

A Model Ministry

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Preacher: Shem Foo

- [0 : 0 0] Thank you, Maria, for reading that passage for us. It's a privilege to be opening up God's Word with you this morning. Now, my wife asked me last night, have I timed my talk?
- I said no. But, Jeremy, where's Jeremy? Jeremy, I'll give you permission to drag me off if I'm waffling on too much. All right. I walked into church a few weeks ago and I saw an older lady sitting there, eyes closed.
- And I thought, I went up to her and said, I won't say the name. Are you having a nap? And she said, no, I'm just praying that God would help me to be still and know that he is God.
- And what a tremendous attitude to have to come in with that mindset to make the most of this precious time that we have together, to know that the Lord is God. So, why don't I pray?
- Heavenly Father, we do thank you that you are a good and gracious God. Thank you for entrusting us with your Word that we may know the Lord Jesus. We do pray that you'll prepare our hearts to hear your Word well this morning.
- [1 : 1 4] In his name we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, if you picked up the bulletin from the back, I do apologise. There's a blank outline. I just simply didn't have time to have it ready for Friday.
- But if you really wanted to know, I think when Maria read up the passage, For You Know comes up repetitively.
- So, I think if you can have a heading, For You Know, And there may be three things. The message, the motive, and the manner. I think it's roughly along those lines.
- Okay, just to recap. We are continuing our sermon series in 1 Thessalonians. We've read that out just earlier. And last week, we learned what a model church the Thessalonians were.
- Now, Paul remembers before God their work of faith, Their labour of love, and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- [2 : 3 6] And Paul has written this letter to them to remind them To keep trusting in the message they have believed. Now, we read in Acts 17 that the Jews were jealous And taking some wicked men of the rabble, formed a mob, Set the city in an uproar, and attacked Jason's house, Dragging him and some of the brothers before the city authorities, And accused them of acting against Caesar's decree.
- Now, Paul and Silas were sent away by night in a hurry. Will the Thessalonians continue in the Christian faith With much conflict and afflictions?
- Wouldn't you be discouraged If you just put your trust in Jesus And all of a sudden, you've made enemies of the locals And the authorities And everyone turning against you.
- At the start of chapter 2, Paul reminds the Thessalonians of his ministry among them. In verse 1, For some of the Thessalonians were persuaded of the gospel message, And they joined Paul and Silas, As did a great many devout Greeks, And a few of the leading women.
- They turned to God from idols, To serve the living and true God, And to wait for his son from heaven. Their visit to Thessalonica had produced a harvest.

[4 : 15] Before Paul and Silas arrived in Thessalonica, They had suffered, And being shamefully treated at Philippi. They were beaten with rods, Thrown into jail, Without trial.

And as the Thessalonians know, Paul, Silas and Timothy had confidence in God, To declare to them the gospel of God In the midst of much conflict.

Conflict followed Paul everywhere he went. After they left Thessalonica to go to Berea, The Jews from Thessalonica learned that he was preaching the word of God there, And so they came there too.

Agitating and stirring up the crowds. It wasn't that Paul, Silas and Timothy had confidence in themselves. As you read that in the passage there, They have confidence in God.

Now surely if we are doing the same thing over and over again, And meeting the same outcome, We're thinking we're doing something wrong.

[5 : 23] Wouldn't that be a dent to our confidence? But not if our confidence and courage are in God. It was God who gave Paul, Silas and Timothy, Complete confidence and courage, To declare fearlessly the gospel of God.

Did you notice what Paul said about their appeal, Or entreaty, Or plea, To the Thessalonians in verse 3? 1. It's not in error.

2. It's not impure. And 3. It's not deceitful. Firstly, Paul's apostleship was not from men, Or through men, But through Jesus Christ and God the Father.

The content of their message was not erroneous. They didn't get it wrong about Jesus, Or preaching a distorted version of him. He was commissioned by the Lord Jesus to be his chosen instrument, To bear his name to the Gentiles, the kings, And to the children of Israel.

As messengers who had been entrusted with the gospel, So they spoke the truth of the gospel. Not to please men, But to please God who tests their hearts.

[6 : 43] That's in verse 4. The gospel message was the necessity for Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead. And during Jesus' time with his disciples, He had said to them that he did not come to be served, But to serve, And to give his life as a ransom for many.

Isaiah the prophet spoke about God's servant in this way. He was despised and rejected by men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And as one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised, And we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Yet we esteemed him stricken, Smitten by God, And afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities.

Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray.

[7 : 51] We have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Doesn't that capture the tendency of humanity to turn away from God And to pursue our own desires?

Love yourself is a popular mantra. Pursuing individual happiness and fulfilment is highly valued in our society. You can fill in the blanks.

I have to love myself by... I'm not loving myself if I... I deserve to have...

It's all about me. How does it play out when it's all about me? I don't think you can have meaningful relationships when it's all about you.

And yet, God in his love and mercy Addresses the consequences of our self-love And restores us to him Through the suffering of a servant Who bore our immoralities.

[9 : 06] This was the same chapter of Isaiah that the Ethiopian eunuch was reading about. He asked Philip who the prophet was talking about. Then Philip, beginning with this scripture, told him the good news about Jesus.

This Jesus, betrayed by one of his disciples, suffered in the hands of unjust men, hung on the cross under Pontius Pilate, Was the suffering servant that God had sent to bear the sins of the world.

Now this is wonderfully captured in the hymn, Man of Sorrows. Man of Sorrows, what a name! For the Son of God who came, Ruined sinners to reclaim, Hallelujah!

What a Saviour! Bearing shame and scoffing brood, In my place condemned he stood, Sealed my pardon with his blood, Hallelujah!

What a Saviour! Guilty, vile and helpless we, Spotless Lamb of God was he, Full atonement can it be, Hallelujah!

[10 : 21] What a Saviour! Lifted up was he to die, It is finished was his cry, Now in heaven exalted high, Hallelujah!

What a Saviour! When he comes, our glorious King, All his ransomed home to bring, Then anew this song will sing, Hallelujah!

What a Saviour! Did you notice in the hymn that Jesus didn't stay dead? Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in power, According to the Spirit of holiness, By his resurrection from the dead.

For King David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, Died and was buried with his ancestors, And his body decayed. But he whom God had promised to establish his kingdom forever, Was Jesus the Son of God, Son of David.

In Jesus we have redemption through his blood, The forgiveness of sins, In accordance with the riches of God's grace. If we come to Jesus and confess our sins, God is faithful and just, And he will forgive us our sins, And purify us from all unrighteousness.

[11 : 44] Isn't this wonderful news? Anyone, Doesn't matter how wicked, How broken, How proud, How unworthy, If we come to Jesus, He welcomes us.

Come today. Come to Jesus who carried our sorrows, And ask him for the forgiveness Of your sins. I'm not sure, I didn't actually read the service plan for this morning.

Now as Darrell read out 2 Samuel chapter 11, It shocked me, That David, One of the renowned kings of Israel, I didn't realise, It struck me again, And how wicked he was.

He was an adulterer, He was a murderer, And yet there's a place in the kingdom of God for him. Surely, There's a place in the kingdom of God for us.

So back to 1 Thessalonians. And secondly, Their motives were not impure. I think what Paul had in mind here was sexual purity. Paul and his company, Silas and Timothy, Were not the kind who wormed their way into homes, And gained control over gullible women, Like King David did with Bathsheba.

[13 : 23] In the culture of the day, Promiscuity, Sexual immorality was rife. I don't think our day is any different. And Paul wants to be clear, That there were not predators, Looking to seduce women.

For God is an avenger in such things. He has not called us to impurity, But in holiness. And Paul has much to say, About sexual purity in chapter 4.

Thirdly, They were not deceitful. They did not use guile, To trick the Thessalonians into believing Jesus. And in verse 5, Paul said, For we never came with words of flattery.

You see how emphatic it was? Never. Ever. Flattery, Puffing someone up, Praise or compliment them, In order to get what you want.

That's not how Paul dealt with the Thessalonians. And they knew that. Nor did they preach the gospel as a cover up. For greed.

[14 : 33] They didn't preach the gospel in order to gain financially from them. To extract money from the Thessalonians. On the contrary, They worked day and night. To supply for their own needs.

Just as God tests their hearts, He is also witness to their integrity. Paul is absolutely confident in their conduct. That he's not afraid to call on God, Who searched the heart and tests the mind, To bear witness.

God is the one who sees all things. And he's the one that Paul appeals to. To testify to their integrity. The next sentence, Nor did we seek glory from men.

Now one that in the context, Is not so much about personal esteem or reputation. This glory is in the middle of pretext for greed.

And made demands as apostles of Christ. So a possible explanation for glory here, Might be seeking financial support from the Thessalonians.

[15 : 42] Or from others. They were not after financial gain. Because they worked day and night. So that they're not a burden to the Thessalonians.

And as you notice, That Paul includes Silas and Timothy as apostles of Christ. The word apostles here does not mean that those chosen, Who have been with Jesus and witness his resurrection.

But messengers or sent ones. In that sense, Paul, Silas and Timothy are messengers of God. They were sent by God.

Next, Paul talks about how he related to the Thessalonians. One, like a mother. And two, like a father.

So like a nursing mother taking care of her children. They were gentle amongst the Thessalonians. It's in verse 7. If you ever watch a nursing mother caring for a child, It is a picture of tenderness and devotion.

[16 : 52] She comforts and soothes. She's attentive to the child's needs. If you are a nursing mother with a newborn, Your entire world centers on the child.

Every waking moment involves caring, Tending, Feeding, Comforting, Changing nappies. Not glorious.

Seems like a drudgery. But a nursing mother will never willingly give up their newborn. So dear were the Thessalonians to Paul That he describes their feelings for them As affectionately desirous.

They were so fond of the Thessalonians That they not only preached the gospel to them, But he shared, They shared their lives with them. Just as a nursing mother Cannot but share her life With her child.

So Paul and Silas and Timothy Were bonded to the Thessalonians Like a nursing mother. And like a father, We exhorted each one of you And encouraged you And charged you To walk in a manner worthy of God In verse 11 and 12.

[18 : 17] As a father addressing his children He takes them aside One by one Exhorting them and encouraging them I would imagine It might be along the lines of Exhorting them and encouraging them In their work of faith.

Labor of love. And steadfastness of hope. I can see some examples Of work prompted by faith in our church.

The Becks, The Youngs, The Senior and Nicky Championing the Barnabas Aid Food Gives Program. Collecting food for Christian believers Who are experiencing food insecurity.

Clas and Murray Have been involved with the Gideons For many years. Getting Bibles Into hotels, Schools And communities. I know a friend Who takes a day off work a week So that he can teach R.I.

In three different schools. A labour of love. Damien has helped mow Peter Nixon's lawn In doing things around the yard For many years.

[19 : 31] I know Tony went out to Ipswich This morning To support Rodney As he preached To a group of senior saints. Isn't that lovely That when you're old And infirmed That you're not forgotten.

How wonderful it is To minister to a group Of elderly saints With God's word. Have you noticed The same people Tend to serve Week in and week out At church.

The same people On the music team Projector Sound We have wonderful people Serving one another In our church.

Some seen Some unseen Many serve Not because They have the spare time But out of love They have made it Their business To serve Even in their weariness.

Surely we can say A word of encouragement To them Thank God For their sacrificial service Why not get alongside Them and serve With them And that would be Such an encouragement.

[20 : 44] Like a father They charge The Thessalonians To walk In a manner Worthy of God And I think The word walk Conveys a sense Of active Steady Purposeful journey Towards a goal A metaphor For a person's conduct Their way of life That is worthy Of God Who calls them Into his kingdom And glory In chapters Four and five Paul fleshes out What it looks like To conduct Oneself As a subject Worthy of God's Kingdom He gave instructions On sexual purity Brotherly love Attitude towards work And the coming Of Jesus And more of that In the coming weeks In verse 10 The Thessalonians And God Are witnesses Of how holy Righteous And blameless Paul, Silas And Timothy Were Holy means

Being set apart Consecrated For a specific Purpose And certainly What Paul was Paul was set apart As the messenger Of Jesus It wasn't Being a messenger Of Jesus And dabbling In something else Started a business Selling his tents No, that was To provide his needs He was called To the proclamation Of the gospel And righteous Means adherence To God's moral standard You would think That he would have The Ten Commandments And he would be Doing that Hearing God's word Living that out And blameless Means absence Of wrongdoing Or fault And he's saying He's reminding He says

To Thessalonians You know How holy Righteous And blameless We were I know of a man Who grew up In a Christian home Went to church His siblings His siblings Are all Christians Some are pastors He was disappointed In his youth leader And has walked away From following Jesus For many years There are many Who are not in churches Anymore Because they perceive Moral failure What if The Thessalonians Had found out Later on That Paul Abandoned The Christian faith Because he got sick Of getting beaten up Maligned Tortured Who will begrudge him If he just wants To retire to Quiet life Will they keep Following Jesus One of the stories

In Richard Wembram's book Tortured for Christ Involves a young girl Who was imprisoned For her Christian faith Despite facing Intense persecution And pressure To renounce her beliefs She remained Steadfast In her faith And trust In Jesus Christ Even when her pastor Who was also Imprisoned Gave up And denied his faith Under pressure The young girl Continued to Steadfastly Trust in Jesus Her faith Wasn't built On her pastor She has discovered The greatest treasure She knows Her shepherd And is known To him The Thessalonians Had believed In Jesus Who suffered In our place And now reigns At God's right hand Look past The messenger Look To the saviour He is all we need

Keep holding on To the Lord Jesus We pray Heavenly Father We do thank you What an encouragement It is to know That the Lord Jesus Bore our iniquities That he suffered For our sake Thank you That it is the true Gospel message That we have heard Help us to keep Looking to the Lord Jesus And we pray this In his name Amen