness, and blamelessness; exhorting, encouraging, and charging one another to finish the race, to fight the good fight, to not lose hope or forsake the fellowship.

In the same way that Paul and Silas and Timothy charged the Jason and the other Thessalonians, so also in the

same way Doug and the elders and the congregation are to behave each in our own role and position in the church, according to the commands of God who is love. When we do, this makes the gospel very powerful, for it is a means by which the Spirit makes the gospel smell fragrant and taste sweet to God's elect. And it is a means by which the mouths of men are shut, for they have no slander that they can speak against us. Let us therefore be not mere hearers of the word, but doers.

Why? **Because God has called you into his own kingdom and glory.** This is his kingdom we are building, not our own. This is his glory we are seeking, not our own. And it is because the Holy Spirit has called us to himself that we are able; for the same Spirit lives in all who have been called and justified and sanctified.

And if you have not yet known this internal calling, know that the Spirit is calling you even now to himself. Look at this kingdom and what it is truly like. Do not look to the failings of men and their sins. For there are many, and every church is full of sinners. We all from time to time become the very celebrities we spoke of earlier. For there is no one who does not sin. No one except Christ. Look to him.

Look to his Father. Look by the Spirit and see this glorious kingdom and what things will be like in a world where sin is removed and men are made new. Look now and see that this kingdom has intruded upon this age, that Christians do in fact act in these ways to such a degree that it can be recognized that the Spirit does change hearts and makes people want to live like this. The Apostles proved it. Know that this is the heart of a Christian and that the garbage of the world is cleaned up in Christ Jesus.

To him be the glory and power and kingdom forever.

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