

1st Thessalonians Ch 2:1-12

“Approved By God”

Vs1-12

Someone has once rightly said, “I really cannot give you the formula for success. But I can give you the formula for failure. It’s this: Try to please everyone.” and Such was *not* the case with the apostle Paul, he had it in his aim, and purposed in his heart to be pleasing to one Person, or should I say the triune Person, the Godhead. He wanted to be pleasing to God and didn’t concern himself with anyone else, and it wasn’t that he wasn’t concerned about anyone else; I think his life will testify quite the opposite of that. But his primary objective was to lead a life that was pleasing to God and God alone, because if his life is pleasing to God, then God will cause the balance to be struck, or the pieces to fall in place everywhere else. But if his life isn’t pleasing to God, then it’s sure to be chaotic and confusing, bringing disorder and disarray into every other circumstance or situation of his life, including the people in his life, to understand it simply, his priorities were right. He purposed in his heart that God came 1st, Jesus Christ was his 1st love, and God honored it, he “approved” of his life. Notice with me briefly vs 4 of ch 2

Vs4

Now we’re not going to delve fully into this just yet, but the point I want to draw to your attention immediately from the get go, before we are fully enveloped into the text is that when the Holy Spirit records for us in His Word, the Word of God, “Here is a lifestyle that I approve of” then we want to pay attention. Remember that every word of the scriptures is inspired by God, 2 Tim 3:16 tells us very plainly, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,*” or more literally, is God breathed. So that when I come to a section of scripture that holds out in view for everyone to see a certain lifestyle or pattern of living that the Holy Spirit places His stamp of approval on. and Says, “This is it; this is a life that I will certainly honor” man, I wanna pay attention. I want to examine that individual’s lifestyle or pattern of living with the utmost of scrutiny, I want to watch it closely, and place the pattern of such a man’s life under the magnifying glass, or microscope of attentive inspection that I might begin to pattern my own life after his. Not out of legalism (God forbid) but out of simple wisdom, Jesus at one time rebuked His followers (In Luke 16:8) saying that the sons of this world are more shrewd than the sons of light. In other words worldly businessmen are wise enough that when they see a good deal, or something that will work to their advantage or benefit them in the long run, they jump on it. and The rebuke was, why don’t we do the same, how is it that they act so often with more wisdom than the sons of light, the children of God.

My point is this, when God gives us a pattern of life that He is in approval of, one that He will bless and honor, and use for His glory, then wisdom dictates that we should learn of such a one, we should take note of the principals and fundamentals that governed his life and do likewise.

In this section of scripture that's before us Paul brings to the forefront of his readers mind, his pattern of living, and his manner of life while he was among them. Because everywhere Paul went he seemed to run into a group of people that wanted to refute his message and hang him out to dry. and Thessalonica was no exception, and it wasn't that Paul was seeking to defend himself for the sake of his own reputation, he knew that if you can discredit the man, you discredit his message. and Paul was very careful to safeguard the message of the gospel, and in order to do that he often reminded people of his integrity, that the integrity of the message itself would be preserved.

I'm certain there was no way that he knew at the time he was writing this the fullness of what the Holy Spirit would do with it and use it for. But what came forth was an incredible little section of a lifestyle or pattern of life that's been approved by God, that it might serve as a model for literally a couple of thousand yrs worth of Christians to come. So you need to know that there's no way we can exhaust the fullness of what's here in 45 minutes, but I encourage you to get familiar with this section and you'll find that the more you read it, the more things just pop out at you that you do well (that I do well) to facilitate, and incorporate by the grace of God into my life.

Vs1

Paul says that our coming to you wasn't empty, it wasn't fruitless, or pointless, it wasn't like nothing happened and there was no verifiable evidence of the life changing impact that the gospel had on your lives. and Apparently Paul had quiet an entrance into Thessalonica because this is already the 3rd he makes mention of it out of the 11 vs we've looked at.

But you recall in the book of Acts ch 17 that Luke records what kind of entrance they had and there was a revival breaking loose, Paul was there for only 3 short weeks and the whole city was stirred. Paul was preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified along with the hope of the resurrection and some the Jews were persuaded and we read there that also a "great" multitude of devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women joined Paul and Silas.

and This vs kind of connects us to vs 9 of ch 1 where Paul says that "They themselves declare what manner of entry we had" speaking of the people that they come into contact with in the surrounding regions. and Then here he says, "and *You yourselves* know to, that when we came with the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, your lives were changed. The Holy Spirit is bearing witness to the reality of Jesus Christ in your lives through the transformation of your lives."

Vs2

Now in our introduction to this letter a couple of weeks ago we took the time to examine Paul's experience in Philippi knowing that he went from Philippi to Thessalonica. and When he says that they "suffered" and were "spitefully treated" believe me that's no understatement or exaggeration. They had been beaten with rods, flogged with a whip and shackled in chains in the lower depths of the dungeon, primarily because they'd delivered a demon possessed girl and ruined these fellows business by doing so.

But the point that I want you to see here is that even though Paul was so radically abused just days before for the message of the gospel and the lives that it changed. When he came to Thessalonica, (no doubt still scarred and scabbed up pretty good from what had just taken place) he came in boldness. In other words he didn't slow down, or allow his previous life experience to begin to stagger and stagnate the work that God had committed to his hands.

Now Paul had been "hurt" pretty bad, but he couldn't let that detour what God had committed to his trust. How many times we let life's experiences, and hardships, especially if they're painful slow us down and trip us up regarding God's work in our lives and plans for our lives. I mean let's be honest, if this had happened to most people today (probably myself as well) if I'd been beaten with rods and flogged with a whip and shackled up in a dungeon. I might consider a change of pace for a while, or at the very least take a few weeks off, it's time for a vacation. But Paul came to them in boldness, he didn't slow down, he didn't let the enemy rip him off for all that God wanted to do in His life. and I don't know what's happening in your life, but maybe you've been through a hardship, or are currently going through a painful experience.

Don't let the enemy rip you off for what God wants to do in your life, remain faithful to God's call on your life (and we'll talk a bit more about that in a minute). But Paul was bold, not in his flesh, but in God, he taught them with steadfast assurance (and we spoke about that last week) even though there was contention or conflict, literally the word is "agony." So even though times were tough and there was plenty of opposition in Thessalonica, so much so that after 3 weeks things were so heated he had to leave for fear of his life or the lives of those he was teaching, Paul preached with boldness.

Vs 3

So we've already observed Paul's perseverance, and Paul's boldness, now Paul's integrity comes into view, as he begins to list out the things that are 1st in the negative, (what kind of man he wasn't,) and then the positive, (the kind of man he was). and He'll do that again in just a minute, but he says here that the "exhortation" that he brought to them, or the imploration, the things of which he was instructing them, didn't come #1 by error, #2 uncleanness, and #3 in deceit. His doctrine was fraudulent, his instructions to them weren't in error, he didn't water it down or change the message so that it would be more appealing to them, he said it like it was. Nor were his motives impure, the message didn't come by uncleanness, he wasn't seeking to give the message in such a way that would profit him personally. So that he might get a big love offering, or become this really hip and cool preacher that was renown and famous. Or so that they might be persuaded to serve *him*, Paul refused their money; shot straight was there to serve not to be served.

Thirdly his message didn't come in deceit, and this word deceit speaks of baiting a hook or setting a snare so as to trick people into "buying" what he had to sell. You know the hook

looks like a worm but in reality it's something very different than what's presented but by the time you realize it, it's too late, you're snagged and being prepared for dinner. Paul says we didn't do that to you, we didn't candy coat the gospel or tell you that there were no difficulties.

So many people try to present the gospel in such a way as to say that if you come to Christ all your problems will be over. But that's deceitful, it's not true, Jesus said, "*narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life.*" Matt 7:14. What Paul is saying is that we were very honest and open with you about what it means to lead a life that's set apart to Christ, we didn't have any ulterior motives. We came to minister to you, not to make merchandise of you, so many today are seeking to make merchandise of the people of God, to fleece the sheep instead of feed the sheep, but Paul is saying such was not the case with me, and such is not the case of the life that's approved by God.

Vs4

Or "tries" our hearts (that should be underlined in your bible) God is always searching your heart; he's trying and testing the motives of your heart, the intentions, and objectives of your heart. Because it's your heart He's interested in Jer 17:9-10 tells us, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.*" Prov 17:3 says, "*The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, But the LORD tests the hearts.*" Man looks to the outward appearance, but God looks to the heart, that's why Jesus had such a problem with the Pharisees, because they had the outward appearance thing mastered, but Jesus said they were hypocrites, why? He said because, "*These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.*" God help us never to become such a people, as God searches your heart what does He find? A man or a woman playing the game, you brought your bible, sang the songs but your heart checked out a long time ago? Or has He tried you and found you approved, or genuine, the real deal, pure in heart?

This word "approved" is the same word that's translated "tried" or "tests" at the end of the vs, God has tested Paul's heart, it's a word that was used of the method of discerning the purity of certain alloys, it's the refiners fire. Paul's been through it, his heart has been discerned of God as genuine and pure, therefore God has counted him a faithful steward and has entrusted him with the gospel. So Paul shared it with all his heart, he aimed to please God and God alone, because if you seek to please men, you can't please God. Gal 1:10 "*For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.*"

It's like when Jesus said, "You're either for Me, or against Me." There is no in between, you'll either be a God pleaser, or a man pleaser, they're mutually exclusive, the question is, would you rather have man be against you, or God be against you? For me that's a no brainer, Paul was all the time stepping on peoples toes because of his faithfulness to God, now those

who had ears to hear what the Spirit was saying weren't offended or rebuffed at all. Prov 9:8-9 says, "*Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.*" But those who don't have hearts eager to be right with God will often take offense at your faithfulness to God; you just can't take it personally.

Now so often we want to but we can't, even in my few yrs in the ministry I've stood multiple times on the side of unpopularity with people that take offense to something I've said or done. Sometimes even by those who've I've considered close to me, but I make it my aim to be pleasing to God, and I trust that He'll work out the details with man. But if I make it my aim to be pleasing to man, then who's going to work out the details with God? Paul spoke to be pleasing to God. This is the kind of man that he was, the positive action.

Vs 5-6

Again into the negative, we didn't try to flatter you, or butter you up, it's been said that, "A flatterer is a person who manipulates rather than communicates." The bible rebukes flattery, Prov 26:28 "*A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, And a flattering mouth works ruin.*" Ps 12:2 says, "*They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; With flattering lips and a double heart they speak.*"

Paul says here, "We didn't speak with flattering lips and a double heart for our own personal gain, we didn't seek to manipulate you so that you would serve us or cater to us." Nor a cloak for covetousness, "We didn't walk in false humility all the while seeking fortune and fame or coveting positions of power and authority over you."

You guys these are the attributes approved or tested and found pure by God, motives that are pure and in it for the glory of God, and the salvation of the lost, not personal gain or benefit.

(Vs6)

The word "glory" there is literally "honor" or "honorarium" he's speaking specifically of money, Paul taught very plainly that those who labor in the word are worthy of double honor, that is "honorarium" and that we're not to muzzle the ox while it treads out grain. Jesus said the laborer is worthy of his wage, but Paul personally never took advantage of what would be rightfully due him because he was so concerned for the integrity of the message he shared, he didn't want there to be anything that could come back to haunt him.

Vs 7-8

Now he's getting again into the positive, he says we weren't rough *with* you, demanding *of* you, or hard *on* you, we were gentle, which is to say, we weren't harsh, but we acted even as a nurse, that is a nursing mother would even with her own children. and What's the lesson here; a

nursing mother literally imparts or invests her life into the life of the infant. The mother eats solid foods, and meats and transforms the food of her maturity into milk for the baby to feed on. Even so the mature believer feeds on the Word of God and shares its nourishment with younger believers so that they can grow thereby. Paul told the Corinthians, *“I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?”* 1 Cor 3:2-3 Or to understand that another way, envy, strife, and a divisive spirit are marks of immaturity, the marks of someone who really has matured as God would have them to.

They need to be relearned in the basic fundamentals of Christianity like forgiveness, grace, mercy and love and how even as God in Christ has forgiven you everything, you likewise need to forgive those who have violated you. That’s why he wrote (I believe Paul wrote Hebrews) Heb 5:12-14 *“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”* They know what’s right and wrong and they act accordingly, Paul says we were like a nursing mother to you, affectionate, not only giving you the gospel but even our very lives.

Vs9

and As a spiritual parent to them he felt responsible to be a blessing to them not a burden, Paul was a tentmaker by trade. So as you read through Acts you find that rather than being supported by the people, Paul would make tents and provide not only for himself, but his whole missionary team. So that he couldn’t be accused of peddling the gospel for profit, and he told Timothy concerning those who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. and You see many of them on T.V.; *“From such withdraw yourself.”*

Vs10

Now we’ve been seeing groupings of 3 regarding Paul and the type of person he wasn’t and he was, he *wasn’t* in error, uncleanness or deceit, he *was* approved of God, entrusted by God, and spoke for God. He *didn’t* use flattery, or disguise covetousness or seek an honorarium (fish for their money) but he was gentle, affectionate, and imparting of his own life. Here he continues to follow suit in vs 3 we see 3 negative things that Paul wasn’t, in vs 10 we see 3 positive things he was, in vs 5-6 we see 3 negative things he didn’t do, in vs 11 we see 3 positive things he did do, these are the type of things we want to pick up on.

3 Characteristics Paul reminds them of here concerning his behavior among them, this ch is the proper way that we’re to behave on the mission field at home or abroad, he was #1 devout, #2 just, and #3 blameless. That word “devoutly” literally means “holily” or “observant of God’s will” he was tenderly sensitive and especially observant to God’s will, fulfilling God’s call on

his life. and He was “just”, or “righteous” we did what was right; he was a man of integrity and uprightness of character. and He was blameless, meaning no one could find fault with the thing that he did according to the scriptures, there were no question marks on the things he said or did and if someone tried to charge him with something it wouldn’t stick. Peter said, *“sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.”* 1 Peter 3:15-16 and That’s the type of life Paul lived

Vs11

Now you no doubt see these 3 things that I’m going to draw your attention to, Paul played the tender role of a spiritual nursing mother, and the challenging role of the spiritual father as he #1 Exhorted them #2 comforted them, and #3 charged them

This word “exhorted” doesn’t mean “scolded” in this context, it’s the Greek word “paraklaeo” and literally it means to “call along side” and “to encourage”, it’s the same word that Jesus used when He said, *“Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.”* Matt 5:4 Now the word that Paul uses here for “comforted” is a word (that I can’t pronounce) that speaks of stirring one, or encouraging one to action, he consoled them and encouraged them to act upon their faith in Jesus Christ he stimulated them to action. In other words he didn’t just make them *feel* better, he made them want to *do* better, and he “charged” them, or, really this speaks of testifying of his own personal experiences. No doubt encouraging them by the Lord’s faithfulness in his own life and how he’d been in some perilous situations but God had seen him through and he encouraged them by way of personal experience to trust in the Lord with all their hearts. To lean not on their own understanding, but rather in all their ways acknowledge Him and He would direct their paths. and Pointed to his own life as an example of how they were live there own.

Vs12

Walk worthy of God, or live your life in such a way as to accurately reflect God’s heart, and His character, and His thoughts and mindset on a given situation. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, and what was His mindset? Phil 2:3-4 *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”* Such is the mind of Christ; such is the lifestyle of the one who’s been *approved by God*. Who calls you into His kingdom and glory, that word “calls” is a verb that’s in the present tense meaning that it’s a continual presently happening calling. God is continually calling you into His presence, into His Kingdom, into His glory, to lead a life of purity, and holiness, in sensitive obedience to all of His will for your life that you might lead a life “approved by God.”

This morning if you’re here and you don’t know Jesus Christ you need to know that God is calling out to you. Calling you to come out from among the world and be separate unto Him, God’s not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But there’s only

one way to everlasting life in the presence of the Father, Jesus said, "I'm the way the truth and the life and no one come to the Father but by Me." He alone paid the penalty for your sin upon the altar of the cross, and He alone arose the 3rd to offer you justification before the Father. I urge you this morning quit kicking against the goads, surrender to Christ.