**Faith In Uncertain Times – Part 2**

**The Good News through good people - 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16**

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Jan. 10rd, 2021

**Intro:**

* I am going to speak to you today like I would at a pastor's gathering or with a group of ministers. In many ways, you are ministers because you have a ministry to witness the good news by how you live and communicate the Gospel's truth to others.
* This sermon could be easily broken up into a day seminar with small group break out sessions and more time to think through, chew on, and personalize the points. I hope you would indeed spend time before the Lord and perhaps with others really think about the text. Having the notes in front of you may be helpful because we will cover a lot of material this morning.
* I am taking this approach because the text presents itself this way, and it is beneficial for all of us to hear, know, and apply. Ministry to this church and through this church will be greatly enhanced if we do so.
* If you remember from last week, this series’ overall theme is "faith in uncertain times." From chapter one of I Thessalonians, we focused on this letter's background and context, what was happening in their world, and how we can apply these eternal truths in our uncertain times by living our convictions, following our examples, and becoming the examples for others to follow.
* In chapter two, Paul and his companions explain in more detail their ministry, what it requires, their ultimate goal, the approach they use, and the results of their ministry. From this passage, we will see the elements and essentials of effective biblical ministry, with my hope that we will all follow this biblical pattern.

**Meet the requirements of ministry**

**1 Thess 2:1-3 NLT**

**You yourselves know, dear brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not a failure. 2 You know how badly we had been treated at Philippi just before we came to you and how much we suffered there. Yet our God gave us the courage to declare his Good News to you boldly, in spite of great opposition.**

*Ministry requires courageous perseverance*

* Their ministry successfully bore fruit in the birth of new believers and established a new church because the ministers continued to press ahead with the message of the good news, despite facing fierce opposition. How many of us give in, give up, or give way when facing difficulties and opposition?
* What if your family turns against you? What if your friends misunderstand you? What if the Gospel costs you? Will you give up? Isn’t Jesus and the message of the Gospel more valuable to you than all these things? Isn’t He more precious to you than anything? Isn’t the message the most glorious news of all time?
* Testing comes to prove if your faith and faithfulness are genuine (1 Peter 1:7). There is a reward for those who persevere and overcome (Rev. 2, 3, 21). To reap gospel fruit, we must persevere and continue to have the courage to declare the Good News boldly amid significant opposition. Ministry requires courageous perseverance, so do not give in, or give up or give way.

**1 Thess 2:3 NLT**

**So you can see we were not preaching with any deceit or impure motives or trickery.**

*Ministry requires pure motives*

* There is plenty of ministry and ministers that can be tuned into 24 hours a day that "minister" out of less than pure motives. It is happening in our day, and it was happening in Paul's day. The preaching is done not for God's glory and advancement of the Kingdom; it is not done to give the message of the good news but to gain things for the minister (either power, popularity, position, praise, or a bigger purse).
* Motivation matters. And biblical ministry that honors God and is faithful to His word never uses the Gospel for personal gain. The message gets bent and twisted and perverted so that in the end, everyone loses.
* Faithful gospel ministry requires pure motives. And if you are using the church or the Word as a pretense for your personal pleasures or gain, I hope the searchlight of God will reveal the true nature of your heart and that you will repent while you still have time. Ask God to search your heart (Psalm 51) and refine you like silver (Mal. 3:3) so that you will be a messenger approved by God.

**1 Thess 2:4 NLT**

**For we speak as messengers approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News.**

*Ministry requires approved messengers*

* Number one, you are a messenger. You do not have a right to bring your own message that is different than the message that God has written for us to proclaim. He is the message; we are the messengers. He is the author; we are the postal workers, the letter carriers, the delivery drivers.
* To be approved by God, we will be tested by God. Will you remain faithful to God and His message? Will you continue to honor God in the face of opposition? God tests everyone He trusts. So, trust Him in trials, remain true to Him in temptation, and you will be entrusted with delivering the Good News.

**Aim for the goal of ministry**

**1 Thess 2:4b-6 NLT**

**Our purpose is to please God, not people. He alone examines the motives of our hearts. 5 Never once did we try to win you with flattery, as you well know. And God is our witness that we were not pretending to be your friends just to get your money! 6 As for human praise, we have never sought it from you or anyone else.**

*Ministry's goal is to please God*

* The goal of both life and ministry is to please God, period. The goal of ministry is never to have a big church, or a comfortable position, or an easy lifestyle. The goal of ministry is not even converts, or disciples, or new churches. The goal of ministry is not world evangelism or the eradication of evil. The goal of ministry, first and foremost, to please God. To please God, we do His will and His work according to His word. And it may involve some of these things, but these things are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. If your ministry aims to please anyone, or anything else, including yourself, other than God, you are not serving God but using "God" for your own idolatry. You will fall into the temptation of using flattery and fluffy words, pretending to be people's friends so that you can get their money and receive their praise.
* When we as ministers set our purpose on pleasing people, we fail to be ministers who please God. Ministers whose goal is to please people conform the word to fit people, verses transforming people to fit the word.
* The irony is that ministers whose real aim is to please God will please the people whose purpose is to please God. And in pleasing God, we will ultimately and eternally be pleased ourselves. Aim for the goal of ministry, which is to please God.

**Apply the model of ministry**

**1 Thess 2:7a NLT**

**As apostles of Christ we certainly had a right to make some demands of you, but instead we were like children among you.**

*Minister like humble children*

* As ministers, you must become servants of people, not demanding your rights to have people serve you. Children are under their parents. You, as a minister, are to serve under those in your ministry. In ways, you are to follow them and take direction from them, instead of pulling rank and demanding your rights in your ministry minister like humble children being submissive to those you minister.

**1 Thess 2:7b-8 NLT**

**Or we were like a mother feeding and caring for her own children. 8 We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God's Good News but our own lives, too.**

*Minister like caring mothers*

* Place in your mind what a caring mother would be like, and minister like her. Take care of those who God had placed in your care. Feed them, watch over them, treasure them, and cherish them like they are your own children. Be interested in what they are interested in, make room for them. Share not only your own Good News with them but share your own lives with them. Trust them with the Gospel, and also trust them with yourself. Too many ministers love God but don't love the people. Be like a caring mother in your ministry.

**1 Thess 2:9-12 NLT**

**Don't you remember, dear brothers and sisters, how hard we worked among you? Night and day we toiled to earn a living so that we would not be a burden to any of you as we preached God's Good News to you. 10 You yourselves are our witnesses—and so is God—that we were devout and honest and faultless toward all of you believers. 11 And you know that we treated each of you as a father treats his own children. 12 We pleaded with you, encouraged you, and urged you to live your lives in a way that God would consider worthy. For he called you to share in his Kingdom and glory.**

*Minister like honorable fathers*

* Work hard to provide for the needs of your family. Don't be lazy or self-serving, or self-absorbed. A good father works hard to take care of the needs of his family. A good father is self-sacrificing and self-denying so that those around him have what they need. They do not want to be a burden for their family, but a blessing to them. Work to be a blessing and not a burden.
* In your ministry, be devout to your family of faith. Think of them first and foremost. In your ministry, be honest in what you say and do. Be honest about your limitations and strengths; be a person who is true and trusted. Be faultless; that is, be responsible and attentive to your responsibilities because of protective love.
* Plead and encourage and urge those in your faith family to live their lives is a way that God would consider worthy, which means you are to live your life in a way God would consider worthy. God's Kingdom, God's household, and God's glory is evidenced in the lives of His citizens, who they are and how they live to His honor, in which they are honorable as well.
* Ministers, be like a humble child in your ministry. Ministers, be like a caring mother in your ministry. Ministers, be like an honorable father in your ministry. In doing so, you will be pleasing to God and effective in your calling. May people see you as a humble child, a caring mother, and an honorable father.

**Rejoice in the response of ministry**

**1 Thess 2:13 NLT**

**Therefore, we never stop thanking God that when you received his message from us, you didn't think of our words as mere human ideas. You accepted what we said as the very word of God—which, of course, it is. And this word continues to work in you who believe.**

*Acceptance of the message*

* Rejoice and thank God when people receive the message. This means the reception of the message is not dependent upon your presentation but God's designation. Rejoice when people receive the words as they are, not human ideas but the very words of God. And not only that the word of God is received, but the word of God continues to work and produce in the soil of the souls of those who received the word, and that the fruit of the word is produced from the reception of the word.

**1 Thess 2:14-15 NLT**

**And then, dear brothers and sisters, you suffered persecution from your own countrymen. In this way, you imitated the believers in God's churches in Judea who, because of their belief in Christ Jesus, suffered from their own people, the Jews. 15 For some of the Jews killed the prophets, and some even killed the Lord Jesus. Now they have persecuted us, too. They fail to please God and work against all humanity**

*Persistence in the message*

* They continued to believe while they were tested by suffering in persecution from those with whom they lived and lived among. They persisted in the Gospel and hung onto the word as the Good News took deep root in their lives. Those who persecute Christians and the Gospel's message fail to please God (even though some who do so think they are pleasing God). And when people resist the Gospel, they work against all humanity because all humanity will be made new and be saved in the Gospel.

**1 Thess 2:16 NLT**

**as they try to keep us from preaching the Good News of salvation to the Gentiles. By doing this, they continue to pile up their sins. But the anger of God has caught up with them at last.**

*Salvation from the message*

* Rejoice that people have received salvation from the message. And by belief in the message and the Good News about Jesus, they will be saved from the wrath of God that is coming against all those who resist the Gospel and pile up their sins against God. In this salvation, we, as a minister, are to rejoice greatly.

**Conclusion**

* You are a minister, and you have a ministry. Let us all see ourselves in this light. Let us meet the ministry requirements by persevering through difficulties, having pure motives, and being approved messengers.
* Let your aim be to please God in who you are, expressed in how and what you do.
* Model your ministry by ministering like a humble child, like a caring mother, and like an honorable father.
* Rejoice in the reception, the persistence, and the salvation of God's work in people.
* The more we become people like this, the more we will please the Lord, and the more effective and productive His work will be seen in us as a church and move through us as a church, which will result in more of His glory and more rejoicing in our hearts and in this place. May the joy of the Lord fill your life and fill our times together.
* Concluding prayer