

## **The Church and The Blessed Hope** **“The Marks of A Model Ministry”** **I Thessalonians 2:1-12**

**Introduction** - In chapter 1 of I Thessalonians we were introduced to “*A Model Church*.” It was an *elect church*, an *evangelical church* and an *expectant church*. Now in chapter 2 we go from “*A Model Church*” to “*A Model Ministry*” from Paul the evangelist, to Paul the Pastor.

In chapter 1, Paul was giving his commotion. In chapters 2 & 3 Paul is giving his vindication.

- *Why?* Paul was under attack from the unbelieving Jews!
- *What?* To undermine his authority and to discredit him and the gospel.
- *What?* Satan always attacks God’s servants. Don’t let Satan rip you off. If you’re a spiritual leader, make sure there’s no truth to the slander. **Illustration** - “*Be above reproach.*”

Why was it important that Paul defend himself? He didn’t do it for selfish reasons, but because of the truth he preached and the future of the church! But “*all things work together for good*”....out of Paul’s vindication, we discover the marks of a true or model servant of Jesus Christ!

### **I. A Faithful Steward vv. 1-6**

The word *steward* does not occur in the text, but the concept is clear. We see it in verse 4 in the phrase, “*we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel.*” Paul often used this picture to express either his “*sense of privilege*” in having the gospel committed to him or his “*sense of responsibility*” to be faithful to preach the true gospel.

#### **1. Paul’s critics attacked the manner of his ministry. vv. 1-2**

- They said his ministry was *worthless* and *irrelevant*. Satan says the same today.
- Paul said no. vs. 1.
- Paul makes it clear that his ministry was **open**, “*as ye know*”(see vv. 1, 5, 9, 10) and **bold**, willing to suffer.

Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica had been public. It was exercised in the open before God and human beings, for he had nothing whatever to hide. 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! We need more transparency and openness of this kind today. - John Stott

#### **2. Paul’s critics attacked his message. vs. 3**

- “Our exhortation or preaching was not of deceit.” vs. 3
- They said he’s not preaching the truth!
- How do we know? Answer - “The Bible”

### 3. They attacked his motives.

- “Uncleanliness” - The Greek word means “impurity, uncleanliness”. It can refer to sexual uncleanliness. The NIV renders it impure motives, i.e. ambition; pride; greed; popularity. Sadly it’s true of many so called servants of Christ.

### 4. They attacked Paul’s methods. vs. 3

- “Nor in guile” - “to bait a hook.”
- They said, “Paul is just trying to trick you.”
- His methods are devious.
- So many today! They conceal the cost of discipleship and offer fraudulent blessings!

Paul makes it clear that his *message* was *true*, his *motives* were *pure* and his *methods* were *open* and *above board*. He was a faithful steward of the gospel. vs. 4

*What is a steward?* A steward owns nothing, but is entrusted with everything that belongs to his master.

**Illustration** - Joseph in the household of Potiphar. Gen. 39 It speaks of *privilege, responsibility and sacred trust*.

For the minister and every believer, it’s the Word of God and the gospel message. It’s given to us as a “treasure,” your Bible. The most important quality in a steward is faithfulness!

*“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”* I Corinthians 4:1-2

“The steward is the trustee and dispenser of another person’s goods. So the preacher is a steward of God’s mysteries, that is, of the self-revelation which God has entrusted to men and which is now preserved in the Scriptures. The Christian preacher’s message, therefore, is derived not directly from the mouth of God, as if he were a prophet or apostle, nor from his own mind, like the false prophets, nor undigested from the minds and mouths of other men, like the babbler, but from the once revealed and now recorded Word of God, which he is a privileged steward.

Let me use a homely illustration. The Englishman’s favourite breakfast dish is eggs and bacon. We will suppose that a certain householder issued his steward eggs and bacon, with instructions to dispense them to the household for breakfast on four successive mornings. On Monday morning the steward threw them into the garbage can and gave them fish instead. That is *contradiction*, and his master was angry. On Tuesday morning he gave them eggs only, but not bacon. That is *subtraction*, and his master was angry again. On Wednesday morning he gave them eggs and bacon and sausages. That is *addition*, and his master was still angry. But in the end, on Thursday morning, he gave him the eggs and bacon - nothing else, nothing less, nothing more, and his master was well pleased with him at last! - John Stott

## What makes a man a faithful steward?

1. A sense of responsibility to God!
2. A high view of scripture!

Paul had that! vs. 4-6

1. *God had “approved him”* vs. 4, allowed of God(KJV). We speak as messengers approved by God (NLT). It’s literally “to test and find genuine.” God tested Paul and found Him fit!
2. *God had entrusted him* vs. 4 - “to be entrusted with the gospel” (NLT)
3. *God was the person he was trying to please* vs. 4 - “our purpose is to please God, not people, He alone examines the motives of our hearts.” (NLT)

*So, tested by God, approved by God, trusted by God, and seeking to please God!* The marks of a model minister! The secret of true service is God-centered. Is yours?

Again Paul with a series of negatives defends his ministry. vv. 5-6

- *Flattering Words*, vs. 5 - Paul was not a smooth talking preacher who tried to flatter people to gain influence over them.
- *Cloak of Covetousness*, vs. 5 - God know’s he’s my witness. “ Put on a mask to cover up greed.” Prosperity faith teaches! 1 Tim. 6:5
- *Nor of men sought we glory*, vs. 6 - All ministry must be done for the glory of God!

## II. A Gentle Mother, vv. 7-8

If the focus of a steward is *faithfulness*, then the chief mark of a mother is *gentleness*. It’s amazing that a man as masculine and strong as Paul would use a feminine metaphor! vs. 7

Paul was an apostle, yet he used his authority with:

1. **Gentleness**, vs. 7
2. **Love**, vs. 8
3. **Sacrifice**, vs. 8

We all need to help the babies grow!

### **III. A Concerned Father, vv. 9-12**

**1. His Work, vs. 9** - unselfishness - Paul gave up his rights!

**2. His Walk, vs. 10**

- Holy - devout, so pleasing to God.
- Justly or Righteous, in dealing with people
- Unblameably, his public reputation

**3. His Words, vv. 11-12**

- Exhorted, to encourage
- Comforted
- Charged, out of his own experience with God!

vs. 12, His fatherly concern. A worthy walk.

The church is a family. The household of God! We all need to do our part to help the children grow!

• **Faithful Stewards**

• **Gentle Mothers**

• **Concerned Fathers**