

1 Thessalonians 2:1-16

Leading like Jesus

Letter > Jesus CHANGES a CITY

Chapter 1 > Jesus changes Lives / Chapter 2 > Jesus changes even Leaders

1. Conflict

Since Eden's Garden: Satan attacking Word of God/ World attacking People of God
 Inside Garden > Half-Eaten Apple (or Mango) / Just Outside > Corpse of Abel

Only ONE Perfect Man ever Walked the Earth > NAILED to a Cross

He Promised those who FOLLOW Him > PATHWAY of Troubles

Faithful Servant PAUL – TROUBLES in Thessalonica – Driven OUT of City

Paul Writes with CONFIDENCE – Paul is Gone but JESUS is IN THE HOUSE!

Jesus who REIGNS over Thessalonica is CHANGING that City thru His Church

a) Cultural Liars Advancing

The normal heathen 'missionaries' ... were itinerant apostles and miracle-workers of the most varied persuasions, heralds of heathen gods, and dispensers of salvation, adroit and eloquent, ardent and evoking ardor, but also smart and conceited in extolling the mighty acts of their gods and fooling the masses ... There can be no doubt that they constituted dangerous rivals of the gospel and that general popular opinion expected the Christian missionaries to be able to vie with them

Gunther Bornkamm

LIARS in our World Today > Media, Entertainment, Sports, Politics, Churches

LIARS are LOVED and LISTENED To as the VOICE of God for Many

Satan Brashly Challenged long ago "You will not DIE, eyes OPENED, like GOD"

Wise Person LISTENS Carefully: Songs, Shows, Speeches, Sharing --- SERMONS

To find a man who in plain terms and without guile speaks his mind with frankness, and neither for the sake of reputation nor for gain makes false pretensions, but out of good will and concern for his fellow-man stands ready, if need be, to submit to ridicule and to the disorder and the uproar of the mob – to find such a man is not easy, but rather the good fortune of a very lucky city, so great is the dearth of noble, independent souls and such is the abundance of toadies (flatterers), mountebanks, and sophists.

Dio Chrysostom (40–120 ca. AD)

Greek orator, writer, philosopher and historian

Paul CONTRASTS his Ministry with Popular Orators of is Day:

1) Message > He speaks TRUTH, they speak ERROR

v. 3 For the appeal we make does not spring from error

The lie has run half way round the world while the truth is still lacing up its boots.

Mark Twain

Twain's PROPHECY of EMAIL > Hit SEND Button the WORLD KNOWS!

2) Motive

vs. 3,4 For the appeal we make does not spring from...impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you...We are not trying to please men

IMPURE MOTIVES > People wondered about PROMINENT WOMEN – Acts 17

Who became Part of Thessalonian Church > What was REALLY Going On There?

Paul says NOTHING! No IMPURITY – No UNCLEanness – HOLINESS

Too Bad NOT EVERY CHURCH – Not every PASTOR – can make this CLAIM!

NOT trying to TRICK YOU – No HIDDEN AGENDA – NO Forced Conversions

v. 6 We were not looking for praise from men

3) Method

v. 5 You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed

The person who seeks to gratify people ...for the sake of getting something for himself is a flatterer. Aristotle

b) Conscience Loudly Accusing

Paul FORCED Out of Thessalonica by POLITICAL MANEUVERING

Did NOT WANT to Leave NEW, EAGER Believers > was Pastor & Teacher

Word of Gospel > Came with CONVICTION, POWER, and HOLY SPIRIT

v. 8 We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.

No other Passage of Paul's Letters reveal LOVING HEART for People so WELL BUT he was GONE – Critics would say “He RAN AWAY, left you ALONE”

Critics took FULL ADVANTAGE of Paul's QUICK DISAPPEARANCE

What was the outcome of their visit to Thessalonica? Nothing but trouble, some people said; it was a pity that they had ever come. The sooner they were forgotten, the better for all concerned.

v. 1 You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure

WRITTEN Affirmation RESULT of WRESTLING with Conflicting Ideas

// I am NOT Ashamed of Gospel – When all around said it was FOOLISH

Church was BORN – Founded on Jesus who NEVER LEAVES

Christians were MIGHTY BELL Sounding Good News in City & World

c) Civic Leaders Attacking

FIRST Churches in MACEDONIA // 1ST Church in JUDEA > HATED

Small, Minority Movement ATTACKED by People in POWER

Jews Attacked Paul in Thessalonica > Chased him to Berea and on to Athens

In Judea > JEWS Ruled / In Macedonia > ATTACK by Romans

vs. 14-16 For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.

2. Clarification

WOW! Paul you HATEFUL BIGOT! NOT Politically CORRECT Language

How can we understand these STRONG Words about Jews from 1st Century as Member of Christian Church in the 21st Century??

a. Patriotic Jew > Proud of his People and Nation

What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew...Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God. Romans 3:1,2

...my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ

Romans 9:3-5

b. Passionate for Jews > Pleads for their Souls > Would give his Life for Them

I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel.

Romans 9:2-4

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

Romans 10:1

c. Promises for Jews > God has PLAN – Will Not Forget His People

Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so *all Israel will be saved*, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion...." As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.

Romans 11:25-29

- Talking about the PEOPLE of Israel, not POLITICAL State of Israel
- Talking about LIFE with God not LAND on Earth
- Talking about BELIEVING in Jesus as Messiah – No Other Way to be Saved

d. Political Outsider

v. 14 You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews

Christianity in 1st C > Politically POWERLESS MINORITY Movement
 INFLUENCE on Decisions of ROMAN Empire almost NIL
 NUMBERS and Influence STEADILY GREW > MAJORITY Opinion

No Christian can read the long history of anti-Judaism in the church without feeling
 profoundly ashamed. John Stott

HATEFUL Words by Honored Church Fathers: Chrysostom and even LUTHER
 Luther's Words used by Hitler to Defend Murder of Millions of Jews in Europe

Anti-Semitism > HATRED of a RACE > NO Excuse in Christian, Church, Society

e. Pastor for Jews and Gentiles > both Pharisee and Apostle to GENTILES

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through
 me" a Jew named Jesus (John 14:6)

"Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the
 antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the
 Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also." a Jew named John
 (1 John 2:22,23)

STRONGLY Against > RACIAL Discrimination against JEWS or ANY People
 DENIES the Gospel of a GOD OF LOVE AND GRACE

Against RELIGIOUS Distortion of Gospel > DENIES the Gospel

Teaching there are OTHER WAYS of Salvation

WRATH of God will Fall on ALL – Jew and Gentile – Only Jesus can RESUCUE

Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath.

1 Thessalonians 1:1

3. Confidence

a) Rooted in God > HE is the ANCHOR for our TRUST

v. 4 We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.

God has put them to the TEST and found them FAITHFUL

PRIMARY Responsibility of Ministry is NOT to MAN but to GOD

GOD Mentioned 13 X's in 16 Verses

v. 5 God is our witness

v. 10 You are witnesses, and so is God

OPENNESS before God > TRANSPARENCY before Man

We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God 2 Corinthians 4:2

b) Revealed in Scripture

v. 8 the gospel of God > God as Author and Subject

v. 9 we preached the gospel of God to you

v. 13 ...when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

c) Reflected in Believers > Living God LIVES in THEM

1) Preacher > FEARLESS and FAITHFUL

v. 2 We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.

Paul SUFFERED for what he KNEW was TRUE > Did NOT QUIT
Just before coming to Thessalonica > TERRIBLE Abuse in PHILIPPI
Stripped NAKED – Publicly BEATEN – Unjustly IMPRISONED
Roman CITIZEN > Rights DENIED in Roman Colony of Philippi

Like RIDICULE by Crowds at HYDE Park Speaker's Corner in LONDON

Christian Faith > Connection between MESSENGER and MESSAGE

Galatians 1 > NO other Gospel – DAMNS - All False Teachings/Teachers

Rest of chapter 1 > DEFENDS his own Actions in Ministry and Methods

PREACHERS Sin > PEOPLE Scatter > WORLD Broadcasts > SATAN Rejoices
Importance of TEAM Ministry > ACCOUNTABILITY of Leaders > Transparency

Uganda in 1980's Jimmy Swaggert > Popular TV Preacher and Musician – Nightly
MORAL Failure: Word Spread Quickly – Students at Makerere Univ *Swagging!*

2) People

v. 1 You know, brothers / v. 2 as you know / v. 5 You know

v. 10 You are witnesses / v. 11 For you know

Happy are those Christian leaders today, who hate hypocrisy and love integrity, who have nothing to conceal or be ashamed of, who are well known for who and what they are, and who are able to appeal without fear to God and the public as their witnesses!

John Stott

4. Conduct

a. Responsible Steward > Manager of HOUSE – Privilege & Responsibility

v. 4 men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel

God has TRUSTED us Enough to HOLD His Word / New Job here gave me KEYS
 JESUS has given EVERY Believer > KEYS of Kingdom – Word of GOSPEL
 USE KEYS – Preach Liberating Gospel of Jesus – PRISONERS Set Free from Sin
 Most IMPORTANT Listener is AUDIENCE of ONE

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus...Preach the Word 2 Timothy 4:1,2

b. Gentle Mother > TOUGH Guy also a TENDER Guy

vs. 6,7 As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.

CONTRAST between AUTHORITY as Apostle and GENTLENESS of Mother
 Image of MOTHER > TIRELESS – Completely SELF-GIVING - PATIENT
 NOTHING to Gain in Cleaning, Feeding, Carrying, Cleaning, Feeding, Carrying

Tell me how to show love without spending time, energy or money, and I will gladly sign up. Tell me that love means sacrifice, however, and I become reluctant to commit myself.

Bill Hybels

c. Patient Father > PATIENT but not a PUSH-OVER

vs. 11,12 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

Father does NOT EXASPERATE Children > LOVES and ENCOURAGES
Emphasis > Father's INSTRUCTION by WORDS but Most of All EXAMPLE

Paul is NOT Setting FIRM, STEREO-Typic ROLES and DUTIES of Man/Woman
If Anything > Emphasis on TASK that is DONE TOGETHER – Joint Effort

d. Faithful Herald MESSENGER who RUNS Before COMING KING

v. 13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Prepare CITY for GRAND ARRIVAL of the MONARCH

Our Duty in Christ – PREPARE BEIJING – Coming of KING JESUS

Application Clear > here at ZGC Ministry Leaders mtg Last Sunday –

One CLEAR Message > WE NEED MORE LEADERS! More Servants for Jesus
ASK the Lord of the Harvest! Make you His Heralds, Stewards, Mothers, Fathers
God wants to CHANGE Beijing – Begins with YOU and ME being WILLING

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men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. 5 You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. 6 We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, 7 but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. 8 We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. 9 Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. 10 You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. 11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, 12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory. 13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. 14 For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, 15 who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men 16 in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.