

I THESSALONIANS 2:1-6
LEADERSHIP – FAITHFULNESS

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Thessalonians chapter 2 as we continue our study through Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica. As we have seen, Thessalonica was the largest and most important city in the Roman province of Macedonia or the northern part of modern day Greece.

And when the light of God shined down upon Thessalonica, lives were transformed. They turned from their idols to worship the true and living God. And the way they lived out their faith, it was seen by many and they not only drew people to Christ through their changed lives but they also encouraged other believers in Macedonia and Achaia to continue on in the faith.

And this young church, only believers for a short time, were waiting for the return of Jesus Christ, they placed their hope in His return!

As you look at this church, these believers, how did they get so strong? Paul is going to show us as we move into I Thessalonians chapter 2. And, as we saw in our first study of this letter, how the church was born, chapter 2 I have called, it how the church grew.

And what we will see is that this is all about **LEADERSHIP!** Now don't think this message is not for you, it is. We are all leaders in one sense or another. In our homes. In our work place. In our neighborhoods. And yes, even in the church. People are watching us, they are looking up to us and they will follow us if we lead them in a way that will build them up.

Over the years as a pastor I have seen people who were not very good leaders. Yes, they wanted people to follow them, agree with them and when they didn't, the person ended up beating the people for not agreeing or following them.

Now some may argue and say that is the only way you can get people to follow you, to do what you want is to make them. I disagree. Yes, they may follow you out of fear at times, but they truly are not following you and you are not building them up.

Look at the life of Jesus. Did Jesus beat the sheep or His men to get them to follow Him? Absolutely not. Jesus was a servant leader and He got people to follow Him by showing them the way they were to walk, where they were to go. You see, His followers went where their leader or Jesus went first! What a great example for us to follow.

Paul, Silas and Timothy were leaders who helped these young believers to grow and be leaders themselves. So, we are going to look at several points here in regards to leaders that we can apply to our lives and help us to lead in a godly way.

As we are going to see, there is always the problem of abuse in leaders. We see that today as well as back in Paul's day. Thus, Paul is trying to instill in them what godly leadership looks like. Listen to what W. Neil has to say. He wrote,

There has probably never been such a variety of religious cults and philosophic systems as in Paul's day. East and West had united and intermingled to produce an amalgam of real piety, high moral principles, crude superstition and gross license. Oriental mysteries, Greek philosophy, and local godlings competed for favour under the tolerant aegis [guidance] of Roman indifference. "Holy Men" of all creeds and countries, popular philosophers, magicians, astrologers, crack-pots, and cranks; the sincere and the spurious [false], the righteous and the rogue [rascal], swindlers and saints, jostled and clamoured for the attention of the credulous [gullible] and the skeptical.

- Cited in Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, p. 68

So, I believe it is important that we understand what God has to say in regard to leadership. And please understand that this is not going to be an exhaustive list of leadership skills, but they are very important ones!

With that as our background, let's begin reading in I Thessalonians chapter 2, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this morning.

I THESSALONIANS 2

VERSE 1

Make no mistake about it, discouragement can stop you from working, from serving God. You see no results and thus, "What is the use. Nothing is happening, I am giving up!" We may not speak those words but we probably felt that way before.

Maybe you heard of the story of the mom who tried to wake-up her son for church. And he remained in bed. She tried again and this time he pulled his covers over his head.

She went into the room and said to her son, "Son, you have to get up. It is time to go to church!"

And he said back to her, "I am not going to church!"

"Why?" his mother asked.

He told her, "Nobody cares for me. They won't talk to me. I am not going!"

His mother said to him, "Son, you have to go to church!"

Again, he spoke up and said, "Give me one good reason that I **HAVE** to go to **CHURCH!**"

She said to her son, "Because you are the pastor!"

Now we laugh at that but I hate to admit that it happens more often than you think. Not with the mom telling her son to go to church, but you know what I mean. These numbers may be a little high, but you get the idea that it is tough out there. One site stated these following two points, “At any given time, 75% of pastors in America want to quit. (Church Resource Ministries - 1998) [and] More than 2000 pastors are leaving the ministry each month. (Marble Retreat Center 2001)”

I am coming up on 22 years as pastor here at Calvary Chapel of Manitowoc and for 15 of those years I worked full time outside the church as well. Have I been discouraged over the years? You bet I have. Then what kept me here all these years? I am not smart! No, it really is very simple.

God called me here to Manitowoc and thus, I know what I am supposed to do, be the pastor of this church. I remember when I first came up here, Joe Samz asked a very important question and one that was heavy on his heart and I am sure on the hearts of the members of this church.

He asked me in a question and answer time here at the church, “Joe, how long are you going to stay here?” And I understood exactly what he was saying. He was saying, “Joe, if you find a bigger church, maybe a church that will pay you more so you don’t have to work outside the church, are you going to leave us?”

And my response has not changed in those 22 years. I said to Joe and the rest of the people there that night, “God has called me to be the shepherd of this church and I am not leaving unless He moves me.”

And here is the reality regarding that. If God has called you to be a shepherd over a group of sheep, you don't go looking for bigger flocks of sheep, you stay with the ones that God has entrusted to you. That is what I have been doing for the past 22 years and it is what I will continue to do. Some of you may be saying, "Praise God!" and others may be saying, "Oh my God!" But I am here, sorry.

And this is true for all of us as we lead in our homes, jobs, wherever. We don't go looking for a better wife or husband or children or this or that. I guess some do. But that is not of God.

Paul wanted these believers, who were struggling with persecution and difficulty that their "**coming to [them] was not in vain.**" No, God was working big time in the midst of the difficulty that was going on. And Paul was encouraged. Silas was encouraged. Timothy was encouraged. And they wanted to encourage the believers in Thessalonica.

Remember what we were told in I Thessalonians chapter 1, "**For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit . . . For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.**" I Thessalonians 1:5-6, 8-9.

So, their work in Thessalonica was not in vain, it was not empty!

J. Vernon McGee sums this up like this. He wrote,

“In vain” means empty, without results. Paul says, “When we came to you, it was not just some theoretical proposition that we presented to you. We didn’t come to declare to you something that was new and novel and which had no effect on you at all. We didn’t just entertain you for a few days and then leave you.” Paul’s work was not in vain; it was not empty. When he came to Thessalonica, it rocked a great many folk, bringing many to a saving knowledge of Christ. And it brought a church into existence. Paul was not simply talking about a theory or a philosophy, but about something that *worked* in Thessalonica. The gospel walked down the streets of that city, and it got into the hearts and homes and lives of men and women.

- J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible* Vol. V, p. 379

Now you may be thinking, “Well, at least they saw results. I have been doing this for years and nothing! I can’t go on like this. Why don’t I see results?”

I have felt that way and I am sure you have as well. And sometimes God shows us what He is doing and sometimes He doesn’t.

When I was working as a nurse in one of the open-heart units in Chicago I was getting frustrated. It seemed I was going through a period of time where nothing was happening. No one was asking me any questions about my faith. Everything seemed dry. No life. I was discouraged and just cried out to God!

After some time I was getting this patient back from surgery after having his coronary artery by-pass surgery and he was a pretty sick guy. He was on a machine called an Intra-aortic balloon pump as well as the usual equipment: ventilator to breath and all kinds of catheters and chest tubes.

And after I got him settled, you stayed with them one-on-one for a time, another nurse came into the room and he just started asking me questions about my faith and what I thought about things. I don't even remember how this all happened and exactly what the questions were but after about 15 minutes he looked at me and said, "Joe, you are using that balloon pump like a podium!" And I looked down and sure enough, I had my hands on each side and it was like I was teaching from the pulpit!

But that does not always happen. Sometimes it does look lifeless and when that happens people drop out, they move on, they go away. That is wrong. I know it is hard but hang in there and remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 15:58, "**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.**"

What encouraging words these are! Paul is saying that our labor, the work we do for the Lord is not empty, it is not in vain, God will accomplish what He purposes to do and our responsibility is to work! Be faithful!

Clarke put it this way as he said, "You must not only work, but you must labour – put forth all your strength; and you must work and labour in the Lord – under his direction, and by his influence; for without him you can do nothing."

Yes, we can lose sight of who we are serving, that does happen, but I don't believe that is the biggest problem for us. I think the biggest problem is as we look at situations, as we look at the work we are doing and we see no fruit, we see nothing happening and we then become discouraged and lose our hope, which causes us to stop what we are doing. As Clare Boothe Luce said, "There are no hopeless situations; there are only people who have grown hopeless about them."

Okay, I may not *SEE* what God is doing, I may not *FEEL* that God is working. Then what can I do? You can *KNOW* that God is working because His Word is telling us this truth. We must then take what we *KNOW* to be true and apply that to our lives. We must walk by faith and not by sight knowing that what we do for the Lord is not in vain!

Think of it this way. The farmer, he works the fields, he prepares them for planting and then he plants the seed into the ground.

Now he doesn't wake up the next day and expect to see fruit yet, does he? No, it takes time. You have to continue to work the land and care for it and before long you see life, but the work is not done.

You still need to watch over it, get rid of the weeds and garbage that can hamper its growth, it is a lot of work, but in the end, there is fruit that is born! The same is true for us as we serve the Lord, may we not lose sight of that, may we not give up!

This story seems to illustrate this point perfectly. We are told,

One night at dinner a man, who had spent many summers in Main, fascinated his companions by telling of his experiences in a little town named Flagstaff. The town was to be flooded, as part of a large lake for which a dam was being built.

In the months before it was to be flooded, all improvements and repairs in the whole town were stopped. What was the use of painting a house if it were to be covered with water in six months? Why repair anything when the whole village was to be wiped out?

So, week-by-week, the whole town became more and more bedraggled [unkept], more gone to seed, more woebegone [miserable]. Then he added by way of explanation: "Where there is no faith in the future, there is no power in the present."

- Halford E. Luccock, Unfinished Business

Our hope is in the Lord and thus, we rest in that. We may not see things happening but know that God is working and what we do for the Lord is **NEVER** in vain!

We need to remember that with us, with our strength, our power, our ingenuity, all things are not possible. But with God, is there anything too hard for Him to do? Of course not!

If He could create the heavens and the earth and all life, keeping things moving, He can do anything!

Thus, as we look around at this life, don't be discouraged because we know the future, we know that God is coming back, we know God is preparing new bodies for our spirit and soul to dwell in that will never fade away, and thus, we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord!

That should be a comfort to us, it is a promise from God that the work we are doing will accomplish what it is intended to do, what God wants it to do.

Don't let life discourage you in the work, let God and His Word encourage you in the work!

VERSE 2

This is interesting because Paul just spoke of encouraging them, that the work was not in vain and then he talks about suffering. I don't know about you, but usually suffering brings discouragement, and yet, Paul is speaking of encouragement in spite of the suffering!

Paul reminds them how they "**were spitefully treated at Philippi**" and they probably carried the scars from the beatings they encountered there.

Not only were Paul and Silas severely beaten in Philippi but they were also thrown in prison for their faith. And it was not a nice place, we might call this a maximum-security prison.

Not only that, but their feet were placed in stocks which Bruce comments on by saying, “These stocks had more than two holes for legs, which could thus be forced apart in such a way as to cause the utmost discomfort and cramping pain.”

Thus, Paul wanted them to remember not only how they looked when they arrived in Thessalonica, but the fruit that was born from their ministry there. So physically speaking they were hurting and bore the marks of the whipping they received in Philippi, as I have said.

Secondly, we see the fruit that was born there in Thessalonica as they brought the Gospel message to a city that was in darkness.

“The word rendered *conflict* (*agon*) contains a metaphor drawn from the athletic games or the arena. It means the place of contest, and then the contest itself – a race, a struggle, a battle. Such a conflict always involves intense exertion and strenuous, persistent effort to overcome the determined opposition or the dangerous antagonist.” (Hiebert)

So what does this have to do with being a leader? It has everything to do with being a leader! You see, people are watching you, how you are living out your faith. And as they watch are unbelievers drawn to Christ by what they see? Are believers encouraged by what they see?

For Paul, in spite of the beatings, being put in jail for his faith, they “**were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.**”

Nothing was going to stop them from sharing their faith, not even persecution. The enemy was trying to keep them from bringing forth the Gospel message and instead of giving in, dropping out, they had a boldness from God, they were empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak forth the Word of God!

We see this boldness to speak forth the Gospel in Acts chapter 4 as Peter and John are arrested by the Jewish religious leaders for their faith! And we are told in Acts 4:13-15, **“Now when they saw *the boldness of Peter and John*, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.”**

They saw Jesus in Peter and John and even though they were uneducated and untrained men in the things of God, they could not argue against their witness!

We continue on with this story of Peter and John in Acts 4:23-31, **“And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: ‘Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: “Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.” For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants *that with all boldness they may speak Your word*, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.’ And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.*”**

They spoke the Word of God with **BOLDNESS** because they were **FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT!** That should just make sense. If we try to accomplish these things in the power of our might, we will fail. And when persecution comes, we will run.

So, Paul, Silas and Timothy, as leaders were **ENCOURAGING** the believers in Thessalonica, and in the midst of **PERSECUTION THEY SPOKE FORTH THE WORD OF GOD WITH BOLDNESS!** Again, encouragement in the midst of suffering!

VERSE 3

We think we have problems with people ripping others off, making profits in the name of God. There were problems back in Paul's day as well and we see Paul speak of "**deceit**" and this word carries with it the idea **ERROR!**

Isn't it amazing how someone can speak something that is a lie with such conviction that people believe it! I don't know if any of you have seen the television show, the Carbonaro Effect? Of this show we are told,

"The Carbonaro Effect features Michael Carbonaro, magician by trade and prankster at heart. In each new episode, Michael performs ingenious tricks on unsuspecting members of the public, all caught on hidden camera. Watch jaws drop when he causes a car to disappear into thin air or turns a tuft of hair into a living puppy. Whether posing as a coffee shop barista, museum curator or seemingly unremarkable store clerk, Michael Carbonaro's effect on people will leave you laughing out loud with his bewildering and thrilling illusions."

He is good at fooling people and getting them to believe the impossible. He made this one guy believe there was a goldfish in the bowl that was hiding even though it was not there! Not at all! And he does it with a smile on his face! That is like religious charlatans, they trick people into believing the most ridiculous thing.

Now some may argue, “Don’t you do the same?” No I don’t. You see, I have evidence to support what I believe and that is the difference and that is what Paul is saying here. He had the truth, he was not speaking forth errors. God gave to Paul the Gospel message and it is truth!

Paul also speaks of “uncleanness” and I think he is speaking of sexual impurity or uncleanness. Now that may seem strange but when you understand what was going on in Paul’s day in the name of religion, it makes perfect sense. One writer put it like this,

“In Paul’s day many of the mystery religions and Greek cults practiced and even exalted sexual perversion. Those religions were very popular because in most of them the primary religious experience centered on the cult adherents having sex with a ritual temple prostitute or the cult leader. Temple orgies were not uncommon.

Sexual intercourse had such a central role in those pagan religions because the members believed that when one had sex with a male leader or female prostitute - those supposedly closest to the gods - the individual connected with the deities. Therefore, through fornication they supposedly achieved some sort of mystical or metaphysical union with the gods. Thus wicked, unscrupulous leaders would seek converts for the purpose of having a sexual encounter with them.”

- John MacArthur

Anything that can hook people to their cause was accepted and we see that today as well. These leaders of these false religions also took advantage of the people, having sex with them and Paul wants them to know that he is not unclean, he did not travel down that path! And there are even more problems with these false teachers that are bringing forth a false Jesus and a false gospel.

Paul then speaks of “**guile**” or “**deceit**” and this word carries with it the idea of “baiting a hook.”

Think about baiting a hook, what are you trying to do? You are trying to trick the fish into going after the bait and get hooked on your line! Paul is saying that when he came to Thessalonica he did not try tricking them to draw them into his teachings, his beliefs.

One writer gives us some insight to what was going on in Paul’s day and probably why some were a little suspicious of what Paul was doing. He wrote,

The city of Thessalonica sat on the Egnatian Way, the famous highway that went east to west through Macedonia. Thessalonica was also an important port and a melting pot city with cultures from all over the world.

There were a staggering variety of religions and religious professionals in Thessalonica. In this city, you would find the worship of the gods of the Olympian pantheon, especially Apollo, Athena, and Hercules.

There were the native Greek mystery religions, celebrating Dionysis and the sex and drinking cult. The Greek intellectual and philosophical traditions were also represented.

There were shrines to many Egyptian gods: Isis, Sarapis, Anubis.

Also present were the Roman State cults that deified the political heroes of Rome.

There were also the Jewish people and the God-fearing Gentiles.

Most of these religions were missionary minded, and sought to spread their faith using itinerant evangelists and preachers. Most of these missionaries were opportunists, who took everything they could from their listeners, and then moved on to find someone else to support them.

“There has probably never been such a variety of religious cults and philosophic systems as in Paul’s day . . . ‘Holy men’ of all creeds and countries, popular philosophers, magicians, astrologers, crack-pots, and cranks; the sincere and the spurious, the righteous and the rogue, swindlers and saints, jostled and clamored for the attention of the believing and the skeptical.”

(Neil, cited in Morris)

- David Guzik

I think we have probably surpassed that today as so many try to get people to take the bait of their false teaching! In II Corinthians 2:17 we see Paul speak of this once again as he wrote, **“For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.”**

The Greek word for **“peddling”** speaks of “a huckster, a con artist or street hawker who cleverly deceived unwary buyers into purchasing a cheap imitation of the real thing.” Remember, “Coke, the real thing?”

Jesus is the real thing and yet so many are peddling a false Jesus, a false Gospel while Paul was promoting the ***TRUTH!***

When I was a young Christian, when there were cassette audio tapes out there, as well as albums, I listened to a man named Mike Warnke. He had the most amazing story of how he came to Christ and what he was involved in prior coming to Christ. Of this man, we are told,

When Mike Warnke shared his lurid past as an army brat, drug addict and high priest of Satan, we were mesmerized. Mike's book, *The Satan Seller* was in high demand. Kidnapped into the church of Satan after being shot, Warnke was saved by Jesus Christ. He came clean about baby sacrifices, summoning evil spirits, orgiastic perversions, rapes, Illuminati conspiracies, very long fingernails, ritual slayings, and magic spells.

Mike, who billed himself a "Christian comedian," put out spoken word albums about his conversion and about the dangers of Halloween, among other things, selling millions of books and records. Warnke was by far the coolest testament to Christ's awesome powers. Defying the powers of darkness, he told his story to Oprah, Larry King, and more.

More than mere witness for Jesus, Warnke was internationally renown as the foremost authority on Satanism and the occult. He was a trusted advisor in law enforcement on Satanic crime and ritual abuse. . . .

[But there was a problem, a big problem with his stories]

All his friends and colleagues said he was lying.

Speaking to over 100 friends and colleagues, not one of them could verify strange behavior, track marks or wounds, or any other clues to Mike's past. Everyone said he was lying. The calendar of full moon rituals didn't even match up, and neither did other dates. A ritual with Charles Manson was quite the black magic: for Manson was at that time in jail. Claims of missing bodies thrown in dumpsters did not match any records.

Mike had asked friends to sign an authenticity affidavit for his book, but they refused, saying it was all bull. Pictures from the peak of Warnke's Satan worship days showed a conservative nerd, not a strung out longhair with six inch fingernails. Mike's involvement as a high priest of Beelzebub was limited to one or two Ouija sessions as a kid and possibly some rock n' roll air guitar.

Far worse than tall tales, former wife Carolyn spoke freely about Mike beating the living hell out of her.

- <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/unreasonablefaith/2009/09/the-devil-made-me-do-it-mike-warnke%E2%80%99s-ministry-of-lies/>

If Satan is the father of lies and we are using lies to bring people to Jesus, something is wrong and it was seriously wrong with this man and I believe he is still out there with his stories.

You are representing Christ and thus, speak the truth, live a life that is above reproach and don't get involved in sexual sin. Don't trick people into coming to Christ! I hope that makes sense.

VERSES 4-6

Paul says that what he is doing has been "**approved by God.**" The Greek word for "**approve**" is DOKIMAZO, (dok-im-ad'-zo) and it is a word that was used in reference to the purifying of metals to prove their genuineness.

In other words, Paul, Silas and Timothy have all been approved of God because they have been proved through divine testing! Now how did this happen? I think Peter gives to us how this takes place in our lives just as it took place in Paul, Silas and Timothy!

In I Peter 1:6-7 we are told, **“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”**

Their faith, their ministries were tested in the fires and proved to be genuine and the same is true in our lives. And please understand that this is not one test and done. This is something that continues on until we go to be with the Lord. Every new situation is a new testing of our faith before God!

Now, since their faith has been tested and is being tested, they have been **“entrusted with the gospel.”** This word, **“entrusted”** carries with it the idea of stewardship. William MacDonald explains it like this,

“He was the steward, approved by God, and the gospel was the precious treasure that had been entrusted to him by God. His responsibility was to please God by the faithful proclamation of the message, no matter what man’s reaction might be. It was clear to him that he couldn’t please both God and man, so he chose to please God, who tests our hearts and then rewards accordingly.”

God has given to us the Gospel message and we are to not only share that with others, but we are not to allow their response to change the Gospel message or water it down to make it more appealing. Paul, Silas and Timothy were not men pleasers and God put His stamp of approval on their ministry!

Paul did not come to tickle men’s ears but to bring the Gospel message to convict the heart and see people come to saving faith!

Now, before I go on with these verses, let me share this with you regarding “Seeker Sensitive” churches, what they are about. And as I am reading this see how Paul is coming down upon ideas and practices like this in the verses we just read. We are told,

In recent years a new movement within the evangelical church has come into vogue, commonly referred to as “seeker sensitive.” Generally, this movement has seen a great deal of growth. Many “seeker” churches are now mega-churches with well-known pastors who are riding a wave of popularity in the evangelical world. The seeker-sensitive movement claims millions of conversions, commands vast resources, continues to gain popularity, and seems to be attracting millions of un-churched people into its fold.

So, what is this movement all about? Where does it come from? And, most importantly, is it biblical? Basically, the seeker-sensitive church tries to reach out to the unsaved person by making the church experience as comfortable, inviting, and non-threatening to him as possible. The hope is that the person will believe in the gospel. The idea behind the concept is to get as many unsaved people through the door as possible, and the church leadership are willing to use nearly any means to accomplish that goal. Theatrics and musical entertainment are the norm in the church service to keep the unsaved person from getting bored as he does with traditional churches. State-of-the-art technology in lighting and sound are common components of the seeker-sensitive churches, especially the larger ones.

Expertly run nurseries, day care, adult day care, community programs such as ESL (English as a Second Language), and much more are common fixtures in the larger seeker churches. Short sermons (typically 20 minutes at most) are usually focused on self-improvement. Supporters of this movement will say that the single reason behind all the expense, state-of-the-art tech gear, and theatrics is to reach the unsaved with the gospel; however, rarely are sin, hell, or repentance spoken of, and Jesus Christ as the exclusive way to heaven is rarely mentioned. Such doctrines are considered “divisive.”

The seeker-sensitive church movement has pioneered a new method for founding churches involving demographics studies and community surveys that ask the unsaved what they want in a church. This is a kind of “if you build it they will come” mentality. The reasoning is that if you give the unsaved better entertainment than they can receive elsewhere, or “do church” in a non-threatening way, then they will come, and hopefully, they will accept the gospel. The mindset is to hook the un-churched person with great entertainment, give him a message he can digest, and provide second-to-none services. The focus of the seeker church then is not Christ-centered, but man-centered. *The main purpose of the seeker church’s existence is to give people what they want or meet their felt needs.*

Further, the seeker-friendly gospel presentation is based on the idea that if you will believe in Jesus, He will make your life better. Relationships with your wife or husband, coworkers, children, etc., will be better. The message the seeker church sometimes passes on to the unsaved person is that God is a great cosmic genie, and if you stroke Him the right way, you will get what you want. In other words, if you profess to believe in Jesus, God will give you a better life, better relationships and purpose in life. So, for all intents and purposes, the seeker-sensitive movement is a type of system based on giving unbelievers whatever they want. What too often happens in such a system is that people make a profession of faith, but when the circumstances of their lives don't immediately change for their material good, they forsake Christ, believing He has failed them.

- <https://www.gotquestions.org/seeker-sensitive-church.html>

I am sorry if I offend anyone here, but this is exactly what Paul is coming against. He is saying that we are not to let the pressure of men cause us to change what we are doing or saying. That the Gospel is unchangeable and to water it down or make it more tolerable for people is negating the Gospel!

“Don't speak of sin, that may offend someone!” Yes, that is what they are saying and you really can't give a deep message because they won't understand it! Really, these believers were taught the Rapture, the Second Coming of Jesus, they were not given candy to partake of but the meat of God's Word!

In Proverbs 29:25 we are told, “**The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.**” Leaders are not to be influenced by the pressure of men but are to follow the ways of the Lord. Now I am not saying that we are to be obnoxious but in love we are to present the Gospel to people.

And here’s the thing. As we begin to fear man, what they may do, what they may say, we are in trouble. And it truly makes no sense. You are in fear of man, part of creation instead of trusting in the Lord, the Creator! It sounds foolish and it is but we have all been down that path before.

And think of all the persecution that these men have faced and yet, they did not change their ways. They brought forth the Gospel message! In fact, Paul said in Galatians 1:10, “**For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.**” May we serve the Lord faithfully as leaders, not compromise our faith!

Not only did Paul not seek to please men by compromising the Gospel, but he did not use flattering words to draw them to Jesus! Morris put it like this, “We can use this English term of remarks which, though insincere, are directed to the pleasure of the person being flattered. The Greek term has rather the idea of using fair words as a means of gaining one’s own ends.”

Here’s the thing. Flattery is designed to, in a sense, disarm people so you can manipulate them for your own agenda, your own purposes! We may say that we are “buttering up the person!”

If you have to use flattery to get people into the Kingdom of God, then what you are saying is that God’s Word is not living, it is not powerful to save people and thus, we must trick them into the Kingdom of God or manipulate them into the Kingdom of God. Foolishness!

In Psalm 12:3-4 we are told, **“May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, And the tongue that speaks proud things, Who have said, ‘With our tongue we will prevail; Our lips are our own; Who is lord over us?’”**

As leaders, we don’t use flattery to get what we want or get people to do what we want. We let God speak to their hearts. I am not saying we don’t talk with people and encourage them, but we don’t use flattery to accomplish things. We let God work and that is what a good leader does.

Then Paul speaks of the **“cloak of covetousness.”** And the idea here is lusting after things that belong to others, but in such a way that they don’t see it that way. And it is interesting because flattery is used many times to obtain what is not yours!

Think about adultery. Either the man or woman is pouring out this flattery on the other person so they can obtain what is not theirs!

Maybe it is not adultery but what about coveting another man’s ministry or position? Paul said that he and his men did not do that and God is a witness to their faithfulness in service. Leaders are to praise God for what they have and not lust after things they don’t have!

Calvin put it like this, “Where greed and ambition hold sway, innumerable corruptions follow, and the whole man turns to vanity. These are the two sources from which stems the corruption of the whole of the ministry.”

Another important point in regard to a leader is that they are humble! Paul said in verse 6 of I Thessalonians chapter 2, **“Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.”**

Paul and his men did not use their position to get special treatment from the Thessalonians or anyone else! I like the way that Poole put it. He wrote, “We did not seek men’s honour, high esteem, or applause; we sought them not in the inward bent of our thoughts, or the studies of our mind, not in outward course of our ministry and conversation, to form them so as to gain glory from men. Though honour and esteem was their due from men, yet they did not seek it. Honour is to follow men, men not to follow it.”

As I look at Christianity today, we love the praise of men. We have all kinds of awards for Christians today. We honor them like they are movie stars or rock stars or whatever. Several years back we had a Christian musician who came to do worship at our church. And as I was walking up to the podium to open the Sunday service in prayer, he said to me, “Don’t forget to tell them that I have been inducted into the Christian musician’s hall of fame!” That did not happen!

I think when you lose the idea of being a servant leader it is hard to be humble. And let’s face it, it is hard anytime. But when you see yourself as more important than others, when you want people to look up to you and honor you, something is wrong! We are to humble ourselves before God and He will lift us up!

And make no mistake about it, leadership is all about being faithful and faithful to God! And we need to know where we are going, what we are doing. That is what being a leader is all about. Maybe you heard this story before. It goes like this,

As a train was about to leave a large railroad station, the conductor began to take tickets. Looking at the ticket of the first passenger he remarked, "Friend, I think you're on the wrong train!" "But," replied the man, "the ticket agent told me this was my train." After a little discussion, the conductor decided to check with the ticket agent. Before long, it became clear that the conductor was on the wrong train! When the leader is lost, how can the followers be going on the right track?

- Source Unknown

Folks, as leaders the only way we are going to know where we are going is if we are following the Lord and are directed by Him. If you chart your own course you are heading for disaster!

For Paul, Silas and Timothy, they were faithful leaders because they were following the Lord. They knew the direction they were going. Thus, if you are unsure this morning, seek direction from God and let Him lead you!

As I begin to close this morning, look at what we have studied regarding faithful leaders. They are to be encouraging. And yes, in ministry you will face suffering, persecution. It is not a **"might"** you **"will"** suffer when you serve the Lord! We are to encourage people with the truth, not with deceit, uncleanness or guile. We don't serve to please man but God and thus, we don't water down our faith to make it more appealing to people. We share the truths of God from the Word of God – the Gospel message! We don't use flattering words or covet what others have, using our position to obtain these things or using flattering words to obtain what is not ours. And we don't seek glory from man we seek to honor God in all that we do! Leadership speaks of **FAITHFULNESS!**