

## ***The Gospel Amid Opposition***

### **1Thessalonians 2:1-6**

Earliest of Paul's letters AD 54. In vision Paul saw man crying come Macedonia to help, went thru Philippi was beat imprisoned, then to Thessalonica more trouble, on to Berea w/ problems-left Tim, Silas & then on to Corinth where writes letter--w/ all the trials we'd wonder was it Gods I heard or me? From Corinth he send Tim w/ letter.

*1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, 2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition*

In spite of difficulties it wasn't in vain but worthwhile w/ many coming to faith in Christ. Our labor for Lord is never in vain...**faithfulness** is God's gold standard. **Greg Noll piecework** ...not w/ God but faithful to call is rewarded.

Gaining trust from people takes time but once you have it, it's very hard to lose. Paul proved himself by his commitment to gospel & they saw it...from mistreatment in Philippi to boldness in Thessalonica in spite of the opposition. Consistency is vital in any endeavor when seeking to succeed.

**Crops don't grow....**

Paul a great model of leadership. I envy those who are **gifted** but I **admire** those w/ character.

"If he gives me credit for being a plodder he will describe me justly. Anything beyond that will be too much. I can plod. I can persevere in any definite pursuit. To this I owe everything." **William Carey**

FB Meyer "God called him to serve in London at the same time 19 yr old Charles Spurgeon, arguably the greatest preacher who ever lived. So, despite his ability & hard work, Meyer would stand outside his church & watch the carriages flow by to Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle. Later in his life, it happened again, as G. Campbell Morgan eclipsed Meyer's success. When they spoke together at conferences, vast crowds listened to Morgan, then left when Meyer was to preach. Jealous & convicted over his bitter spirit, Meyer committed himself to pray for Morgan, reasoning that the Holy Spirit would not allow him to envy a man for whom he prayed. He was right. God enabled Meyer to rejoice in Morgan's preaching. People heard him saying: "Have you heard Campbell Morgan preach? Did you hear that message this morning? My, God is upon that man!"

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Some are reluctant servants – King **Saul** hiding in baggage at his coronation **1Sam 20:22**; Others latent leaders, dormant til God calls **Gideon** hiding out beating out *'Oh valiant warrior....go in this your strength and deliver Israel'* **Judges 6:12-14**. Some begin young **Josiah** 8 yrs old **2Ki 22:1**; others later in life **Abram** 75 yrs old **Gen 12:4**; **Moses** 80; **Caleb** 85;

Me salesman Greg Noll surfboards 15 yrs. Polishing 16 yrs quality control—telling on older guys 'dry fin layup, hatchet marks, pinholes, orange peel, pinline bleed, pigment not meet rails. I learned what to do & say & what not to do and say.

Leaders need to be sensitive to get along; peacemakers not troublemakers. Know what to say & how to say it...Acquired skill. **Barber** *'are you prepared to meet your God?'*

Wounded people often make some of best leaders. God picks choicest servants from ranks of the suffering. *'To those God uses greatly He wounds deeply'* **Ps 109:22** *For I am afflicted & needy & my heart is wounded w/in me.* **David**

Joseph son of Jacob w/ 10 older brothers--abused, mistreated & hated by them. Sold, falsely accused of rape, jailed, forgotten at age 30 2<sup>nd</sup> to Pharaoh.

**Hosea 6:1** *Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us but He will heal us; He wounded us but He will bandage us.*

God will not leave the wounded in that condition. He will not let us remain in state of perpetual self pity, poor me....10 ways to change our life-*do a good turn for one in greater need than yourself*....repeat 9 x's. **Give life away**.

Bandaged believers make good leaders—.

**Jephthah** – son of a harlot then his father married had children his 1/2 brothers drove Jephthah from the home--God made mighty deliverers in Is.

**Jesus** *'despised & rejected of men a man of sorrows & acquainted w/ grief, like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised & we did not esteem Him Is 53:3.....Zech 13:6..I was wounded in the house of my friends....Heb 5:8 Although He was a son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.*

**2Cor 1:4** *God...who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction w/ the comfort w/ which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

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A person who endures suffering builds fortitude & doesn't easily give up which creates hope which, as a leader, imparts hope to those they lead.

**Warf rats...37 min to 37 hours**

***Rom 5:3-5 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. – need to let the process work***

Paul's own physical disabilities, thorn, emotional conflicts, chiseled his character into a man of God, used by God in the lives of others. Hard times taught Paul four things a leader needs to know.

***3 For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;*** Leaders first must avoid dishonesty—the temptation to be insincere, artificial. Not using flattery or fakery to get a benefit. Saying what isn't true to gain advantage. ***Pr 29:5 A man who flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his steps. Jude 1:16....flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage. Prov 26:28 A lying tongue hates those it crushes, And a flattering mouth works ruin.***

Ministers who prey on people are **worthless shepherds** ***Zech 11:15...Rom 16:18 For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting'***

Paul had no hidden agenda or ulterior motive, didn't have to filter his speech, like a politician. Paul's intentions were always pure.

***4 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.***

Second not a man pleaser. Leaders need to get along w/ all kinds of people but not appease or pacify them. Trying to have everyone like you & be happy w/ you at all cost is a sign of weakness not strength in a leader.

***Pr 29:25 The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted---*****King Saul** was disobedient & blamed the people ***1Sam 15:24 I sinned & was disobedient because I feared the people & listened to their voice.***

Leaders decisions can sometimes please the Lord but anger some people--***but we must take that risk.*** ***Gal 1:10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond servant of Christ.*** **KLHT if can't depend on Chuck**

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People pleasers handicap ability in making Godly decisions--**Empress** mayor Jeremy Harris '1000 points of Light Award' *'wisdom is vindicated by her deeds..Matt 'I guess he was right' Don 'I admire what God had done thru you'*  
**5 For we never came w/ flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed-God is witness—6 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**

Third BG glory-girls-**gold**--avoid greed...wanting more than what God has given...striving for what others have. Creates envy in ministry. **Morgan 'No one is a complete failure until they begin disliking those who succeed'**

**2Pet 2:15 forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness prophet for hire**

WW Money has many of the characteristics of deity...money wants to claim the loyalty & love that belongs only to God, & it has the power to capture us if we're not careful. Money is a marvelous servant but a terrible master & only a disciplined devotion to God can enable us to keep Mammon in its rightful place...People who can't be trusted w/ God's wealth can't be trusted w/ God's truth.

Greed holds a person captive to many things--position, power, people--**he who dies w/ biggest bank account wins--philosophy**...Greed's evil twin is glory...self-congratulation, look at me. Conquer it by practicing simplicity.

**2Cor 11:3 But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. Lk 3:11 And he would answer and say to them, "Let the man who has two tunics share with him who has none; and let him who has food do likewise."**

Stop hoarding Start sharing, helping others. If pride is the problem seek to be unknown **Phil 2:5...have this attitude**....stop looking for praise from people or glorying in position....

If excess is the problem practice moderation & restraint **Phil 4:5 Let your gentle, unselfishness spirit be known to all people. The Lord is near Amp.....Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand KJV**

Stop trying to impress others or seeking the favor of man but seek to impress God w/ devotion to Him--His favor not your own. Self control is fruit of spirit which a servant-leader must have...**Greed is a loss of self control.**

**6.....as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.**

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Finally a leader is not to be over-bearing, authoritarian--a tyrant ...Paul as apostle could make demands, throw weight around, assert his will & church go along---He didn't abuse the position God put him in by intimidation or coercion, insisting on submission to get his way.

**But instead-Phil 1:8** *For God is my witness, how I long for you all w/ the affection of Christ Jesus. 9 And this I pray, that your love may overflow still more & more in real knowledge & all discernment, 10 so that you may discover the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere & blameless for the day of Christ; 11 having been filled w/ the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God.....convince don't command, instruct don't dictate*

Diotrephes **3Jn 9-11** *I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. 10 For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with malicious words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brothers either, and he forbids those who want to do so and puts them out of the church. 11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does what is good is of God; the one who does what is evil has not seen God.*

Paul learned leadership from Jesus. **Mk 10:42** *But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. 44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." ....*

Paul a servant to those he led not glorying in position as apostle & having others serve him. He didn't seek admiration or applause but was painfully honest about his weaknesses, failures & fears...transparent & vulnerable.

Paul a leader worth following..1 never dishonest 2 Not man pleaser but pleasing God. 3 Not given to greed. 4 Not authoritarian.