

## A MODEL PREACHER

### **TEXT: I THESSALONIANS 2:1-20**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. Last week we started a new series in the apostle Paul's two epistles to the church at Thessalonica.
2. These epistles were written from Corinth, not long after the church in Thessalonica was established.
3. I mentioned that in many ways the church in Thessalonica was a model church. This evening, as we get into chapter 2, I want for us to see that in many ways the apostle Paul was a model preacher.
4. Perhaps it would be better to say Paul and his fellow-laborers were model preachers -- "our" (2:1), "we" (2:2), "our" (2:3), etc.
5. However, since Paul often used the plural number when he was referring to himself only, we will look at the text in that way.

#### **I. PAUL WAS A POWERFUL PREACHER (2:1-6; cf. 1:5).**

1. Paul's preaching "was not in vain" (2:1); i.e. it was not empty or without results. Paul had a very fruitful ministry. When Paul entered Thessalonica and started preaching, people got saved and things started happening – a local New Testament church was established in a very short time.
2. I remember back in Bible college, the president of the college used to preach in chapel and say, "Go out and preach the Gospel – it still works!"
3. This is what the apostle Paul is saying in I Thessalonians 2:1, his preaching "was not in vain." It was not without success.
4. Paul's preaching was bold – "we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention" (2:2).
5. Even though Paul and his companions "were shamefully entreated" (2:2) they were not discouraged. They did not give up.
6. They "were shamefully entreated" in Philippi (Acts 16) and Paul was forced to leave Thessalonica in a hurry (Acts 17), but he continued to steadfastly preach the Gospel.
7. Paul preached the Gospel in its purity. "For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile" (2:3).
8. Paul's preaching "was not of deceit" (2:3). There was no error, or trickery, or deception. It was the pure message of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

9. Paul's preaching was not of uncleanness (2:3). The Christians in Thessalonica were surrounded by idolatrous false religionists, who mixed religion with immorality. Paul preached against immoral uncleanness (cf. 4:3-7).
10. The teaching of the heathen philosophers led to a life of licentiousness, but the preaching of the gospel led to purity.
11. Peter describes false teachers as "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls" (II Peter 2:14).
12. Peter says they "they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness" (II Peter 2:18).
13. Paul's preaching was not "in guile" (I Thess. 2:3). He did not have impure motives. He did not use worldly methods to attract an audience.
14. Paul was not a "man-pleaser" or an "ear tickler" -- "even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts" (2:4).
15. Paul warned in II Timothy 4:3, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts, shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears."
16. Certainly, that time has come.
17. But Paul was only interested in pleasing God, not men.
18. Paul's ministry was free from undue influence – he did not flatter people or "butter them up" (2:5).
19. Paul's ministry was free from covetousness (2:5). Unfortunately, some preachers covet money, or fame, or popularity, or self-promotion, or power – but Paul did not hide under "a cloke of covetousness" (2:5).
20. The word "cloke" is translated "pretense" in Matthew 23:14 and Mark 12:40, where our Lord says, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation."
21. The hypocritical scribes and Pharisees devoured widows' houses, and they hid their covetousness under a "pretence" (cloke) of long prayers.
22. God was Paul's witness (2:5b).
  - "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son" (Romans 1:9).
  - "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 9:1).

23. Paul's ministry was free from self-glory (2:6). Some preachers seek fame and fortune, but Paul did not.

## **II. PAUL WAS A COMPASSIONATE PREACHER (2:7, 8).**

1. Paul was bold but he also was "gentle...even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (2:7).
2. Paul was "affectionately desirous" of their spiritual welfare, and they were "dear" to him (2:8).
3. Paul was willing to lay down his life ("soul") for them (2:8). "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life (same word as *soul*) dear unto myself" (Acts 20:24).
4. First John 3:16 says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

## **III. PAUL WAS A HARD-WORKING PREACHER (2:9-13).**

1. In order not to be burdensome ("chargeable") to them, Paul and his companions had supported themselves by labouring night and day, (2:9). Paul made tents to support himself.
2. "Holily" or "piously" (2:10) refers to our relationship with God. If that is right, then everything else will fall into place – we will behave "justly" and "unblameably" before others (2:10).
3. In I Thessalonians 2:7, Paul speaks of loving them just as a loving mother nurses her child. Now in 2:11, Paul speaks as a "father" to his children. Paul comforted them, exhorted them, and charged them (2:11).
4. Paul encouraged the Christians at Thessalonica to "walk worthy of God" (2:12; cf. 4:1).
5. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:1, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."
6. The Christians at Thessalonica received the word of God "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (2:13).

## **IV. PAUL WAS A DISCERNING PREACHER (2:14-18).**

1. Paul knew that many "religious" people are enemies of the Gospel (2:14-16; cf. Acts 17:5, 13, etc.)
2. Paul knew better than anyone because he himself had been a zealous Pharisee and had persecuted Christians.

3. In Acts 22:3 & 4, Paul said he “was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.”
4. Paul refers to Jewish opposition in I Thess. 2:16. They would not allow Paul to speak.
  - In Antioch (Acts 13:45, 50).
  - In Iconium (Acts 14:1-5).
  - In Lystra (Acts 14:19).
  - In Berea (Acts 17:13).
  - In Corinth (Acts 18:12).
  - And in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5, 6).
5. The apostle Paul had spiritual discernment and could see the hand of God at work in all of this. “To fill up their sins always” (2:16) means God allows the wicked to fill up to the brim before He moves in judgment – “for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost” (2:16b).
6. Our Lord said to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:32, “Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.”
7. Genesis 15:16 says, “For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.”
8. Satan hinders the work of God in various ways (I Thess. 2:17, 18). Therefore we must “pray without ceasing” (cf. 5:17).
9. Satan cannot do anything that God does not allow. If Satan (“Adversary”) was successful in keeping Paul out of Thessalonica, it was only because God had a reason for it. Paul wrote in II Corinthians 12:7, “There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me.
10. Paul prayed and asked the Lord three times, that this “thorn in the flesh” from Satan would depart, and the Lord said to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (II Cor. 12:8, 9).
11. We can trace the hindering work of Satan all through Scripture. Nehemiah worked hard to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, but Satan used Sanballat and Tobiah to hinder him.
12. Satan uses men like Sanballat and Tobiah to hinder the work of God.
13. The Lord said to Peter in Luke 22:31, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.”