

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

Wednesday June 24, 2020

Hey good evening everyone. I trust this message toninght finds you well, safe, healthy...Last week we started a new series on Wednesday nights through the books of 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Verse by verse. A series that we are calling “The Gospel & The Church” → looking at how the gospel forms the church, and sends the church.

If you remember from our study – the area we left off and the challenge to each of us – was how the message of the Gospel rang out through the entire region as a result of the church at Thessalonica → and the challenge was specifically – what is ringing out from you? I want to dig a little deeper on that point tonight, then transition to 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8.

The scriptures say that the word of the Lord sounded forth throughout the whole region, and their faith in God had gone forth everywhere.

Tonight’s passage specifically looks at Paul’s ministry, and his labor for this church. From last week, remember, Paul was a serial church planter. But first and foremost, Paul was a pastor. Tonight’s message, looking at how Paul pastored the church at Thessalonica, the title of tonight’s study is **“The Gospel-Centered Pastor”** and the main **Idea I want us to consider is the priority of the Gospel in the life of the pastor.**

Here's one of my beliefs – until and unless the Gospel is at the center of the pastor's life, where he finds his identity, his value, his worth, his marching orders – until and unless the Gospel is at the center of the pastor's life, he's wasting his time. And he's wasting the time of those that fall into his church.

There's a tendency, and a temptation, for the Gospel (life, death and resurrection of Christ, and the life He alone offers), for it to be a side dish in the pastor's ministry. But let me tell you, it needs to be the only dish. And when I say this, I'm not talking about heretics. A heretic is easy to throw out as an example. I'm talking about the temptation of pastors, Baptists, conservative Presbyterians, non-denom guys – leading good and real churches, planting churches, whatever – there's a tendency and a temptation for the Gospel to become a side dish in our ministries. And it's a temptation I have to fight in my own life.

So, with that said, “The Gospel-Centered Pastor”. Turn with me if you have a Bible to 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

READ

For you yourselves know, brothers,^[a] that our coming to you was not in vain. ² But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel

of God in the midst of much conflict. ³ For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, ⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. ⁵ For we never came with words of flattery, ^[b] as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. ⁶ Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. ⁷ But we were gentle ^[c] among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. ⁸ So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

PRAY

V1 – Not in vain – suggests that there would have been a way for them to come to them IN vain. But why wasn't their trip in vain - or EMPTY? Because the Gospel was at the core of their coming. They came for 1 reason – to bring the good news of the Gospel to the people at Thessalonica..

I. Not in Vain, But with Boldness

V2 – They had previously suffered at Philippi. See Acts 16

- Beaten with rods

- Thrown into the inner jail
- Lied about
- Locked up

I'm guessing that no one on this line tonight has ever experienced this type of suffering. My English translation says they were "shamefully treated" – they could have turned tale and run. BUT, they had boldness. Not just anything – they had boldness in God to declare to you the Gospel in the midst of conflict.

Bold vs. Arrogant

Bold vs. Stupid

Bold → FREEDOM, Openness to speak, outspoken

Boldness PAIRED with PURPOSE → To declare (speak with words) the gospel of God.

They had just been thrown in jail, and beaten for speaking – yet empowered by the Holy Spirit, centered on the Gospel, they had a freedom to speak, a boldness to share. And, what I'd tell you is that, a pastor with the Gospel at the center of his life and ministry, will speak with freedom in Christ, not in Vain but with Boldness.

II. Gospel Centered Motives

Re-Read V3-5

- Approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel
- Speaking to please God, not men
 - God alone knows the purity of our motives.
 - God alone will test our hearts
 - And, he loves us too much to leave us on our own
- I've been reading this little book called "Meditations on Preaching" written by a pastor in DC named Francis Grimke. Long since died (1937) and has gone to be with Jesus. Not a book that you just sit down and read from start to finish – but one you read little pieces of at a time. Here's one of Dr. Grimke's meditations on preaching
 - All our efforts as Christians should be to help men the better to know Christ, the better to love him, and the better to serve him...My prayer is that God would help me, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, to get a clearer and fuller knowledge of him, and to bring to others the same clearness and fullness of knowledge.
- Grimke had Gospel-centered motives as a preacher. He was motivated by the praise of God, and not the praise of people.
- How do we know the motives of our pastors?
 - How do they pray

- How they live
- How they love one another
- How and what do they preach
 - Are they willing to correct
 - Are they willing to preach through challenging texts
 - Are they willing to call out sin in the church, not just the sins in the streets
 - As your pastor – I'm more concerned with the sin in our church than the sin in our city. Why? Because our church has been called to be a base camp of sorts – to prepare people to be sent all over our city as salt and light, sharing and showing Jesus to every corner of our city.

Ex.: Uncle Ron planting the Church at Life Park

A Gospel-centered pastor will also reflect a spirit of gentleness.

III. Nurturing with Gentleness

There's a balance here between Paul's authority as an apostle, and the nurturing gentleness of a nursing mother caring for her children.

There's a sense in which ministry work can attract or maybe better said hide toxic leadership.

So long as you put on a good show on Sunday, no one cares or even is aware of how you may treat people throughout the week. Almost as if the church has taken a cue from Wall Street, where it doesn't matter how toxic your leadership is, so long as your stock price keeps climbing you're good.

Illustration – A tale of two mars hills...Rob Bell and Mark Driscoll

See, it's entirely possible to preach the best sermons, cast the best vision, create all kind of good Christian looking stuff but not actually be qualified for pastoral ministry. But according to the Scriptures, there's a necessity of gentleness of Christian leaders – if you look at the qualifications of pastors all over the place – you'll see the requirement of a gentle spirit.

Not like Melba Toast, or soggy donuts – but a gentle spirit. A gentle spirit corrects, protects, feeds, equips, celebrates, disciplines, all of those things.

Illustration – Lucy's advice to gently teach

At the heart of a Gospel-centered pastor, you'll find a God-honoring concern and nurture of the people he's called by God to lead.

Lastly, the Gospel-Centered pastor will love in Word and Action

IV. Love in Word and Action

Read V8

I'm in the ESV tonight. I love the phrasing "affectionately desirous"

There's a picture of an eagerness to share in Word and Action → literally sharing their lives with the people of the church.

See, this only makes sense if the Gospel is at the center of the pastor's life.

CLOSING:

Would you make a commitment with me tonight...

1. Pray for the pastors/elders in your church. Pray that our hearts would be captivated by the greatness and glory of Jesus, that we would be faithful in our lifestyle and in our teaching. That we would find our identity in Christ alone.
2. Extend grace, knowing that they're not super man, but hold to the standards
3. Give the benefit of the doubt

CLOSING PRAYER