

The Ministering Heart of a Disciple-maker in the Church

MAIN TEXT:

1Th 2:1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain,

1Th 2:2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.

1Th 2:3 For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;

1Th 2:4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.

1Th 2:5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed--God is witness--

1Th 2:6 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.

1Th 2:7 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.

1Th 2:8 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.

1Th 2:9 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.

1Th 2:10 You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers;

1Th 2:11 just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children,

1Th 2:12 so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

1Th 2:13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

OVERALL CONTEXT:

Paul's letter to the Thessalonians is probably the earliest of his letters, except possibly for Galatians. He wrote it from Corinth not long after he left Thessalonica on his second missionary trip described in Acts 16-17).

Paul wrote this letter to a young, struggling church that was suffering persecution (1 Thess 2:14). And out of his deep concern for them, Paul had sent Timothy to Thessalonica to strengthen these young Christians (see I Thess. 3:2). Timothy brought word that the church was doing well (I Thes. 3:6), but apparently there was some turmoil over opponents of Paul who were seeking to discredit him and his teaching. There was also grief and confusion among the Thessalonians about believers who had died. So Paul wrote this letter in response to defend, encourage and further instruct the Thessalonians. Paul also wanted to encourage them, and to urge them to live godly lives.

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT:

- Paul is defending accusations by Jews in Thessalonica that he was a fraud! They said he was a fool who had been deceived; he was greedy and in the ministry for the money; They said he was impure and wanted personal gratification; and that above all he was power hungry and just wanted to control their lives (1 Th 2:3,5-6)

- In chapters two and three Paul defends himself against these attacks NOT because he was worried about himself or his own reputation, but because he knew he must have these young believers' confidence if he was going to be able to minister to them. In 2:1-12 he reminds them of his behavior while he was preaching the gospel to them. Not only does Paul defend himself against his accusers but he gives us a picture of his method of ministry... he gives us a model of the ministering heart of a disciplinemaker.

In our section, we see Paul seeking to do 3 main things:

- 1) Defend his ministry against opponents that were accusing him.
- 2) Correct the confusion brought about by these opponents
- 3) Be an example of Christ-like shepherding to the Thessalonians for the sake of the gospel ministry

We will be focusing on the 3rd purpose for our time together today.

I. The Heart of Disciple-maker is one of a bold gospel-proclaimer

- One thing that we can see from this passage is that Paul is abundantly clear that the gospel is at the very center of Christ-like shepherding:

places that mention Gospel / Word of God

- (v.2) “we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the **gospel**”
- (v.4) “we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the **gospel**”
- (v.8) “we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the **gospel** of God but also our own lives”
- (v.9) “we proclaimed to you the **gospel** of God”
- (v.13) “when you received the **word of God** which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, **the word of God**”

(example: Shepherd leading flock to water)

1Th 2:1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain,

*1Th 2:2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, **we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.***

1Th 2:3 For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;

1Th 2:4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak

- “we had boldness in our God”; courageousness to speak freely

A. Being a bold gospel-proclaimer IS NOT

1Th 2:2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.

*1Th 2:3 For our exhortation **does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;***

1. not speaking from error

- “not from error” = as to their **MESSAGE**: it did not contain false teaching, but truth

2. not speaking from impurity

- as to their **MOTIVE**: they did preach from impure motives and methods; but from holy motives

3. not speaking from deceit

- “deceit” gives idea of “baiting with a hook” like with a fish

- as to their **METHOD**; they were authentic, not seeking to trick, mislead or cheat or deceive, but being earnest and honest

B. Being a bold gospel-proclaimer IS teaching the gospel entrusted to you

*1Th 2:3 For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;
1Th 2:4 but just as **we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel**, so we speak*

- Paul writes that their boldness to speak the gospel came from the confidence knowing they were NOT teaching error, impurity, or deceit, BUT RATHER were teaching exactly what they were approved and entrusted to teach. In other words, their confidence was not in their skill, their high learning, their winsomeness, their attractiveness, their eloquence, but rather that they stuck closely to the Word of God!

- Therefore, our confidence for successful ministry does NOT come by our own natural talents BUT RATHER how closely we preach God's Word truthfully and accurately! Do you want to have boldness in your gospel-ministry? Then you MUST preach the Word! You will only be as bold as much as you know you are delivering the message that has been entrusted to you. The moment we stray from that entrusted message, God is no longer in our efforts. He did not approve you and I to teach any other message, and therefore you should have NO confidence when you give something other than His message. On the other hand, if we seek to accurately teach God's Word, then we can have great boldness, for God has approved us for that very task - so He, Himself will see that it brings about His desired result.

*1Th 2:1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you **was not in vain**,*

*1Th 2:13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, **which also performs its work in you who believe.***

Isa 55:11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Application:

- What is the source content of the ministry you serve in?

- What am I using to counsel people that come to me needing help, comfort, or answers? Do we give our own worldly wisdom and knowledge?

- What am I using to teach my children? Am I shepherding with the life-giving content of God's word? Or am I letting other outside influences teach him/her?

- Am I equipped with the ability to understand and communicate the Word of God to be an effective shepherd in the sphere God has called me to?

II. The Heart of Disciple-maker is one committed to please God alone

*1Th 2:4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, **not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.***

1Th 2:5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed--God is witness--

1Th 2:6 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. Not pleasing men

1. Not with flattering words

1Th 2:5 For we never came with flattering speech,

- "flattering speech" describes a slick eloquence with the purpose of lulling the audience into a false sense of security. Paul did not do this with the Thessalonians

1Co 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.

1Co 1:18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

- to preach the gospel in cleverness; while trying to appeal to men with his wit, charm and charisma was tantamount to making the beloved cross of Christ null and void of its power

Application:

- For me, this means that in my ministry, I do not fake my relationship with the people. My major concern is not whether they like me, but whether they are seeking, pursuing, and enjoying God as their sole source.

-are we being faithful at confronting sin in peoples lives? Are we being faithful at dealing with failure and weaknesses with graciousness?

-are our compliments or encouragements aimed at making them feel better about themselves OR is it aimed to produce worship toward God?

2. Not with a pretext for greed

1Th 2:5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed--God is witness--

- Greed is the desire to possess more than what you need.

- "pretext for greed"; Paul didn't come with the clothes/cloak that greed wears.

- to not be greedy in my ministry means that I'm not seeking to selfishly reap the greatest benefit from my relationships

Application:

- am I being fiscally responsible with the ministry resources?

- am I serving my flock/bible study/disciples only to gain something (may not be monetary, could be a certain status of holiness, or influence, or favor)?

3. Not seeking glory from men

1Th 2:6 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.

- glory: reputation, respect

- Paul could have "thrown his weight around" as an apostle, but he refrained from that and did not seek his own reputation, he did not pull rank on the Thessalonians

- He could have used his position to make demands, but rather he supported himself (seen later in verse 9)

Application:

- Do you abuse your power as a ministry leader, a discipler, parent? Do you unnecessarily "pull rank" on people?

- Do you get discouraged or angry when you are not recognized for your service either by fellow staff or the people you serve?

- Am I mindful of the needs that arise in ministry? Am I willing to serve in ways that I'm not used to for the benefit of the ministry? Are their tasks that you see are "beneath you"?

B. Pleasing God

1. being gentle as a nursing mother

1Th 2:7 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.

- being gentle in contrast to coming with hard authority

- Paul was committed to meet the basic need in the Thessalonians life. He pictures himself to them as a nursing mother. Paul shows nurturing gentleness, giving those whom he love exactly what they need. We need to cultivate this kind of attitude.

- traits of a nursing mother

- giving nourishment

- providing protection and warmth

- actions are gentle, tender, not harsh, disturbing, overbearing

- The thing about babies is that they suck the very life out their mother! The mother is often drained of her nutrients. It's easy to withdraw from people when they tend to be draining people, but Paul did not do this. Paul knew his people so he knew what they needed and served them appropriately like a mother knows her children's needs and meets them.

Application:

- am I getting involved with my flock/bible study/ disciple's life?

- do my relationships reveal that they see me as a "spiritual parent" who tenderly cares? Is it evident that my flock / bible study/ disciple/ child can come to me when they have problems or trouble?

2. sharing not only the gospel, but your lives

1Th 2:8 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.

1Th 2:9 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.

- "having so fond and affection for you" - Paul had great affection for the Thessalonians because who they were in Christ. They are precious to God, so they are very precious to Paul. He valued them and showed it by being loving, tender, warm, affectionate and close.

- The people had come very dear to Paul...carrying the idea of a parent's favor for his/her children. This affection made it well-pleasing to Paul to impart not only the gospel but also enabled him to pour his very life into them

- Even though Paul was elected as the primary apostle to the gentiles, he still had time to relate to people

Application:

- am I spending quality time with the people God calls me to shepherd?

- am I giving my flock/bible study/disciples/child both truth, but also pouring in the the life example that proves that truth?

- Paul imparting his life was proven through "labor and hardship". Paul worked "night and day", meaning he worked whenever he needed to for their sake. Paul worked to the point of fatigue so he could be most free and available to minister to the Thessalonians.

- some commentators say "day and night" refers to that Paul worked as a leather worker/tent maker (Acts 18:3) and as a minister of the gospel at the same time, which would mean he used his workplace/workshop as the context for preaching the gospel to people.

- not only did Paul work to cover just his own expenses, but he would work to earn enough to pay for his ministry team to come along as well. Paul paid others way in ministry!

- He purposely did this so people would know the gospel was not something to be bought.

Application:

- am I striving and laboring even in hardship for the sake of Christ's ministry?

- am I willing to be inconvenienced for the benefit of the gospel and the spiritual well-being of people?

- do we expect "free-rides" in our ministries just because we have a certain position?

3. caring as a father

1Th 2:10 You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers;

*1Th 2:11 just as you know how **we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children,***

- Paul came with affirmation, "exhorting and encouraging and imploring". A father is to exhort, encourage, and appeal to his children. A father is called to affirm / enthusiastically support his children throughout upbringing.

- exhort - admonish; correct

- encourage - comfort; edify

- imploring - insist, command

Application:

- am i rightfully balanced in my correcting, comforting and commanding people I shepherd? Does it seem like i only do one of these instead of all?

- am i enthusiastically affirming the people God wants me to shepherd in their walks with God?

DISCUSSION GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What are some way some ministers speak from error, impurity, and deceit? How can we examine ourselves to ensure that we do not fall into the same sin?

2. According to 1 Thessalonians 2:2-4, what is the source of Paul's confidence to speak the gospel? What implications does that have for our own ministry?

3. Talk about the biblical picture of the role of a mother and a father is to their children. How is that a useful picture in how we are to people in our ministry?