

“The Pastor’s Heart”
1 Thessalonians 2:7-12
(Preached at Trinity, May 26, 2019)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In the opening verses of **Chapter 2** Paul defends himself against the false accusations being spread about him and his ministry. This was the frequent tactic used by the enemies of the Gospel. Besides the frequent physical attacks, Paul often faced personal attacks upon his credibility. The opponents of the Gospel knew that if they could convince people that Paul was a false teacher unworthy of receiving, they could discredit the Gospel.
2. As I’ve pointed out, we don’t need to respond to every accusation levied against us. We need to guard our hearts against lashing out against our accusers because of some personal offense—because our pride has been bruised. We need to be longsuffering and trust God to vindicate us in due time.
There are some cases, however, when it is prudent for us to respond. This is particularly true when there is a threat to the Gospel and the cause of Christ. There are times when it is prudent for a pastor to defend himself, not necessarily for selfish vindication but to protect the work of the ministry from being maligned.
This is the place where Paul found himself.
3. Although, we are not given specific details of the attacks upon Paul, these opening verses of **Chapter 2** imply that Paul’s adversaries were attempting to discredit his ministry among the Thessalonians by attacking his integrity—his sincerity and motivation. Paul’s line of defense was to present both positive and negative arguments. He declared what he did not do as well as what he did do.
4. In **Verses 1-6** Paul’s defense was largely negative – what he did not do.
1 Thessalonians 2:5-6 NAU - "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."
Paul never softened the tone of the Gospel in order to make it less offensive to fallen men. The lost man does not want his sin exposed. He loves his sin and pretends that there is no offense in it. Paul refused to preach a Gospel filled with flattering words.
1 Corinthians 2:4-5 NAU - "my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."
6. Beginning with **Verse 7** Paul changes his tone and turns to his positive defense. In these verses Paul exposes his wonderful pastoral heart.
 - A. On one hand, Paul is speaking as an apostle.
Verse 6 - "as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority."
While Paul’s office contained authority, Paul was more interested in caring for these new Christians. One of the roles of an apostle is that of shepherd. Jesus commanded Peter, feed or shepherd my sheep.
Apostles were also pastors.

- B. In this passage Paul is speaking pastorally. While a pastor's office also carries authority, the chief role of a pastor is to shepherd God's people.

Peter wrote:

1 Peter 5:1-2 NAU - "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ² shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness"

Pastors must care for their flock with a sacrificial heart. It is a heart that no pastor displays perfectly but all should strive toward with great diligence.

- C. And as with many of the other pastoral attributes, this should be the model toward which we must all strive. Every Christian has the duty to care for the members of the body of Christ.

Romans 12:10-13 NAU - "*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹ not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³ contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.*"

Paul writes in **Chapter 5**

1 Thessalonians 5:14 NAU - "We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone."

7. What are these qualities of pastoral care?

- I. Pastoral care is a tender care – **Verse 7**

- A. Paul uses a contrasting mode of behavior

1. In **Verse 6** Paul states that he and his companions might have exercised their apostolic prerogative. He uses the word βάρος which the NASB translates "authority." It can also refer to a burden which is how the KJV translates it: "we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ." The idea is Paul didn't come in making demands of them. He didn't insist on their provision, even though as an apostle it was his right. **1 Thessalonians 2:9 NAU** - "For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you,"
2. Instead of insisting that they care for him, Paul came in with a desire to care for them. He uses the example of a nursing mother tenderly caring for her infant child. Paul was interested in gaining them, not what they had.
3. Even in the face of hostility kindness should be the response **2 Timothy 2:24-25 NAU** - "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵ with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,"

- B. Pastoral care demands looking to the needs of the flock
1. It demands caring for the souls of God's people
Hebrews 13:17 NAU - "for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account."
 2. It demands a great regard for the well-being of God's people. They must be dear to us.
1 Thessalonians 2:8 NAU - "because you had become very dear to us."
 - a. Too often pastors think that all they need to do is sit in their office and study. They quickly quote from Acts 6 that pastors must devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word, and see that as the totality of their work.
 - b. Pastors cannot care for the souls of their congregation unless they are involved in their lives.
 3. All of us have a duty to care for one another
1 Thessalonians 5:14 NAU - "We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone."
Romans 12:10 NAU - "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor"

II. Pastoral care demands a humble giving of self – **Verse 8**

- A. Paul's motive was to bring them the Gospel at whatever personal cost
1. Paul states that it had cost him dearly. He had given his very life in the service of the Gospel of Christ.
1 Thessalonians 2:8 NAU - "to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives"
 2. Paul's enemies had made the accusation that Paul was only motivated by selfish greed – **Verse 5** - "nor with a pretext for greed" - πλεονεξία
The word refers to covetousness.
 3. One of the qualifications for pastor is:
1 Timothy 3:3 NAU - "free from the love of money."
1 Peter 5:2 NAU - "not for sordid gain, but with eagerness"
 4. The two poorest paying professional careers are pastors and teachers. It testifies to the priorities of our culture. We place much higher value upon our physical health than upon our spiritual wellbeing.
 - a. The congregation must pay a fair wage
1 Timothy 5:17-18 NAS - "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."
 - b. The pastor must guard his heart against covetousness or discontent. He must be very careful about voicing complaints.
 5. Greater attention must be given to caring for the people of God and advancing the Gospel of Christ.

- B. Selfless sacrifice is required of every Christian
Romans 12:10-13 NAU - "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹ not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³ contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality."
1. We should maintain a heart of sacrificial service to others. When the early church heard of a brother or sister in need they sacrificially gave.
 2. Paul spoke of his collection for the poor in Jerusalem:
2 Corinthians 9:6-7 NAS - "he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. ⁷ Let each one *do* just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver."
 3. Paul wrote of the generosity of the churches in Macedonia
2 Corinthians 8:1-5 NAU - "Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, ² that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. ³ For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord, ⁴ begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, ⁵ and *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God."
 4. What a wonderful thing it is to have a church where we give ourselves to one another in love—where we sincerely care for one another.
- III. Pastoral care demands tireless labor – **Verse 9** - "*how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you"
- A. The pastor must be committed to hard work
1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 - "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, ¹³ and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another."
1. "Labor" - κοπιᾶω • to grow weary, tired, exhausted, wearisome effort, to toil
 2. He should maintain full days of labor so that he can feed Christ's sheep – they must never be neglected.
 3. Paul considered his care of Christ's church his most arduous labor
2 Corinthians 11:27-28 NAU - "*I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸ Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me *of* concern for all the churches."

4. The pastor should labor until the end of his days.
Robert Godfrey writes of John Calvin's last days:
"By early 1563 he at times was unable to walk due to gout and arthritis. In early February 1564 he gave his last lectures and sermons. Calvin prayed that his mind would remain clear to the end so he could work. From his bed he continued to dictate letters and his final commentary, on the Book of Joshua. His fellow ministers appealed to him to get more rest. He responded, "What! Would you have the Lord find me idle?"¹
 5. We should all be involved in the work of building up of the body of Christ. Part of the duty of pastors is to equip the body so that they might build up the body.
Ephesians 4:12 NAU - "equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;"
Ephesians 4:15-16 NAU - "we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."
 6. The Christian life is full of labor for the building up of the body of Christ. It is a labor to see Christ's reign advance upon the earth.
Matthew 6:31-33 NAU - "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' ³² "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness"
- B. We must also labor for our daily bread – We must not be afraid of hard work.
1. Paul was not afraid of so-called secular work
1 Thessalonians 2:9 NAU - "*how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God."
 2. When at Corinth Paul labored in his trade as a tent-maker which would have been working with leather goods.
Acts 18:1-3 NAU - "After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. ² And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, ³ and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers."

¹ Robert Godfrey, *John Calvin, Pilgrim and Pastor* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009) Page 195.

3. Part of Paul's reason for laboring was to serve as their example
2 Thessalonians 3:7-10 NAU - "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, ⁸ nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; ⁹ not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either."
1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 NAU - "make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, ¹² so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need."
4. We are in error when we pretend that there is a division between our secular work and our religious life—between the secular and the sacred.
 - a. Our entire life is a display of Christ's reign. Everything is sacred!
 - b. Too many see evangelism as an event – something we plan and execute. Evangelism is simply the life of a Christian on display.
 - c. Whether Paul was working in a trade or laboring among the Thessalonians, it was all service to the glory of Christ.

IV. Pastoral care demands blameless behavior – **Verse 10**

- A. This was a high priority for Paul. He was always very careful not to discredit the ministry or disqualify himself as a Gospel minister.
2 Corinthians 6:3-6 NAU - "giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, ⁴ but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, ⁵ in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, ⁶ in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,"
 1. He was always willing to make personal sacrifice that he might not hinder the Gospel.
 2. Paul wrote in his earlier letter to the Corinthians that he was giving up some of his rights before them lest the Gospel be hindered.
1 Corinthians 9:11-12 NAU - "f we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? ¹² If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ."
- B. Whenever a person finds cause to take offense in the life of the preacher he will be less likely to respond positively to the message of the Gospel. This is why a pastor's character must be above reproach.
1 Timothy 3:2 NAU - "An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,"

1. A man can disqualify himself from the ministry and bring great harm to the integrity of the ministry in general. In such cases he no longer meets the qualification to shepherd God's sheep as a pastor. This is not to hold pastors to an impossible standard or to forget that they are mere men. But there is scandalous behavior that can disqualify. One of the greatest dangers is not guarding zealously against the threat of infidelity to our marital vows.
 2. **W.A. Criswell**, senior pastor at First Baptist Dallas for over 50 years wrote regarding marital unfaithfulness in the life of a pastor—
“In God's Book we are told that our Lord casts our sins behind His back, that He buries them in the depths of the sea, and that He remembers them against us no more. In that goodness of God, we all rejoice. But the problem of the minister in the pulpit who has committed adultery or who has sinned grievously in other areas assails me and confronts me as a listener. No matter how I tried, I could never get beyond the fact that this man has betrayed his trust. It seems to me, therefore, that for the sake of his listening audience he ought to seek employment in some other area of life.”²
 3. **John MacArthur**: “We must recognize that leadership in the church cannot be entered into lightly. The overarching requirement of a leader is that he be above reproach. That is a very difficult requirement, and not everyone can meet it. Some kinds of sin irreparably shatter a man's reputation and disqualify him forever—because he can no longer be above reproach. Sexual sin is singular in its effects on those who fall to it. It is one thing to fail in a moment of anger and lose one's temper, or stumble in weakness and say something careless or unkind. To compromise with regard to sexual morality and have one's sin be known to the world is another matter because of the lasting reproach that inevitably accompanies such sin.”³
 4. The Gospel of Christ is irksome to the natural man. It is natural that many will reject the Gospel. A pastor's actions, however, should never be the cause of this rejection.
- C. In addition, all leaders in the church should strive to live exemplary lives.
1. The nature of leadership is to maintain a life worthy of following **Philippians 3:17-18 NAU** - "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ,"
 2. All of us should strive to be leaders – to be able to say, follow me. Every church needs leaders. Trinity needs leaders. All of us must maintain lives of integrity. Every believer must live a life consistent with his Christian calling, else we bring a reproach upon our God.

² LaHaye, Tim, *If Ministers Fall, Can They be Restored?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990) Pages 131-132.

³ *Ibid.* Pages 149-150.

Conclusion:

1. Paul maintained a kingdom focus in his life. Too often we become so preoccupied with our own lives we forget about those around us and the eternity that lies before us.
2. How we live before others is important. May God grant us much grace to live forth as people of grace as we serve Him by serving others.

Matthew Henry:

“What is our great gospel duty—that we walk worthy of God, that the temper of our minds and tenour of our lives be answerable to this call and suitable to this privilege. We should accommodate ourselves to the intention and design of the gospel, and live suitably to our profession and privileges, our hopes and expectations, as becomes those who are called with such a high and holy calling.”⁴

⁴ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2339.