

# Christlike Character: 1 Thessalonians 2

**Introduction:** Last week we discussed the Paul's love and remembrance of the brethren in Thessalonica, their faith, love and hope. We considered how they were chosen by God when the gospel was proclaimed in power. There was a beautiful cause and effect - God embraced them and began to sanctify them all. The whole community heard the word of God and were witnesses to a changed people. They now served King Jesus. Today we'll continue to consider the character of both Paul and the brethren.

## 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12:

- **1-6:** Paul's Message:
  - Paul preached the gospel, boldly, in a rough atmosphere. He was mistreated in Philippi and declared the gospel in the midst of conflict in Thessalonica.
  - He spoke about the manner in which they brought the truth:
    - It wasn't motivated by error, impurity or an attempt to deceive.
    - His aim was to please God, not man. God was witness and tested their hearts.
    - They didn't use flattery or have hidden agendas. His goal wasn't to receive glory.
- I especially take note of this as a minister. They say "you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." However, there's a balance between being kind and encouraging (for example) and using flattering words. Want to have a good conversation with someone? We're told, "Just ask them questions! Get a person to talk about themselves. Everyone likes to talk about themselves." When does it turn into a way to break the ice vs. manipulating someone? You can feed into someone's ego as well. Is that good? "Well, it got their attention and now they like talking to me!" True, but is that right to do? What makes a person choose such a path? Why not take the path of least resistance? Why not twist the truth a bit to ease the awkwardness or avert their anger? Why not package it in such a way to bring personal glory? Why not take a "little" advantage? Because, after all, people don't like to hear what we have to say. They don't like to be corrected. They don't like to think about eternal consequences. They don't like pain. It's easier to tell people what they want to hear. It's easier to blend in. It's easier to drink the kool-aid and use the same phrases as those around you. People are naive and can be fooled. People can be led astray, honestly, quite easily. Brethren, we can justify a lot of things, but it doesn't make it right. Preachers need to hear this first and foremost, but so does everyone else. (**Micah 2:6,11** "Do not preach"—thus they preach— "one should not preach of such things; disgrace will not overtake us . . . *If a man should go about and utter wind and lies, saying, "I will preach to you of wine and strong drink," he would be the preacher for this people!*) Also see **Micah 3:5, 11**.
  - Paul acted so because he knew that God was a witness to his heart. Paul, like those in Thessalonica, was motivated by a hope in Jesus Christ.
- Brethren, what do we have to offer the world? You know, every which way I look around, it seems like we're in the minority. We're in the minority to the world. We're in the minority to the religious world. Our music is different. We don't have official programs. Our structure is different. We spend our money differently. Our preaching (picking on myself) isn't anything to write home about when compared to all the speakers out there. It can tempt you, at

times, to want to change. But brethren, at least for me . . . unless God's word changes, neither will I. You know what we have to offer others? Jesus. And we try to keep anyone or thing from getting in the way of the cross. Jesus, our Savior, knew something about integrity. He knew something about truth and how highly valuable it is.

- **7-12: Paul's Character**

- He served them like a caring mother in gentleness.
  - To Paul, there was no concept of teaching the word without living it. To share the gospel is to be ready to share yourself. It's practical. He didn't burden them, and so, he worked hard night and day.
- He acted like a father.
  - He encouraged them to rise to the calling of God in Jesus Christ. We need to remember that, while sympathy is a part of christianity, pampering is not. We need to remind each other what God expects and what we're capable of doing for the Lord in His Kingdom.
  - We need to see this in the Lord's family. People who are responsible. People who can provide. People who encourage one another to not give up. People hold you accountable in a lovely way. People who have your back. People who will walk the walk. Brethren, we don't always see this in the world. So many haven't seen it in their families. They need to see it in the church.

**1 Thessalonians 2:13-20:**

- **13-16: The Word.**

- What are we talking about? We're talking about the word of God. Listen, without it we're really in a mess. Why? Because it's the truth. It comes from God. It does away with human reasoning. It gives us an objective standard.
  - Why is the world in a mess?
  - Why can't we agree on abortion?
  - Why are there so many religions?
  - Why do people feel lost?
  - Why do as a people lack trust?
  - **Because we have no objective truth.**
    - Why is there division within the Christian community? Because we don't handle this objective truth with honor and respect.
- It's at work in us. We've said it before and will say it again - we can't be "head only" Christians. It's got to work in our hearts as well. It's got to be implanted, as James wrote. God wants to see us being led by the Spirit. He wants to see Himself in us all. We should be producing godliness.
  - However, notice we've come back to suffering. We've part of allowing God to dwell in us is to practice love like He did. And brethren, people who love get hurt. People who love, suffer. Remember how we said we want everyone's eyes fixed on Jesus earlier? Not only do they see a Lord who respects authority and truth, but something else. He knew something about suffering as well. This is who we want the world to see. We want them to fix their eyes on Jesus.
    - People who take the time to see Jesus going outside the city to the cross can't get the image out of their mind. The image leads to action. The action

sends you in the same direction as Jesus, as the Hebrew writer put it, "So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through His own blood. Therefore let us go to Him outside the camp and bear the reproach He endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come." **Hebrews 13:12-14**

- **17-19:** Brotherly love.
  - Jesus does something to our hearts. What's that? He enlarges them! I'm always encouraged by how Paul writes. For example:
    - **2 Corinthians 6:3-13**. It's interesting how many times you read of suffering and brotherly love in the NT. Where does this all come from?
    - **1 John 4:7-12**. We've ultimately come to understand this in Jesus Christ. We see Him living in one another. To love Christ is to suffer. To love Christ is to love one another, beloved.