

1 Thessalonians 2

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Tape # 8185
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Shall we turn now to 1 Thessalonians, chapter two?

As we shared with you last week, Paul had been called of God to come over to Macedonia. When he arrived in Macedonia, he began first of all in Philippi. There, he was thrown into prison into the dungeon, into the stocks and God used that for His glory, but then he was requested by the men of the city to leave town.

So he came to Thessalonica after this bad experience in Philippi. Also in Thessalonica, they stirred up problems and trouble against Paul, going to the city magistrate. Not finding Paul, they grabbed one of the converts there, Justus, and took him before the city magistrates. He had to post bail. Paul was encouraged to leave town. He went down to Berea. There again problems, so he left Timothy and Silas to go back to Thessalonica, sort to encourage them. Paul went on to Athens, then later on, down to Corinth.

The reception that he got in Macedonia, I'm sure would have caused many of us to question whether or not it was really the leading of the Spirit to go to Macedonia. After he gets there, you know, the Spirit said for him to go. He saw in a vision (Acts 16:9-10), a man from Macedonia, saying come over and help us. So, he came on over, but immediately the ministry ran into great difficulties. A lesser person than Paul would have concluded that it was somehow a mistake that he went there and would have headed off someplace else.

So at the beginning of chapter two, he talks a little about his first coming to Thessalonica. Now he is writing in about the year 54 AD. It's the earliest epistle of Paul. This is his first letter. He wrote it when he arrived in Corinth. Timothy and Silas joined him there. So he sent this letter back to the church in Thessalonica, with Timothy, in order that Timothy might minister to them and strengthen them.

So he said, *For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain.* In other words, God did accomplish His purposes there. Many of you came to a faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul writing to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:58), said that your labor for the Lord is never in vain. The glorious thing about serving God is that it is a salaried position not commission. We are not really paid with or for the results. We are paid for our faithfulness in fulfilling the call of God on our hearts, the obedience to Jesus as our Master. We are salaried rather than commissioned. That is comforting because a lot of times we don't see any visible fruit of our ministry.

I have a friend who labored among the Saranoy Indians in Bolivia. He was there seven years before he had his first convert. Then of course, once the Lord began to break through into their hearts, there were many, many. The whole tribe almost, that accepted the Lord, but seven years without a convert.

So your labor for the Lord is never in vain. Paul said our coming there was not in vain: ²*But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi,* And as we mentioned, there in Philippi (Acts 16:19-24), he was arrested. He was beaten. Many stripes were laid on him, then he was placed in these stocks in the inner prison, shamefully entreated.

Yet, *we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.* We do read in Acts that as Paul shared the gospel, there were those that received immediately. Then the other side of the coin, there were those that rose up against Paul and began say blasphemous things against the things that Paul was teaching. So, there was a lot of contention there in Thessalonica at the ministry of Paul.

But, he said, ³*For our exhortation,* And now Paul is going to talk about his ministry. And as Paul talks about his ministry, surely this is a classic model for anyone who is interested in being involved in the ministry. Whatever ministry for the Lord, he is setting a classic example. Later Paul said, be ye followers of me even as I also am of Jesus Christ.

So our exhortation he said, first of all *was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness* (and that Greek word, *akatharsia*, referring to moral impurity.) *nor in guile:* or deceitfulness. Paul was straight-forward. He exhorted them in a straight-forward manner. He wasn't using deception. It wasn't deceitful, nor was it of

moral impurity nor in guile.

⁴*But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel*, I like that! God entrusted us to share His good news. We were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, this good news that we have! God has entrusted it to us.

even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. So, I was there. I wasn't saying things to gain popularity. I didn't speak in order to please men.

Paul wrote in another gospel, for if we please all men, we are not the servants of Christ. The truth, often times, is not well received. Many time people don't want to hear the truth. They would rather be flattered. They would rather have the "feel-good" kind of sermon, where you go out with sort of a chuckle. I feel, like you know, I can now conquer the world because I have learned the seven steps of prosperity.

So often, sermons are designed to please men, but not so with Paul. He was a straight shooter. He would tell the truth. And the truth would often times, upset the people. But he wasn't seeking to please man, but he was seeking to please God. And that should be at the heart of every servant of God to realize that I'm not here as a man pleaser, I'm here to please God. For one day, I must answer not to man for my ministry, but I must answer to God for my ministry. And I think that it's important that a minister have that acknowledgement, that recognition, that one day, I am responsible to God and I will answer to God for the ministry that He has entrusted to me.

So Paul said, He has entrusted to me the gospel and I didn't seek to please men, but God, who tries the heart. He knows my hearts and the motives, the real motives for the ministry.

⁵*For neither (he said) at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:* And here he calls God as his witness. I didn't use flattering words. You know that. You are my witness to that. But the covetousness, God is witness to that because God knows my heart. I wasn't there coveting from you. I wasn't there in order to raise a big offering, to raise support for the ministry. I wasn't there using gimmicks to get you to give and to give generously for the support of the ministry. Not so! There was no cloke of covetousness, God is my witness to that.

⁶*Nor of men sought we glory*, Nor did I seek the glory of man. And this, again, is a vital thing for the minister, not to seek the glory of man, not to seek the praise of the people.

So we did not seek the glory *neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.* As apostles we could have come and demanded your support because the Bible declares that you are not to muzzle the ox that treads out the corn, that the labor is worthy of his hire. Paul said, however, we didn't become burdensome to you. We weren't a burden on you, though we could have been as apostles of Christ.

⁷*But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:* So we ministered in a very gentle way, in a loving way, in a compassionate way. We weren't harsh, but we were very loving, concerned, as a nurse is concerned for the children that she is caring for. So we were as a nurse caring for you in tenderness, in lovingness.

⁸*So being affectionately desirous of you*, Because we so much desired to see you walking with Jesus, *we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.* Hear the heart now of the apostle. You know, it isn't just the gospel that I wanted to impart to you, but my own soul because you are so dear to us. He had developed a tremendous love and affection for those in Thessalonica.

You know, as we look back on the many years of ministry, and actually, next month will mark fifty years of ministry for me. And as we look back, what did I say? Next month, it's this month. You get old and you get senile, you know. But as I look back on the various churches that we pastored, we look back with keen fondness on the people that we were privileged to minister to. Kay and I oftentimes reflect on the various churches that we pastored and the people in those churches as we remember some of the incidents and the people themselves and how they became so dear to us! I understand what Paul is saying to these Thessalonians as he speaks about his affections and his desires for them, willing to impart his very soul because they were so dear to him.

⁹*For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.* So Paul and Silas and Timothy probably worked during the day. Then they held night Bible studies, but they were laboring among them and traveling night and day in order that they might bring them the gospel without charge. They didn't want anyone to accuse them of being sort of mercenaries or being in it for the money. They were willing, if necessary, to support themselves in order to be in the ministry.

For the first seventeen years of our ministry, the churches that we pastored were so small that we had to work, laboring with our hands in order to support the family so we could stay in the ministry. I know exactly what Paul is talking about. But the joy of being able to minister to people is so great, you don't mind working, if necessary, in order to be able to share the gospel of God with people. So laboring night and day, you are witnesses. You remember our labor and travail because we didn't want to be chargeable.

I love the outreaches that we have here at Calvary Chapel. Outreaches where when we are seeking to reach out to the community, such as we will be in the Good Friday service, Good Friday evening, also, the Good Friday noontime, the evening service, the Easter sunrise service, we don't take offerings. I like that! We are not chargeable to anybody. We just present it to the people. I really love to be able when we are in an evangelistic kind of outreach, to never take an offering because so many people, you know say, well, all they want is the money. You can really just destroy that kind of an argument when you don't ask for money, you don't take pledges, you do nothing, you know, not even pass the plate. There is no box to drop it in when you leave. You know, it's just offering it to the people without charge. And that is a great way to be! And Paul was rejoicing in that when he was in Thessalonica. He was able to work with his own hands, laboring among them day and night, in order that he wouldn't be chargeable unto them.

¹⁰*Ye are witnesses, and God also,* Now earlier God was his witness and now he is again called God as his witness and they, also.

how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: We were there in holiness and purity. We were there in justice and we were there unblameable. We lived an exemplary life before you. You were witnesses to that. It was in holiness, unblameable.

¹¹*As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you,* There were three things—exhortation, how we exhorted you. And how we comforted you—the comfort of the Scriptures. Paul says he that prophecies speaks to the church for edification and for exhortation and for comfort. So you know that we were there, how that we exhorted, how we comforted and then how we charged everyone of you. We challenged you, so to speak.

as a father doth his children, This relationship, this beautiful relationship. Our concern as a father with his child, that you walk in the right path, that you live the right life.

¹²*That ye would walk worthy of God,* And so he exhorted them to walk, to walk worthy of God. You are a child of God now. You have been born again by the Spirit of God. You have become a part of the family of God, as a son of God. Now God is holy and God is pure! Because you are a child of God, you must be holy. You must be pure. You must walk in honesty, in purity, in holiness. Paul was exhorting them to these things. Charging them, as a father doth his children, how they ought to walk, now that they have embraced Jesus Christ and Christianity.

Thessalonica was in the midst of a pagan society. Every kind of vice was practiced. We would classify them as extremely impure, immoral, governed by their fleshly desires, sexually promiscuous. There was no sense of honesty or decency.

And Paul comes to people living in this pagan environment. He says God loves you and wants to forgive you of your sins. The gospel of God is the gospel of forgiveness, of man's sins through Jesus Christ. But now that you have received Jesus, now you have become a child of God, and thus your whole lifestyle needs to change! No longer can you be dishonest! No longer can you be cruel and mean! You must be kind. You must be forgiving. You must be honest. You must walk in love. You must live a life of purity.

So Paul as a father, you can hear him as he talks to them and shares with them the way they need to live as a child of God, that they would walk worthy of God, *who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.* You

are now a citizen of the heavenly kingdom. The rules are different in the heavenly kingdom than they are in the worldly kingdom. And as a citizen now, the heavenly kingdom is a kingdom of glory. You need now to walk as a citizen of God's kingdom.

¹³*For this cause (Paul said) also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us,* So there was a great reception to the teaching of Paul, to this gospel of God that Paul shared, that people received it. And that word, received the gospel, is equivalent to, they believed it. They accepted it. They were born again. So Paul is thanking God without ceasing as he mentions how he prays without ceasing. Speaking of the Thessalonians, he was thanking God how they received the Word of God.

And ye received (he said) it not as the word of men, not my words, not my interpretation of it.

but (you received it) as it is in truth, the word of God, You recognized that this was God's Word. You received it as such.

Now in Acts, chapter seventeen, it tells us about Paul's ministry in Thessalonica. It's just a short paragraph because he really wasn't there very long before trouble was stirred up by the Jews. So he had to leave Thessalonica under, you know, by stealth because they were looking for him to arrest him. So they, his friends, got him out of the city. But we read in Acts seventeen that Paul was alleging from the Scriptures how that the Messiah must suffer and die and rise again. And that Jesus was the Messiah. The word of the crucifixion of Jesus had spread through the world.

So Paul comes now declaring to them that Jesus was the Messiah, even though He suffered and died. He began to point out the Scriptures, Isaiah 53, 52, Psalm 22, and the many passages of Scripture—Daniel chapter nine (Daniel 9:24-27), where it talked about the Messiah being cut off. Where the Messiah would be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, and wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. And sharing with them these verses, showing, alleging and showing from the Scriptures, that the Scriptures actually prophesied that Messiah would suffer and die and rise again! And thus, Jesus was the Messiah! And they received this. They looked at the Scriptures. They were convinced. God's Word prophesied the suffering of the Messiah. And they accepted Jesus as the Messiah. And so they received it as the Word of God as it is in truth.

which effectually worketh also in you that believe. The glorious thing about the gospel of Jesus Christ is that it works. It transforms a person's life.

Today in the end of the twentieth century, the power of the gospel has not changed! It is still effectual! It can still bring changes in people's lives! It can bring them from darkness to light! It can deliver them from the power of Satan and bring them into the Kingdom of God! The glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, works in hearts and lives! It works, that's the thing! It is effectual in bringing to pass changes. It brings you from sorrow into joy, from unrest into peace, the glorious working of the Word of God in our hearts and lives today.

But it was effectual in Thessalonica, two thousand years ago, almost. And it is effectual wherever it is preached, in whatever society, whatever culture. Wherever the gospel goes, it transforms and changes lives. It is the power of the Word of God, working in our hearts and lives, transforming us into the image of Jesus Christ. So His Word, Paul said, you received it, which effectually works in you that believe.

¹⁴*For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:* So you have become a part of the family, the church. Now, the church began in Jerusalem, in Judea there, and the church in Judea suffered much from the non-believing Jews, who looked upon the church as a sect that had to be destroyed. And so the church experienced tremendous persecution from the Jews, their own countrymen. But you in Thessalonica, just like them in Judea, have experienced a lot of persecution from your own countrymen.

It is interesting how that people seem to resent those who want to live a Holy, pure life. You don't want to drink. You don't want to carouse. You don't want to cheat on your wife. You don't want to go to Las Vegas and gamble away your money and go to the night shows and so forth. And they don't like you! In fact, they develop a hatred of you. They begin to persecute you. They begin to talk against you. They begin to give you titles like "Holy Joe". They begin to make fun of you. Why would they resent your wanting to

live a pure life? Why would they resent your wanting to be honest in all of your dealings?

Many of the people in the church have lost their jobs because their bosses required that they lie or they cheat in the accounting processes. Because they were Christians, they felt they couldn't do it. And it cost them their jobs. Why would people really want to have a dishonest employee? If your employee will be dishonest in the keeping of your books, then you can be sure that he is going to steal from you when he gets a chance, because he is dishonest. It's an interesting thing. You want them to be honest towards you but dishonest towards others. There are those who have lost their jobs because they wouldn't lie about the product that they were selling. They wanted them to deceive people about what the product was able to do. It is tragic isn't it, that the world doesn't just dislike, they hate the person who seeks to walk in purity and in holiness and in righteousness.

When I went to Santa Ana high school years ago, we had a fellow in school, Bill Carwood. His father was the postmaster in Santa Ana at the time. Not Bill Carwood, but at any rate, he had made a stand that he wouldn't listen to dirty jokes. And so around high school, the guys would say, oh that's "DJ", Dirty Joe Carwood, you know, he won't listen to dirty jokes. And they made fun of him. Now why would people make fun of a person who wants to keep his mind pure? There is an antagonism of the world against purity, against righteousness, against holiness. And so the church is always, if it is preaching the truth of God and lives are being transformed, it is always generating persecution from the world. They that live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. That's one of those promises I really don't like!

Speaking of the Jews, who had of course, set themselves against Paul and were really persecuting Paul. They were the ones who had instituted his stoning in Lystra. They were the ones who instituted his being beaten and imprisoned in Philippi. They were the ones who had stirred up the people against Paul in Thessalonica that forced him to have to leave town. They followed him down to Berea and created such a stir, that he had to leave Berea. They were fighting him where ever he was going with the gospel. And so Paul writes concerning those Jews.

He said, ¹⁵*Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets*, Now, you remember when Stephen was speaking to the counsel, he asked the question, which of the prophets did not your fathers kill? But you are worse than they are because you killed the One that they were prophesying about, the Messiah! And that's when they got so angry, they gnashed on him with their teeth. They began to yell and they drug him out of the gate of the city and they stoned him to death as Paul stood by, consenting and holding the coats of those who stoned him. But now Paul, having received Jesus Christ is now the object of their hatred and their venom.

And so speaking of the Jews, they killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, *and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:* ¹⁶*Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved*, And their big thing with the Jews was their anger against Paul, was the fact that he was bringing the gospel to the Gentiles and telling the Gentiles that they could be saved! That God would forgive and pardon them, their sins. That made the Jews angry because they felt that salvation was only for Jews and that you could not be saved unless you were a Jew. God's salvation was offered only to the Jew and to no one else.

You remember when Paul came back to Jerusalem with an offering for the church and as he was going through the purification rites so that he could attend the temple services at the holiday, some of the Jews spied him in the temple grounds. They began to say, this is the man who, you know, has been teaching to the Gentiles throughout of Asia. They pounced on him and started to beat him to death. A Roman guard at the Antonio Fortress saw the tumult down there on the temple mount. They came rushing down. They rescued Paul from the mob, who were attempting to beat him to death. There on the temple porch, Paul said to the captain, can I speak to them? He said sure. As Paul began to speak to them in Hebrew, telling of his conversion. Saying I understand you. I understand your zeal. I understand why you are angry with me. I understand why you want to kill me because I was just like you. I felt the same way you feel but I had an experience. The high priest will testify. He gave me papers and authority to go to Damascus to imprison those that called on the name of Jesus. While I was on the way, the Lord met me. And He said, I am calling you to go to the Gentiles. The moment he said that it was like lighting a match to gasoline. The whole place

blew up! They began to throw dirt in the air. They began to scream. They began to tear their clothes. They said, kill him! Kill him! They began to rush towards the Antonio Fortress. So they pulled Paul within and closed the gate. But they were angry as Paul declares here forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved. They didn't want the message of salvation to be brought to the Gentiles.

Paul said *to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost*. God's judgment is going to fall. And it did fall! Within sixteen years after Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians, Titus came and besieged Jerusalem and slaughtered over a million people in taking the city of Jerusalem. It was one of the worst slaughters in the history of man! And if you read the *Antiquities and the Wars of the Jews*, by Josephus, you will read, as Paul said, the wrath had come upon them to the uttermost. It was certainly that! And that was just within sixteen years after Paul had written to the Thessalonians.

¹⁷*But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart*, We had to leave but my heart is still with you. I'm still there with you in my heart.

endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. How I wanted to come back! I wanted to see your faces again. My heart is there. And oh, how I long to be there among you.

¹⁸*Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again*; A couple of times we tried to come, *but Satan hindered us*. Now, how Satan hindered, Paul doesn't say. It's interesting that when Paul was wanting to go to Asia, the Holy Spirit forbid him. Now Satan is hindering him from coming back to Thessalonica to personally minister to them again. How, we don't know.

For he said, ¹⁹*For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?* Isn't that our desire? Isn't that our joy? That is what we are longing for, our hope, the crown of rejoicing? Is that when Jesus comes, you will be there! You will be with Him at his coming.

As we mentioned throughout First Thessalonians, the coming of Jesus is a prominent theme throughout the Book. Paul was only there for a short time, but he shared with them the glorious kingdom of God that is going to come. He shared with them how that Jesus died, rose again, and ascended into heaven, but how that Jesus is coming back again. So over and over in this epistle, he is referring again to the return of the Lord. What is our joy and our crown and our hope? It's being with you when the Lord returns. I'd like to come now, Satan has hindered us, but oooh, I look forward to it and wait for the Lord to come where we will be together again!

²⁰*For ye are our glory and joy*. So the ministry, the work of God and seeing the work of God in the lives of people, it's a joy and the reward of the ministry.

John wrote in his third epistle, I have no greater joy than to know that my children walk in truth. To see people going on serving the Lord, growing in the things of the Lord. What a joy that is--the heart of the ministry! So what a joy to see you tonight! What a joy to spend this time with you! What a joy to be able to share with you the Word of God and to grow together in the things of God! What a glory! What a joy!

Father, we thank You for the privilege of sharing the gospel. We thank You for Your Word and its power to transform lives. Lord, we thank You that You have called us to be Your children and to walk worthy of God. Help us, Lord. Strengthen us by Your Holy Spirit, for our desire, Lord, is to indeed be holy even as You are holy. Righteous, even as You are righteous. Pure, even as You are pure. Loving, even as You are loving. Forgiving even as You are forgiving. Lord, we want to be like You. Mold us into Your image. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.