

There have been many preachers over the years

- that were not great public speakers
- and led many to Christ.

Why? God does the work.

It's the work of the Holy Spirit.

When the scribes and Pharisees approached Jesus complaining about the disciples transgressing the traditions of the elders, Jesus called them hypocrites! He said, Well did Isaiah prophesy about you saying,

Matt 15:8-9

8 "These people draw near to Me with their mouth,
And honor Me with their lips,
But their heart is far from Me.
9 And in vain they worship Me,
Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

They were correct in their speech,

- but their life said something different.

We are to walk the talk.

Mark 9:42

42 "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.

verse 5, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

They lived what they taught!

So, a person first receives the gospel then it redirects his ways.

Paul takes no credit for their conduct amongst the church.

In the next chapter he reminds them of their character:

He uses phrases like, "You yourselves know, As you know, You remember, and You are witnesses."

He isn't concerned about what they might think.

- *They know* how the trio lived among them.

The third thing which takes place in the life of the believer, we send the gospel message to others thru our words and by our example:

1 Thess 1:6-7

6 And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,

7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

These two verses are discipleship 101. I hear, I watch, and I do.

Paul set an example for the Thessalonian church and to all Christians thereafter.

He made it easy for them to follow.

He said something similar to the church of Corinth.

1 Cor 4:16, Therefore I urge you, imitate me

1 Cor 11, Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

- For someone like Paul to encourage the church
- to follow him would have certainly
- put a large target on his back.

This isn't to say we shouldn't strive to be more like Christ.

Peter affirmed this:

1 Peter 2:21

21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

Paul recognized the church had received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.

To receive with affliction is

- to receive with trouble and suffering,
- or with persecution.

Jesus said the world would hate us, He said, "if they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."

The Thessalonian church became the example:

7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

They must have been doing something right

- because Paul commends them

- for being examples to others.

If everyone in this church were just like you,

- what kind of church would this be?

Fortunately, we're all a work in progress and the Lord overlooks our shortcomings.

1 Thess 1:8-10

8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.

We know from verse 5 that the church received the word,

- now they're sharing what they've received.

The word of the Lord sounded forth.

- To sound forth in the Greek means to sound forth as a trumpet or as thunder.

9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you

Why did the Thessalonians welcome them so readily?

- Because they were ready for something different.

The church had a reputation, a good reputation.

It spread by word of mouth.

Notice the change in their lives:

and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

There was action in their life. They didn't remain where they were.

- They heard the word, they received the word, they made changes based on what they received.

When Jesus spoke the parable of the sower, He said:

Matt 13:23

23 But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

1 Thess 1:10

10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Every chapter of 1st Thes ends with a clear reference to

- the future event of Christ's return.

Chapter 1 tells us we are to wait for God's Son from heaven.

Chapter 2 - 1 Thess 2:19

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

Chapter 3: 1 Thess 3:12-13

12 And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, 13 so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

Chapter 4: 1 Thess 4:17-18

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Chapter 5:

1 Thess 5:23-24

23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

Now as we jump into chapter 2, we'll see Paul's approach to ministry there in Thessalonica.

Paul spoke to the church about ministry because of those who were out for personal gain.

The ancient world was accustomed to that.

- Traveling salesmen, traveling teachers,
- people bringing some new philosophy,
- anything that would earn them some money.

Some outside of the church were maligning Paul and Timothy and Silas.

If Satan could undermine God's messenger,

- then he can undermine the church

Six qualities of a faithful servant.

1 Thess 2:1-12

1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. (wasn't a failure, or without effect.)

He emphatically tells them, “you yourselves know.”

In chapter 1 Paul told them:

1 Thess 1:5

5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

I believe Paul was saying in chapter 2

If you're a faithful steward in ministry, your ministry will be fruitful.

Ministry isn't only being a Pastor,

- or a home fellowship leader.

Ministry is being used

- where God opens a door for you.

Paul told the Corinthian church:

1 Cor 15:58

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 13:02

The first quality of a servant is to be faithful.

The second quality is to be bold.

2 But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.

- Paul and Silas were previously imprisoned

There is coming a day when people are going to have to make a stance for their faith.

- It's already happening around the world.

Notice what Paul says, “we were bold in God.”

Our strength has to come from above.

The third quality of a servant is a commitment to truth, purity and integrity.

3 For our exhortation (preaching) did not come from error (deception) or uncleanness, (immorality or filth) nor was it in deceit. (treachery, they didn't try tricking them into anything)

- Paul was faithful, committed,
- a man of integrity and truthful.

How do we know what is true? It comes from the bible, the word of God.

- That's our moral compass.

The fourth quality of a servant:

4 But as we have been approved (testing to see if it's worthy or not) by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests (same Greek word as used for approved) our hearts.

Paul was saying they'd (the trio) been approved by God,

- they were entrusted with the gospel message.
- Therefore, we are going to handle God's word with care.

Joseph is a great example of a steward.

Paul was a steward of the gospel. The number one quality of a steward is faithfulness.

1 Cor 4:1-4

1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. 4 For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

Our number one responsibility is to the Lord,

Paul said in 1 Tim 1:8 that the wives of deacons are to be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, and faithful in all things.

Jesus said if you're faithful in the small things, you will be faithful in large ones.

Ps 19:14

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.

The 5th quality of a servant is that he is motivated by God's knowledge:

1 Thes 2:5

5 For neither at any time did we use flattering words (this speaks of someone whose motive is gain), as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness (putting on a mask to cover their greed. It involves hidden motives) – God is witness.

The 6th quality of a servant is to seek God's glory, not man's glory:

6 Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.

7 But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.

Paul now goes from speaking of the faithfulness of a steward

- to speaking of the gentleness of the mother.

In the Greek this refers to a mother nursing her own children,

- not simply loving them.

So Paul is saying that they cared for the church

- much like a nursing mother cares for her children.

Paul uses the word cherishes:

- It carries the meaning of warming with body heat

Thomas Wolfe, noted author, told of George Webber, a huge man from North Carolina who wanted to be a writer above all else and came to New York in search of a career. Webber found the going very hard. He discovered how difficult it is to write and publish. Rejection slips, rejection slips! When things got unbearable, George would take a train and ride all night in a coach back to North Carolina. Arriving, he would walk from the station to their humble home where his mother was invariably waiting. The giant six-foot-ten-inch man would kneel before his mother, his aching head in her lap, and he would weep like a child. His mother's reply was always the same: "Son, I don't know what's wrong but whatever it is, it will be all right."¹

The critics in Thessalonica were probably telling the church that Paul and the others didn't really love them.

But I think it would be safe to say that most in the church knew that Paul loved them.

8 So, affectionately longing 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 dear to us.

Why would they, Paul, Silas and Timothy be willing to give their life for the church?

Because the church had become dear to them.

This is the only time in the bible this word "affectionately" is used

- carrying the meaning of a yearning love.
- Webster's defines it as a tender or urgent longing for.

9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.

¹ Jones, G.C. (1986) *1000 illustrations for preaching and teaching*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, p. 137.

Paul was telling the church, “hey,

- we don’t want you to think
- we’re asking anything of you.”

10 You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe;

This is how we are to strive to live our life, in purity with devotion. We are to be blameless which is innocent or guiltless.

11 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children,

Back in verse 4, Paul said, we didn’t come as men pleasers but we came as a mother nursing her children,

In verse 7 he said, now we’re encouraging you as a father encourages his children.

What is the ultimate motivator to encourage one another?

12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.