

# “THE LEADER’S SACRED TRUST”

**Text:** I Thessalonians 2:1-13

**Subject:** Truth That Produces A Healthy Leader’s Heart

## Introduction

1. Acts 17:1-15 records the founding of the church in Thessalonica (on Paul’s 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey).
2. Paul ministered there for only a short time (yet the Lord did a great work in just 3 weeks).
3. Paul had to leave Thessalonica and was unable to return (he was smuggled out in peril of his life)
4. Paul sent Timothy to see how things were going, and then sent I Thessalonians from Corinth in response to Timothy’s report.
5. Paul’s purpose (for I Thess.) was to encourage the saints and assure them of his love.
6. II Thessalonians was written a few months later to motivate believers to be steadfast in the midst of trial and persecution (and live “ready” in light of the second coming of Jesus).

(First Thess. Ch 2 has two distinct sections)

- ◆ In V. 1-13, God gives us medicine (or preventive care) to be spiritually healthy leaders.
- ◆ In V. 14-20, God shows us how the believers suffered (with faithfulness)

(Notice God’s Wisdom Through Paul To Us)

## **I. Healthy Leaders Look Beyond The Immediate (v. 1)**

(v. 1) *“For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain.”*

Question: How many of you have ever wondered just how much good you are doing?

Question: How many of you have ever wondered if your praying or giving or serving or teaching really makes a difference?

- ◆ The word “vain” in (v.1) is KENOS which means “empty” or “failure”.
- ◆ Paul says, *“Our service to you was not in vain, not empty, not a failure.”*

(In Other Words)

- ◆ The enemy was taunting Paul – that he wasted his time in Thessalonica.
- ◆ The enemy insinuated that Paul frittered his time away in serving God.
- ◆ The enemy tried to discourage Paul – to drop out and spend his life on selfish (me-centered temporary gains).

(And The Same Fiery Darts Come Your Way)

- ◆ “It’s vain for you to seek first the kingdom, spend time in prayer, get wisdom in the Word, pay tithes of all, witness to your friends, forgive your offenders, hold up your leader’s hands, serve in your local church and keep going when you feel like giving up”.
- ◆ “You’re wasting your time worshiping God, reading good books, feeding the homeless, supporting the missionaries, and living in light of eternity.”
- ◆ “You’re wasting your time living right while others party on with no regard for God or the cross where Jesus died.”

## II. **Healthy Leaders Leave Their Baggage at the Cross (v. 2)**

(v. 2) *“We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you His gospel in spite of strong opposition.”*

Question: How many of you have ever been insulted or offended in any way?

(Listen To Paul’s Words Here)

***“I have been insulted and suffered in Philippi”*** (Which means two things):

#1. The word **“insulted”** is HYBRISTHENTES which means “treated with haughty oppression.”

#2. The word **“suffering”** refers to Paul’s physical pain when his feet were fastened in the stocks after scourging in Philippi.

Question: How did Paul respond to the abuse?

Answer: *“Nevertheless we dared to tell you the gospel in spite of strong opposition.”*

(In Fact)

***“God helped us to continue to minister in spite of insult, suffering, abuse and opposition.”***

- ◆ Paul’s painful experience in Philippi could have made him hesitate to minister in Thessalonica!

(What’s The Discovery Here?) That...

1. Your past pain doesn’t have to **rob you** of future opportunities.
2. Your past disappointments (in Philippi) **have no power** to keep you from miracles (in Thessalonica).
3. Your past offenses have **no authority** to make you critical, cynical, judgmental or sour.
4. Your past wounds and rejections were intended by satan to **sideline you** (but intended by God to **prepare you** for future service).

Question: What’s the secret to it all? Answer: (v. 2) **“With the help of God.”**

(In Other Words)

- ◆ Time doesn’t heal all wounds (if time heals, then God is not necessary).

**“With The Help Of God”** (Means):

- ◆ God graced Paul with supernatural power & grace to stay sweet, be a good forgiver and keep the touch of God upon his life.
- ◆ And the God of Paul is the same today – **to pour grace into your heart** (if you'll only respond God's way to your previous pains)

(Only two choices when you hurt)

- #1. Run **from God** and claim that God isn't fair (or)
- #2. Run **to God** and find grace and help in time of need.

### III. **Healthy Leaders Live Under a Sacred Trust (v. 3-6)**

(V.3) *"For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you."*

(V. 4) *"On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts."*

(V. 5) *"You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed – God is our witness."*

(V. 6) *"We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else."*

Question: Why does God list Paul's motivation of heart?

Answer: To show us how to "chill out" and "rest" in the Lord while we serve and live.

Question: Why is this so important?

Answer: Because (in V. 4) we've all been "entrusted" with the gospel which means:

- ◆ You are a "**steward**" of what God has given you!
- ◆ You have the privilege of serving God in His Kingdom!
- ◆ You (therefore) have no need to ever use trickery (or deception) in ministry.

Here's How A "Trusted" Leader Lives:

1. "You have faith in the **Word** to do its job! "Our preaching was not from error" Which means the gospel is from God and without fault or mistake.
2. You serve with "**pure**" motives! Which means you are not motivated by selfish reasons.
3. You never lower yourself to use "**trickery**"! Which means deception is never an option in your life of service.
4. You do not serve to "**please men**"! Which means you refuse to accommodate the message to appease the feelings of those listening.
5. You avoid all "**flattery**"! Which implies manipulation to achieve personal gain.
6. You possess "**no mask to cover up greed**"! Which means Paul never put a price tag on his service.
7. You seek **no "praise from men"**!

Which means true leaders need no applause to be motivated and want no personal glory for themselves!

Fact:

◆ Paul was not concerned with his own image – but with imaging Christ in his ministry (more concerned about **his responsibilities** than **his privileges**).

#### IV. Healthy Leaders Understand the Principle of Endurance (v. 7,8)

(V. 7) *“As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.”*

(V. 8) *“We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.”*

◆ There can be no more tender language possible than this.

◆ This language (in V. 7) removes the “right” to be harsh or rude to people.

Remember ...

◆ Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica had roused some violent opposition and slander (yet how did Paul respond?)

1. He retaliated by praying for his accusers (and)
2. He refused to war with flesh and blood (carnal) means.

In Other Words

◆ Paul could have wielded a heavy hand of “apostolic authority” – but instead he chose to **be gentle as a mother holding a newborn baby!**

What’s The Revelation Here?

- #1. True spiritual leaders have learned to bear with the **weaknesses** and imperfections of other people!
- #2. True spiritual leaders are **patient** in the face of criticism (as a mother is patient with a newborn baby).
- #3. True spiritual leaders are willing to **endure** – for the sake of those who they are serving.

(Notice V. 8)

*“We don’t just share the gospel with you, but also our very lives as well.”* (Which means):

◆ We don’t just love the Word, **but we love those to whom we give the Word!**

In Other Words

- ◆ Vital Christian service will always be **costly!**
- ◆ Self-sacrifice lays at the **heart** of all Christian ministry!
- ◆ A true leader will endure much because they make themselves **vulnerable!**

## V. Healthy Leaders Accept Their Personal Limitations (v. 9)

*“Surely you remember brothers, our labor and travail; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.”*

Question: What is Paul doing here?

Answer: He answers the critics who questioned his motivation!

◆ Paul states that he worked with leather (as a tent-maker) for two reasons:

- #1. So he would not be a burden to others (and)
- #2. So he could prove that his motivation was not based on greed.

(In Other Words)

◆ A real apostle would rather “get a job” than intimidate, manipulate and pressure people for personal support.

Paul says “**Remember our toil and labor.**”

1. The word “toil” (KOPOS) means weariness or **fatigue**.
2. The word “labor” (MOCHTHOS) means **hardships**.

In Other Words

- #1. It is possible to get fatigued and weary in your continual service for the Lord (and)
- #2. It’s possible that you will face some hardships in life along the way.

Question: Are you fatigued in your labor?

Question: Are you weary because of a hardship you are dealing with?

Question: Do you live in (V. 18) where Paul says, “Satan hindered us”?

Question: Are you in a spiritual battle and you know that satan is opposing your progress – to hinder you from your fullest potential?

## VI. Healthy Leaders Live Holy Through a Repentant Spirit (v. 10-12)

(V. 10) *“You are witnesses and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we are among you who believed.”*

(V. 11) *“For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children.”*

(V. 12) *“Encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His kingdom and glory.”*

Question: What describes a healthy person on the inside?

Answer: Paul uses three words.

1. **Holy** (HOSIS) which means – being “set apart” for God.
2. **Righteous** (DIKAIOS) which means – to submit to the law of God in obedience.

3. **Blameless** (AMENPTOS) which means – without cause for reproach to those who watch us.

#### This Means

- ◆ What we **are** is more important than what we **do**!
- ◆ We must keep our **walk** before our **work**.
- ◆ We must maintain a heart and attitude of **repentance**. (Which Is...)
  1. A heart that offers **no excuse** for any inconsistent behavior.
  2. A heart that hates **every sin** that robs God of His glory.
  3. A heart that is **easily convicted** when it offends the Lord.
  4. A heart that **confesses every disobedience** that hinders our growth.
  5. A heart that never wants to cause another person to **stumble**.

#### Why Is Repentance So Important? Because...

- ◆ When you lessen the motivation for repentance, the tendency to excuse sin **increases**.
- ◆ It is only by continual repentance that the heart is kept **tender**.
- ◆ Repentance frees you from carrying **guilt** that drains the vitality out of your life.
- ◆ Without repentance you cannot be **free** from sin, restored to God and God's wrath abides on all who chose their own way over God's way.

(Romans 2:5)

*“Because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”*

#### Remember

- ◆ The more that I mourn over my sin, the more that sin loses its power to **govern** my life!!!

#### **(Hear the Good News in v. 13)**

(v. 13) *“For this cause also we thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”*

Question: What do Paul, Silas and Timothy “Thank God” for without ceasing?

Answer: They Thank God for the humility in the way the Thessalonians received the gospel.

Two revelations here:

1. **“You received the Word of God and accepted it as from God and not man.”**  
(Which means):
  - ◆ There was a humility to welcome the truth that was heard.

2. ***“The Word you received is working inside those who received it.”*** (Which means):
- ◆ Paul is ecstatic over the fact that in just three weeks in Thessalonica – he saw changed lives for those who welcomed the truth.

Notice this phrase;

*“You received the Word which **effectually works** in all who believe. (V. 13)*

- ◆ The word “works” is the verb (ENERGE) which is a present tense verb.
- ◆ This verb implies that the work is still in process.

What’s it all mean? It means...

1. **The power is God’s and the Word is His instrument.** (and)
2. To the degree that you welcome the truth, to that same degree you will be changed, healed and freed from sin.

(Remember this)

- ◆ The spectacular in church may get your attention – **but its only the Word that can change your life!**
- ◆ And change only happens when I humble myself, **and honestly answer the hard questions:**

Question: Why ask the hard questions?

Answer: Because you cannot **change** what you do not **confront!**

### **Inventory Application:**

1. Are you spiritually dry because your prayer life and Word life has been sporadic?
2. Are you anxious and hurried because of misplaced priorities?
3. Are you angry at anyone because they hurt you?
4. Are you bitter because there is someone you need to forgive?
5. Are you allowing alcohol to destroy your brain cells?
6. Are you allowing tobacco to steal oxygen out of your bloodstream?
7. Are you in a relationship that is not pushing you closer to Jesus?
8. Are you allowing pornography to pollute your thought life?
9. Are you robbing God of His rightful place in your finances?
10. Are you giving any evil reports about other people?
11. Are you critical towards your pastor or any church leadership?
12. Are you intimidating, rejecting or manipulating people who disagree with you?
13. Are you addicted to anything that’s made you a slave to it?
14. Are you unwilling to say, “I’m sorry”, “I was wrong”, or “Please forgive me”?
15. Have you lied to yourself about any of the above questions?

16. Are you more concerned about what people think (your image) than what God thinks (your condition)?
17. Was there ever a time in your life when you were closer to the Lord than you are today?
18. Are you willing to take a step now – so that God can bring change where change is needed?

### **Will You Humble Yourself (Like Paul)**

- And serve God with all your heart?
- Leave your past abuses behind you?
- Live to please God not man?
- Run to God for grace if you are weary and fatigued?
- Turn from every sin that robs God of His glory in your life?

### **Remember (To Be A Healthy Leader)**

- ◆ **Feeling bad – will make you feel good! (That's conviction)**
- ◆ **Changing your mind – will change your future. (That's choice)**
- ◆ **The more you delay – the more that you lose. (That's consequence)**

Amen  
Bill Kirk

