

Seven Qualities for *Meaningful, Fruitful, Credible, and Faithful* Ministry: the kind of ministry we need, and the ministry we should model before the lives of other people.

Paul reviews their character, how they functioned and operated among the Thessalonian believers... “For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain.” (2:1) It was not a failure; empty. This is how those entrusted with the sacred and powerful Gospel must live in their situations...

Readings: Jeremiah 17:5-11; Acts 20; Isaiah 40; 1 Cor. 15:55-57; Romans 12

1. Endurance: *spiritual perseverance*

- a. “We had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi; we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the Gospel of God amid much opposition.” (2:2)
- b. Difficulty and barriers in various cities and places did not stop Paul and his companions from continuing to minister the Gospel. They pressed on . .
- c. Yet, it is God’s Gospel; it is true, and God promised this; God loves and rewards . . *when I am wanting to give up* . . John 16:33; 1 John 4:4

2. Exhortation: *sharing the Gospel, necessary to use words*

- a. “So we speak” (2:2) “Our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or deceit” (2:3) “So we speak” (2:4) “flattering speech” (2:5) “proclaimed” (2:9)
- b. Romans 10: How beautiful the feet of those who preach the Gospel!
  - i. Faith comes by hearing; hearing by the word of God
- c. We are called to “use our words” - wisely and carefully. Guard your heart and your tongue... be a faithful spokesperson of the Gospel. (Colossians 1:27-28)
- d. “We cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard.”
- e. “Nothing seals the lips or ties the tongue like the poverty of our own experience; ultimately, we say nothing because we have nothing to say.” (J. Stott)

3. Evaluation: *living before God and others with accountability, vertical and horizontal*

- a. “We have been approved by God.” (2:4) “Not as pleasing men, but God who examines the heart” (2:4) “We did not seek glory from men” (2:6)
- b. Notice that Paul is first concerned with serving God and being accountable to Him. Then, he considers the way others view him and his ministry.
- c. We live before an audience of one. Before others, we have nothing to prove. Nothing to gain, nothing to lose.
- d. Keep watch over your heart . . and the public character will follow.
  - i. God sees, knows, hears: His eye is on the sparrow; I know He watches me
- e. Paul knows that his validation comes from God, and he is first and foremost accountable to God; therefore, he has been credible in relationship with them.

4. Endearment: *spiritual family ties; we are family; the body of Christ; we need one another*
  - a. "Brethren" (2:1, 2:9, 2:14, 2:17) - notice the posture of Paul's heart approach
  - b. "We proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares" (2:7)
    - i. Let your gentleness be evident to all. (Phil. 4:5)
    - ii. With all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love (Eph. 4:1-2)
    - iii. "Who is wise among you? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom" (James 3:13)
  - c. "Having so fond an affection for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel, but our own lives" (2:8)
  - d. "You had become very dear to us." (2:8)
  - e. "Exhorting, encouraging, imploring each of you as a father would his own (2:11)
  - f. Be as wise as serpents; as gentle as doves... tender, tough.
    - i. He is the Lion and the Lamb; Behold the Kindness and Severity of God
    - ii. We are not nearly as well-rounded as God is... .
    - iii. When I am wanting to be controlling, manipulative, bitter and resentful; passive and pouty... John 15:13; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21; Romans 5
5. Exertion: *blood, sweat, toil and tears; no coasting or loafing; holy hustle*
  - a. "You recall, brethren, our labor and our hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel" (2:9)
  - b. Take up your cross daily, follow me
  - c. When I am exhausted and lazy and sluggish: Hebrews 12:1-2
6. Excellence: *salt and light; you are the light of the world; a peculiar people*
  - a. "You are witnesses and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers" (2:10)
  - b. Be holy as I am holy... keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles (1 Peter 2:12)
    - i. Jesus: but not so among you; whoever would be great would be servant of all
  - c. Look how confident Paul is in how they behaved... above reproach:
  - d. His claims? That he mortified, to match the Gospel, no hidden agendas
    - i. Error, impurity, ways of deceit; people-pleasing (a trap and snare); flattery; pretext or cover-up for greed; glory from men
  - e. Stand out like stars in the sky in this crooked and perverse generation (Phil. 2:12-13)

7. Empowerment: *benefiting others; helping others; encouraging and edifying...*
- a. "So that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory" (2:11)
    - i. This is the whole goal. To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. In this brief life, to share and live the Gospel in such a way that others come to know God and experience the great gift of salvation: that others would receive what is eternal and good and true . .
    - ii. Forgiveness, Transformation and future glory!
    - iii. The expulsive power of a new affection . . . Luke 12:32; Jeremiah 6:16
  - b. In light of what I deserve, look at His mercy.
  - c. In light of what I don't deserve, look at His grace . .
  - d. How can I say thanks???
    - i. "The voices of a million angels could not express my gratitude"

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:57-58)

"What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for some goal worthy of him. What he needs is not the discharge of tension at any cost, but the call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled by him."

— **Victor Frankl**

"Depend upon it, Sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully." (Samuel Johnson, 1777)

Discussion Questions:

- What qualified Paul, Silas, and Timothy to preach the Gospel to the Thessalonians?
- Why do you think Paul is writing to clarify for the Thessalonians the nature and credibility of his ministry?
- Do you have the qualities mentioned in this sermon in your own life? Where should someone go to receive these kinds of ministry qualities?