

The Character of an Effective Ministry to a Pagan Culture

“A Model Ministry Through an Effective Minister”

I Thessalonians 2:1-12

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Introduction

All of us desire to minister effectively for the Lord Jesus Christ – however, what are the marks of an effective ministry?

We have been talking about how to minister effectively by applying 1st Century truth to our current context and environment without compromising that truth or marginalizing our impact.

It is our hope that the faithful application of this truth will have the same *essential nature and effect* in our cultural context that it did in Paul’s even though the outer trappings and results (application/methods) must be viewed through a 21st century lens.

The Apostle Paul had such a ministry to a group of New Testament believers in Thessalonica. We know that his ministry was effective because he stated that at the end of the day when all the facts had been considered, his visit among them had had been fruitful and profitable for the Lord.

The description of Paul’s ministry in I Thessalonians 2 reveals the essence or heart of this kind of ministry to be the faithful proclamation of God’s Word. At the end of the day – in spite of immense struggle and in the face of incredible opposition – Paul opened his mouth and proclaimed the truth accurately and attractively and there was much permanent and abiding fruit.

What was it that marked the declaration of the message and the character of Paul’s ministry among the Thessalonians? If we can identify these marks and model them, they become for us essential prerequisites to a fruitful and effective ministry in our own day and cultural context.

I. Effective Ministry must Model Sincerity and Authenticity – Because We Desire to Please God and not Men (2:1-4)

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, ask you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. (NASB)

A. Negatively – we are to avoid error, impurity, and deceit in our preaching.

Paul had come to the Thessalonians and exhorted them to heed the gospel and they turned from idols to serve the living God and wait for Christ's appearing from heaven!

In delivering this message, Paul wanted the Thessalonians to know certain things about his ministry and his message that had had such an effect on their lives during his time among them. These are the things that must mark our lives and ministries today.

1. Our _____ must be grounded in truth (2:3)
Our exhortation was not of deceit. . .
2. Our _____ must be pure (2:3)
Nor of uncleanness. . .
3. Our _____ must be honest and above board (2:3)
Nor in guile. . .

B. Positively – we are to approach our preaching ministry with God-given confidence

We don't have to resort to the above because God has given us assurances that enable us to speak boldly and confidently.

1. We should rest in God's _____ because we have been tested. (2:4)
But we were allowed of God . . .
2. We should remember God's _____ because we have been entrusted (2:4)
to be put in trust with the gospel. . .
3. We should remember God's _____ because we will give an account.
not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

Transition: *If we are going to model effective ministry we must be sincere and authentic striving to please God and not men. However, there is a second mark that must be found in our ministry –*

II. **Effective Ministry must Model Selflessness and Sacrifice – Because We Love Those We Serve more than We Love Ourselves (2:5-8)**

For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed – God is witness – nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. (NASB)

A. **We must reject self-serving Motives and Methods (2:5-6)**

1. No _____ (2:5)
...For neither at any time used we flattering words. .
2. No _____ for _____ (2:5)
...nor a cloak of covetousness. . .
3. No Self-Promoting (2:6)
...Nor of men sought we glory. . .

B. **We must reflect selflessness and tenderness in Ministry (2:7-8)**

1. Our Ministry must be marked by _____ (2:7)
...But we were gentle among you. . .
2. Our Ministry must spring from _____ and _____ of Heart (2:7)
...as a nurse cherisheth her children. . .
3. Our Ministry must reflect _____ (2:8)
...we were willing to impart our lives . . .because you were dear unto us.

Transition: *Paul's ministry was effective because he was sincere and authentic striving to please God and not men – AND – because he modeled selfless sacrifice loving the people more than himself. However, there is a final element to Paul's model that made his ministry effective.*

III. **Effective Ministry must Model Integrity and Edification – Because We Want to Provoke Others to Obedient Living (2:9-12)**

For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. (NASB)

A. **We Must Avoid Being a Burden – Be Diligent in Responsibility (2:9)**

. . . You remember our labor and travail – because we would not be chargeable unto any of you.

B. **We Must Set a Good Example – Be Faithful in Integrity (2:10)**

. . . You are witnesses – how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you. . .

1. _____ – speaks of his devotion to God (inner heart life)
2. _____ – speaks of his uprightness or righteous conduct to other men
3. _____ – speaks of his testimony before the gainsayers/enemies

C. **We Must Impart Good Instruction – Be Fervent in Edification (2:11)**

. . . As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you as a father does his children. . .

1. We _____ and exhorted you.
2. We _____ and corrected you.
3. We _____ upon you the importance of meeting the standard of God in His Word.

Conclusion:

Why go through all of this? What was the end goal? That these Thessalonians would do two things summed up in one statement – Walk Worthy of their Calling from God – Live in Obedience to the Gospel!

1. They were to stop reflecting in their conduct the character of the World out of which they had been called!
2. Instead, they were to reflect by their conduct the character of the One who had called them – God!