

1 Thessalonians 2:1-5

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The Integrity of the Man – The Integrity of the Message

REVIEW

Chapter 1 ended with Paul defining the nature of this collection of men and women in Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.



A Christian is someone who has been RESCUED FROM WRATH by Jesus! The local assembly of believers is a collection of men and women who have been RESCUED FROM WRATH by Jesus! Now, as rescued individuals, and as a *group* of rescued individuals, we are waiting for Jesus who has rescued us from the wrath that is to come!

Last week we spent a considerable amount of time looking at what the Bible clearly states about God's wrath:

- The PURPOSE of God's wrath.
- The ETERNITY of God's wrath.
- The FINALITY of God's wrath.

It is in the light of those scriptures that we are able to grasp:

- The GREATNESS of our DELIVERANCE.
- The GREATNESS of our DELIVERER!

In light of the Scriptures we understand that the CUP that Jesus took to Himself was the cup of God's wrath and indignation against sin. We understand that when Jesus cried out "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me" it was BECAUSE God had poured out upon Jesus the WRATH that we deserved - That Jesus hung there as our SUBSTITUTE.

We understand in light of those scriptures that when Jesus said, "It is finished." he meant that he had indeed satisfied the wrath of God; he had indeed delivered all who would believe in Him from the wrath to come!

We closed by noting that though we might experience the pain and suffering that is common to this fallen world and that one can experience because of their faith in Christ, we will NEVER experience the WRATH OF GOD that will be meted out upon the fallen angels and Christ-rejecting humans -- BECAUSE through faith in Jesus we have been RESCUED from the wrath to come. We have an incredible HOPE and DESTINATION to look forward to and I can't wait.

So here are these baby Christians in Thessalonica. Paul was only there three weeks before he was driven out and yet within those few weeks he DEEPLY implanted within the hearts of those new believers the reality of

their rescue and the hope of Christ's return!

As we continue reading the content of this letter in Chapter 2, we must bear in mind that Paul is not just thinking of them as a former congregation that he once pastored— or as some friends he met while pastoring. Instead he looks at this gathering of men and women with the deep, profound understanding that they are blood-bought and from that understanding he pours out his heart in Chapter 2 in regards to ministry and in particular his ministry to them.

Paul becomes very passionate here. He is going to pour out his heart concerning the inseparable and crucial connection between the integrity of the minister and the integrity of ministry that had so powerfully touched their lives.

Jim Elliot – The missionary martyr wrote in his journal, “In spiritual work, if nowhere else, the character of the worker decides the quality of his work. Shelley and Byron may be moral free-lancers and still write good poetry. Wagner may be lecherous and still produce fine music, but it cannot be so in any work for God. Paul could refer to his own character and manner of living for proof of what he was saying to the Thessalonians.

“Nine times over in this first epistle Paul says, ‘You know,’ referring to the Thessalonians’ firsthand observation of Paul’s private as well as public life. Paul went to Thessalonica and lived a life that more than illustrated what he preached; it went beyond illustration to convincing proof. No wonder so much work in the Kingdom is shoddy; look at the moral character of the worker.”

1 Thessalonians, Chapter 2

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 1For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. 2But 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.

So Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica was not free from conflict, in fact it was in the midst of much conflict. So first of all, we’re going to look at the integrity of this man, the integrity of Paul.

I. INTEGRITY OF THE MAN

“For you yourselves know...” opens a section where Paul will explain and defend his own character and ministry before the Thessalonians. This wasn’t because Paul was insecure about his ministry it was because he had many enemies in Thessalonica. We find this stated in Acts 17:5-6 and verse 13.

Acts 17:5-6 5But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. 6And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also...”

Acts 17:13 13But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

These people tried to discredit him in his absence, especially because he had left Thessalonica in a hurry. There were those who said he left town so quickly because he was a self-serving coward. Their intent was to undermine the faith of these men and women. Why should they believe a message declared by a man who was just a self-serving coward? They wanted to make the message suspect by accusing the messenger. NOTICE what he says to answer these charges. DON’T MISS THIS - Paul’s defense is going to give to us radical instruction concerning the character of the man or woman who serves the Lord. He says:

- YOU KNOW what kind of an entrance we had.
- YOU SAW what we looked like when we came from Philippi. (Remember Philippi? They were being beaten with rocks and thrown into a dungeon.)
- YOU KNOW that we didn’t turn away
- YOU KNOW that we were willing to put our lives on the line to tell you the truth about Jesus Christ.

He's saying to them SUCH COMMITMENT to Christ --- leading to a WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER --- disproves any accusation of self-serving or self-promotion.

Thomas Constable, in "The Bible Knowledge Commentary" put it this way, "This mission had cost them dearly, but God gave them uncommon boldness to stand up in the synagogue at Thessalonica and preach the same message that had brought them persecution in Philippi. And when opposition broke out in Thessalonica the missionaries kept on preaching. This is not the reaction of people who are trying to make money or build personal reputations at the expense of their hearers. Paul called on his readers to remember these actions and to recognize the sincerity behind them. The missionaries' boldness amid strong opposition was the sign of God at work in His servants and was proof of their genuineness."

So this was not a self serving defense. This explanation was for the sake of guarding the faith of these men and women against the time (and at those times) when the devil would try to destroy their faith by telling them they embraced a phony message because the messenger was phony!

How many people have said, "Well I tried Christianity, and I went to this church, and I raised my hand, and I went forward, and then the pastor committed adultery and I believe the whole thing was a lie?" The message that they heard might have actually been very biblical, but the enemy of your soul wants to undermine the message by undermining the integrity of the messenger, to get them to doubt the message they embrace.

FAST FORWARD to 2009 and for a moment and juxtapose Paul's words to the Thessalonians against the hype of much ministry today. Those ministries that promote themselves as... "The fastest growing church" or "The second fastest growing church in..." or "The third largest church in..." Somehow I don't think that we would be hearing anything like that if a fresh beating was awaiting those leading the proclamation of the Gospel and the teaching of the Word of God. The prospect of a fresh beating however, NEVER slowed down Paul or changed his message.

Paul would say to the Philippians - "To live is Christ, to die is gain!" In another place Paul said, "I will endure all things for the sake of the elect,..." *2 Timothy 2:10*

He wouldn't give up. One more beating would have made no difference to him. And note this, he said, "We had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. *1 Thessalonians 2:2* It's amazing, the words "suffering" and "affliction" are woven through the first section of this letter:

- "...much affliction..." *1 Thessalonians 1:6*
- "...suffered and mistreated..." *1 Thessalonians 2:2*
- "...hindered by Satan." *1 Thessalonians 2:18*
- "...afflictions..." *1 Thessalonians 3:4*
- "...distress and affliction..." **1 Thessalonians 3:7*

I wonder, are those the themes of modern Christianity today? I'm not saying I'm going out to look for it. I'm not going to stand on a corner and wear a big sign that says, "Come beat me," but in reality we have this church culture that's actually promoting the opposite at any expense.

It's interesting; Paul's record of suffering and affliction is discussed in the first three chapters, looking backwards - reminding them and encouraging them, but they are not mentioned in Chapters 4-5 which look forward emphasizing requests and instructions. But looking back as to when they received the gospel and what was the message they received, he has this thread or theme of suffering and affliction. So the integrity of the man is so important.

II. INTEGRITY OF HIS MESSAGE

1 Thessalonians 2:3-5 **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 as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness.

3For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive ...

"Our appeal" is a reference to the message that Paul proclaimed to them. "Appeal" or "Paraklesis" comes from two Greek words:

"pará" means *to come along side of, beside* and "kaléo" means *to call*. It literally means *a calling to one's side for admonition, encouragement, exhortation*.

I came across this note from the Pulpit Commentary - (A 24 volume commentary on the entire Bible available inexpensively from Ages Software): "Paraklesis denotes both 'exhortation' and 'consolation' -- when it refers to the moral conduct it denotes exhortation but when it is an address to a sufferer it denotes consolation."

When someone has gone wrong morally, the word speaks of exhortation. It speaks of exhorting someone by coming along side them and saying, "Whoa- wait a minute!" But when someone is suffering it denotes consolation.

What's so beautiful is that BOTH of these elements are found in the APPEAL that is made in the Gospel. In the Gospel we find God addressing the moral bankruptcy of man and man's lost condition. But then the message of the Gospel extends to man the offer of comfort that follows from reconciliation to God through the shed blood of Jesus! We have the record of the APPEAL made by Paul in Acts:

Acts 17:2-3 2And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."

So when Paul says, "3For our appeal does not spring from error..." *1 Thessalonians 2:3* Paul is setting the INTEGRITY of the message that he proclaimed to these men and women in stark contrast to the false appeals of the numerous false religions and philosophies of that time and place.

The Thayer Definition of "Error" is *a wandering, a straying about*.

This word "Error" is always used in the New Testament in a figurative sense of roaming or wandering whether in doctrine or in morals. It is crucial to understand that in Scripture, doctrine and morals are never really divided. BELIEF always influences BEHAVIOR.

There in Thessalonica there were many messages competing for the hearts and lives of men and women. Without studying the bible we don't realize that we're not unlike any other generations of Christians and back in Thessalonica it was worse.

The city of Thessalonica sat on the Agnition Way which was a port of great significance. It was a melting pot city with cultures from all over the world. Think cosmopolitan. (Think of London or Manhattan.) There was a staggering variety of religions and religious professionals peddling those religions in Thessalonica. In this city, you would find the worship of the gods of the Olympian pantheon -- especially Apollo, Athena and Hercules. There were the native Greek mystery religions that celebrated Dionysus and the sex and drinking cult. There were the Greek intellectual and philosophical traditions. There were also shrines to many Egyptian gods: Isis, Saraphis, and Anubis. Also present were the Roman State cults that deified the political heroes of Rome and the emperor.

The "Appeal"- the message proclaimed by each of those religious systems and philosophies had their origins in the wandering and wayward speculations and opinions of man's wisdom and demonic deception. Paul is setting his message in stark contrast to those messages. Paul says -- You can rest in the TRUTH of what we proclaimed because it did not spring from such error (wayward nonsense).

CHRISTIANS - This is what we place our confidence in 2,000 years later! We do not have to wonder about the INTEGRITY of the message we have to declare.

2 Peter 1:16-21 16For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the

power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," 18we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. 19And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

1 John 1:1-3 1That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— 3that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Luke 1:1-4 1Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 3it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 16All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Dan Dutcher is teaching a series here on how to study the bible. Dan made a good point today saying,

"The unbelieving world says, 'The Bible is WEAK. You can't really believe that this is divine. Some nice sentiments here and there — but it is intellectually too weak.' Then the false religions say that it is 'INCOMPLETE.' The Koran, The Book of Mormon, The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society all claim that their writings were necessary because the Bible was INCOMPLETE" But here's what really struck me - Dan continued with, "Much of modern Christianity says that the Bible is BOTH weak AND incomplete!"

There are great segments in Christianity today that say, "The Gospel is WEAK - It doesn't have the power to get people in the door. It doesn't have the power to keep people in. The Gospel is INCOMPLETE. In order to get the job done we have to ADD to the Scriptures our PROGRAMS. In order to get the job done we have to ADD to the Scriptures our clever IDEAS."

LISTEN CHRISTIANS, I can say to you, what Paul said to the men and women in Thessalonica: Our message does not spring from error! The Gospel message sprang from God. It is the only message that can lead men and women to right belief and right behavior. So there is this INTEGRITY of Paul's message — an inherent integrity by virtue of its source — GOD! But there was also INTEGRITY in Paul's message in relationship to the man delivering the message. He said, "3For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity..."

Impurity comes from two Greek words: akatharsia

The prefix "a" means *without* and "kathairo" which means *to cleanse*. We think of cathartic agents such as medicine. In biblical days, salt was a cathartic agent used to cleanse a wound.

It's key to note that this word was used several ways:

- To describe filth or refuse/sewage.
- In medical settings to refer to an infected, oozing wound.
- To describe decaying matter, like the contents of a grave.

With those physical images in mind, this word was also used to define a state of moral impurity — especially sexual sin. In that sense it described a filthiness of heart and mind that defiles the person, making them unusable in ministry. So Paul tells them that the message they heard was pure and that it came from a pure

heart.

There was the INTEGRITY OF THE MESSAGE by virtue of its origins. It didn't spring from error of the wayward wanderings of lost men or demonic systems, but from God. And there was the INTEGRITY OF THE MESSAGE by virtue of the ones proclaiming it – the message was not defiled by the spiritual and moral character of Paul.

The INTEGRITY OF THE MESSAGE was preserved in the WAY Paul delivered it.

3For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive...

The word "Deceive" literally refers to putting bait on a hook or in a trap. The Greek word, "dolos" derived from "dello" means *to bait*.

Did you know that EVERY fisherman is a deceiver! We catch fish by means of deception by using lures that resemble bugs that fish like to eat – or by putting food over a hook in hopes that a fish will bite the hook!.

PAUL IS SAYING - We didn't come BAITING you - We did not say what we thought you wanted to hear so we could get you in the door and keep you in the door. We came to you and we were up front and open with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is still relevant today. There is so much bait out there designed to hook somebody when actually the Gospel is a costly message. It declares that our salvation required the death of God's only Son. Our responsibility is to deliver that message with clarity wrapped up in the love of God. We do not have the right to trick men and women into a "decision" for Christ by disguising the costs of discipleship. We can not bait men and women with a message that is centered on man or man's perceived needs. We can not bait men and women with a church culture that is centered on man, making the Gospel all about them. It's not all about them; it's all about God, and His Son.

HERE IS THE MOTIVATION for the INTEGRITY in preaching the message.

1 Thessalonians 2:4 4but 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.

Paul's commitment to preserving the integrity of the message was DIRECTLY LINKED to his commission from God.

The word "Approved" means, *tested, proved or approved, tried as metals by fire and thus purified*. The tense of this verb implies that there was a time of testing prior to their being entrusted with the gospel. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were tested and found valid by God.

God demands that those whom He commissions for His service BE APPROVED before He gives to them responsibility in ministry.

"...approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel..."

Paul was motivated to INTEGRITY because he recognized the tremendous TRUST that God had placed in him.

Ephesians 3:8 8To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.

1Timothy 1:11-12 in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. Christ Jesus Came to Save Sinners12I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service,

Paul said, "I didn't apply, I was appointed."

Titus 1:3 And at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God

Paul understood that the message he was given did not ORIGINATE with himself. It was not Paul's to mess with, add to, take away from, or hold back some of it. He understood it was God's message and God had ENTRUSTED him to handle it as such.

1Corinthians 4:1-2 1This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

A steward is obligated to please the one who whom he serves. So Paul says - so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

It is not beyond those in ministry to speak in a way that pleases man, to hold back the full message, or to speak things that do not come from the bible either for sake of the praises of man or the support of man. The minister MUST BE MOVED to preserve the INTEGRITY of the message because he understands the TRUST - the PRIVILEGE that has been given to proclaim the Word of God. That he realizes that God is the Master and that God knows when the message is watered down or held back.

God knows.

I've never taught a group of people who are so hungry for the Word. Sometimes I say something and think, "That made no sense" and I wonder, "Did I do a disservice to the text?" but I never want to wonder, "Did I preach to please man?" "Did I do it for the praises of man?" You need to pray that God will always keep you hearing HIS Word.

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