

**HUMILITY
TRUST THE SPIRIT
LOVE THEM WITH THE WORD**

1 Thessalonians 2:9-20

Gospel-Centered Pastors, Part 2 – Alternative title: “Pastors and the people they love”

Hey good morning RCM. So very good to be with you today. If you have a Bible, go ahead and turn to 1 Thessalonians 2:9-20. If you are using a device, go ahead and get there, and make sure your device is on CSB which is the translation I teach and preach from.

Also, if you'd like as a gift from the church – we have these Scripture notebooks on the back table for 1 Thessalonians. Grab one of those and take some notes – as a gift from the church to you.

This entire series through 1 Thessalonians is centered on how the Gospel shapes the church. We started 2 weeks ago in looking at how the Gospel had and was shaping this church – what impact was their faith having on the people of the church and the city – and then last week we started to look at what a Gospel-Centered Pastor looks like.

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We're going to continue that theme today – with part 2 of Gospel-Centered pastors – alternatively titled “Pastors and the people they love.”

READ 1 Thessalonians 2:9-20

⁹ For you remember our labor and hardship, brothers and sisters. Working night and day so that we would not burden any of you, we preached God's gospel to you. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and so is God, of how devoutly, righteously, and blamelessly we conducted ourselves with you believers. ¹¹ As you know, like a father with his own children, ¹² we encouraged, comforted, and implored each one of you to walk worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

¹³ This is why we constantly thank God, because when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, the word of God, which also works effectively in you who believe. ¹⁴ For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's churches in

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Christ Jesus that are in Judea, since you have also suffered the same things from people of your own country, just as they did from the Jews ¹⁵ who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and persecuted us. They displease God and are hostile to everyone, ¹⁶ by keeping us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. As a result, they are constantly filling up their sins to the limit, and wrath has overtaken them at last.^[c]

¹⁷ But as for us, brothers and sisters, after we were forced to leave you^[d] for a short time (in person, not in heart), we greatly desired and made every effort to return and see you face to face. ¹⁸ So we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us. ¹⁹ For who is our hope or joy or crown of boasting in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? ²⁰ Indeed you are our glory and joy!

PRAY.

So this text, the way I have outlined our study through the book of 1 Thessalonians – this text is intended to build on what we looked at last week. Where we saw kind of a

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blueprint for Gospel-centered ministry – for men that have been called by God, meeting the Biblical qualifications, and affirmed by the local church – a blueprint of sorts for ministry. Under the heading of Paul’s Conduct.

If you remember last week’s message – there were kind of 4 elements of a Gospel-centered pastor:

- Productive
- Boldness
- Rightly motivated
- Sacrificial Care

Well, what we see in the verses for today builds on those four and add first, what I would call Hard-working men of integrity.

I. Hard-Working Men of Integrity

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We see in V9-10 Paul's work ethic. Working night and day. But we have to understand the purpose of his work ethic. Not just so could say look at me, and how hard he was working – but Paul's desire was for all of them to know Christ – to believe the Gospel – and he never wanted to be a burden on any of them. I would suggest to you that his work ethic – his desire to not be a burden on them – was rooted in his complete trust in the character of God and the hope of the Gospel.

Paul knew that the Gospel was his only hope, and the Gospel was the Thessalonians' only hope – and he worked hard so that they would hear, and some would believe.

And he set an example of Christian integrity for them. They had seen how he lived, and while not perfect it was an example. That's why I'm saying here – Gospel-Centered pastors are called to be hard-working men of integrity. If you turn to 1 Timothy 3, you see the very first qualification of a pastor listed is that he is “above reproach”, and then in Titus 1 the first qualification is that he is blameless. Peter says an elder must be an example to follow.

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None of this suggests that men called by God and qualified by the Scriptures are to be perfect – but we are called to be hard working men of integrity. What we say is how we live. Lifestyles and teaching match. And when we make mistakes – we own it, repent, and move forward.

As Gospel-Centered pastor will also be pushing the Church toward Godliness.

II. Pushing The Church toward Godliness

This shows up in V11-12. Paul had previously mentioned how he had cared for them like a mother nurturing her children. Now he reminds them how he encourage, comforted and implored like a father with his own children.

But here's the kicker – it matters what Paul was pushing them toward. **We can either lead people toward Godliness or worldliness, but not both.** He's pushing them to grow in Godliness – to walk worthy of God. Not like, hey go make a lot of money, go do awesome at your game, your concert, your report card – those are all well and good – but that's not the concern – the concern is growing in Godliness. What is the

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foundational goal in all of life, the goal that Paul was leading pushing them toward: **To walk worthy of the Lord**. A Christian father should be WAY more concerned with his kids' commitment to the Scriptures and the local church than their jump shot, report card, music performance or friend group.

And even more than fathers, gospel-centered pastors will care for the people they're leading enough to push them toward practical godliness

- Love people enough to call sin for what it is
- Love people enough to speak truth to them in an culture that denies all truth
- Love people enough to encourage AND confront when necessary

As a side note, I'd say the only way this can happen is if you take the time to KNOW the people you are pastoring.

These next 4 verses, Paul praises the people in Thessalonica – and what I'd say he's praising them for is Fearing God and Trusting His Word. This is a result of how he had led them.

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III. Leading the church to Fear God & Trust His Word

Paul had led these people to Fear God & Trust His Word – and these two are inseparable. You will not Trust the Word of God until you first Fear God – a holy fear, and amazement at the greatness of God.

They had received the word – trusted it – and shocker it worked effectively in them. The Word of God accomplishes the Work of God. Paul and this church trusted the word to work – and it did. We must always trust the word of God to do the work of God.

When we lose our Fear of God, we will stop trusting His Word → and everything that follows is rubbish. Paul refused to compromise on the Word of God, not because he was stubborn or refused to “get with the culture” (something I’ve been accused of too). Paul refused to compromise on the Word of God because he knew it was his only hope and their only hope – he had this fear of God that drove him to the word. And he trusted the word of God to work in their lives.

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It was effective.

In contrast – those that have no fear of God will have no place for His Word. We see this here in V15-16 where Paul writes “They displease God, and are hostile to everyone, by keeping us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved.”

That’s an overt example – sadly there are many, many more subtle example alive and well in many churches today. Where you can see and hear a disregard for God’s Word and ultimately losing all fear of God. 1 small decision, 1 small choice at a time. Where we sacrifice the word on the altar of acceptance or convenience, or even pragmatism. May God help the church whose pastor is more concerned with acceptance of people than acceptance by God.

Gospel-centered pastors will fear God, trust His Word, and lead the church to do the same. And lastly this morning, Gospel-centered pastors will follow through

IV. Following Through

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You guys know I'm a sports junkie. In every sport just about you have to follow through.

- Basketball
- Softball
- Football
- Baseball
- Gold

Follow through.

They were forced to leave – but didn't forget. They were willing and desiring to follow through. They were prevented – but even this letter is a type of their follow through.

Paul and the boys had a deep affection for the people of the church – he wasn't content just to view them as another checkmark for his church planting report, or another sale that was closed. He cared deeply for them and was committed to their long term growth in the Gospel. And we see that here in these last few verses.

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They were forced to leave – picture like being torn away – it wasn't their choice to leave but they had to.

They even tried to come back but Satan hindered them the text says – as a side note – spiritual warfare is real. Satan is real and he will try and destroy you and sideline you.

But Paul's commitment to the people of the church at Thessalonica was long-term. He cared for them, he cared for their growth in the gospel, and he was following through as best he could with what the Lord had started in them.

CLOSING

CLOSING

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The only way this was possible for Paul, was he had been so deeply changed by the power of the Gospel in his own life.

So what do we do with this – as RCM what do we do with this passage of Scripture – detailing Paul’s conduct as an example for a Gospel-Centered pastor:

1. Pray. Pray for Matt and me – as God has called us and you have affirmed us as elders of this church. Pray that we would remain faithful to what God has called us to do. Pray that our motives would remain pure and God-centered, that we would follow the example of Paul and so many other faithful pastors scattered through church history
2. Work with us – knowing that every one of us has a role to fill – and God calls each of us to be faithful in that role
3. Don’t Sacrifice the standards. Hold us accountable – yes extend grace but there are standards that God has set and we will do well to see them and to keep them.
4. Trust that the Lord is the Great Shepherd of His people

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