

# 1 Thes 2:1-9

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Jesus is speaking, he says, a new command I give you, love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another.

By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. The very visual sign of a church which is united in love for one another is a wonderful witness to the world.

All men will know that we are the disciples of Jesus Christ if we love one another. Wonderful truths and again we'll pick up more on that later in a moment.

1 Thessalonians chapter 2, 1 to 16. You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure.

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.

[ 1 : 1 1 ] For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.

We're not trying to please men, but God who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed. God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you nor anyone else.

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. 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've become so dear to us. Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship. We work night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preach the gospel of God to you.

You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous, and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

[ 2 : 4 5 ] And we also thank God continually because when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus. You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and also drove us out.

They displease God and are hostile to all men in their efforts to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles, so that they may be saved. In this way, they always heap up their sins to the limit.

The wrath of God has come upon them at last. Well, please take your Bibles and turn back to that chapter 1, Thessalonians chapter 2.

And we're going to just spend the next half hour or so working our way through this passage, slightly different to this morning, in that there'll be a bit more instruction for us as a church here, and encouragement and direction in how we are to respond to the gospel.

[ 4 : 22 ] I trust the good news from verses 9 and 10 of chapter 1, which is for us all, is still warming our hearts as we come to this second chapter.

Now, if you were going to go and plant a church in a new area, you were going to go somewhere, start a new church, one of the things you'd really hope that you wouldn't do is cause a citywide riot.

I reckon that should be fairly high on your list of priorities, things not to happen when you get there. And also, you'd ideally want to have trained up some good men, some good leaders.

You'd invested a lot of time in building up a real nucleus of people to lead that church forward, to be able to support and grow and be the backbone of all that goes on in the church.

Especially if you were planting this church in an area where there was hostility and opposition, and it was going to be difficult. Well, in that sense, you might be tempted to think that what Paul and Silas did in Thessalonica was a bit of a failure.

[ 5 : 37 ] They were so unpopular. You can read the story in Acts chapter 17. They were so unpopular. The message was so unpopular. They turned the whole city upside down. It says they caused this.

Well, they were so unpopular that the mob was set on them. And there was this riot in the city. And they dragged Jason out, who was harboring them in his house. And they tried to find them.

And they ran them out of town. Not a particularly successful thing, you'd think. And they were only there for three weeks. Maybe four at the most.

Not really had that time to invest and build a nucleus. They left behind a church, which was in many ways just a baby.

A baby church. Left there to fend for itself in the midst of very fierce Jewish and Gentile hostility. Imagine if you were one of those new converts. You'd come to know the Lord Jesus eight days ago.

[ 6 : 37 ] That's all. And there you are, as a brand new Christian. And there's people threatening you, threatening your life. There are scholars and experts in the scriptures who are coming to you and asking you all sorts of difficult questions.

You need to defend yourself. You've got no New Testament, of course, yet. It's only AD 50. You've got no apostle there to keep you afloat.

You really are on your own. So I reckon you've probably got a little bit of justification for feeling a little bit aggrieved. It didn't go well. Maybe you'd think that.

Maybe you'd feel a little bit bitter. Paul did not do a fantastic job for you. Maybe. But look how he begins. Verse 1.

You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure. He's pretty bold, isn't he? And actually, he's kind of saying, look, I'm not telling you this.

[ 7 : 40 ] I'm not bringing you news of what I think about this. You know, he says. You know. You agree that it wasn't a failure. Remember? And Paul's going to do that a lot, by the way, through this chapter.

He's going to get them to remember that three weeks that they were there, that time that they were among them. And recall just what happened. Was it a failure? So he's going to say to them again and again, remember this.

You know about this. It was not a failure. Now, Paul, I guess, is realistic. He knows that that might be a little bit difficult for them to get their heads round.

Because three weeks, opposition, run out of town. Okay, explain yourself, Paul. So he goes on to do that in the rest of the verses. Now, Paul uses the fact that they preached the good news of Jesus in the face of this great opposition.

You know, there was the persecution. There were the insults we read about. There was the opposition. The fact that they went ahead anyway in the face of all of this authenticates the reality and the truth of what they were saying.

[ 8 : 52 ] Why would you stand before a crowd that is baying for your life and proclaim this news to them if you didn't believe it was true? You just wouldn't do it. You couldn't do that.

You couldn't face that kind of opposition if God was not with you and on your side. Verse 2. We'd previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know.

There he goes again, appealing to their memory. But with the help of our God, we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.

For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives. We're not trying to trick you here, in other words. Had they been up to no good, had they just been after their money or after some kind of power or status or they just wanted to cause some trouble.

Then when all the problems came, when the opposition came at them, as fiercely as they did, they would have just backed down, wouldn't they? Well, we're not getting what we want. We'll just go somewhere else. We're not getting what we want.

[ 9 : 58 ] We're not going to continue preaching this message. Get rid of the unpopular stuff. You wouldn't go through that persecution if you knew it wasn't true, would you?

To stand up and do what we did, Paul says, that kind of opposition, you know this is only possible with God's help. How else would we have done it? God was evidently with us as we ministered.

We read this morning in chapter 1, verse 5, just have a look. Chapter 1, verse 5, that the message came not just with words, but also with the power of the Holy Spirit, with great conviction among them.

God was with these guys as they were doing this. There were no tricks. There was no error here. No failure. Not at all.

This was not a failed church plant. Verse 4, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.

[ 11 : 00 ] We're not trying to please men, but God, he is the one who tests hearts. He's the one we're subject to. He is the one who really will judge on this matter of whether we were successful or not.

He goes on, as you know, we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed. God, who is the heart tester, he is our witness.

God's our witness. We're not looking for praise from men, you know, obviously. If you're a people pleaser, you don't start riots.

You don't rub people up the wrong way so badly that they have to set the mob on you. That's not good people pleasing. Now, you get to this point, you might be tempted to think, is Paul just being a bit defensive here?

Is he just trying to justify what happened and say, well, no, it wasn't a failure. We are apostles of God. We're doing the right thing. We're just trying to, is he justifying himself?

[ 12 : 04 ] Is that what is going on here? There could be an element of truth to that. There could be. But I think his main concern here in doing this, and I think the key is the fact that he keeps on appealing to their memory of the three, four weeks that they were there, is he's trying to get the guys to see, you saw this.

You saw it with your own eyes. The reality of what we were saying, the truth of what we were saying, you saw in our lives. It wasn't just stuff we were telling you.

We lived this out. You know this is true. And this is our first point. The reality of the gospel is seen in our lives.

The reality of the gospel is seen in our lives. The reality of the gospel is seen when we share our lives with one another and with the people we're witnessing to.

They kind of see how we live out what we're saying. Now there's a lot of that going on here in this particular passage. Paul gets them to recall. Remember this.

[ 13 : 13 ] Think about how we were among you. Remember our behavior. We could have done this. We didn't do it. We did that. We spoke the truth. But we also lived it out among you.

For example, verse 7. We could have been a burden to you. We could have been a burden to you. We had the right to be a burden. But actually, no, we were gentle among you. Like a mother caring for her little children.

And here's the key verse. Verse 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.

Our lives. We gave you ourselves. We didn't just stand there outside the synagogue with a megaphone and a sandwich board, not opening up to anybody, not relating to anybody.

We shared our lives. We came among you. You saw everything. We were gentle. We were gentle. Like a nursing mother. We fed you.

[ 14 : 20 ] We gave out of ourselves at great cost to ourselves, from ourselves. It was costly. It was costly. It was sacrificial. Tender.

Nurture. Of you, our children. Verse 9. Surely, you remember, brothers, our toil, our hardship.

We work night and day in order to not be a burden to anyone while we preach the gospel of God to you. So, Paul's emphasized the fact there twice that they were not a burden.

Did you notice that? Verse 7 and verse 9. They weren't a burden to them. Now, the reality of the gospel is seen in our lives.

You see, if our lives tell a different story to our words, what we say and what we do don't match up. If our manner with people doesn't match the kind of manner that Christ has with people, then people are going to start asking questions.

[ 15 : 26 ] The message is not going to look right. So, in terms of burden, since Paul has brought that up a couple of times, if I'm preaching a gospel which holds out that Christ is our substitute, that he takes the burden of our sin onto himself.

He is the burden bearer. He's the one who takes the weight of the law, who pays all its demands. The yoke of our burden is upon him. And he is the giver of life, the one who gives of himself.

He gives his righteousness, he gives his spirit, he gives his father, he gives his kingdom, he gives his inheritance, forgiveness, adoption, all these things in himself. He is an amazing giver.

The only thing he takes is our burden. That's my message. And then I'm going around just taking, taking, taking, making demands of the people I'm ministering to all the time.

And not giving anything out of myself or opening myself up or coming alongside people. If I'm just a dreadful burden, frankly, then again, who's going to take the message seriously?

[ 16 : 34 ] If I'm preaching about a God of love, but all the while I'm being harsh and snide and cynical with people and about people, cold and closed, why on earth would anybody listen to me?

You don't look anything like the Jesus you're proclaiming. That's what they'd say, isn't it? And all that would say about the gospel is that it doesn't work. It's pie in the sky when you die.

It's eternal fire insurance. It makes no difference now, in other words. But that is wrong. Jesus does change us.

There is a reality to this which begins when we come to know him and it affects our entire lives. We thought about it this morning. We've turned to God. We've changed the way we are.

We're different now. Paul's appeal to their conduct among this new church, Paul's appeal to the way they lived, I think is supposed to be illustrative of the message he brought.

[ 17 : 45 ] That's what he's saying here. Illustrative of the actual content of the gospel. Now, there's a lot we can learn here as a church, isn't there? Absolutely loads.

Absolutely loads. So we'll just look at three implications for tonight because we've not got time to look at everything. But firstly, and I guess obviously, we must be involved in sharing our lives with one another as these were.

Open homes. Open homes. Open hearts. Open hearts. Generous. Open handed. To our brothers and sisters and also to the people we're ministering amongst.

Lengthy, costly involvement in people's lives. Difficulty in that. Sacrifice of time. Sacrifice of money.

Sacrifice of priorities. We give from out of ourselves, from out of our own resources, generously as a mother gives to her children.

[ 18 : 46 ] We're givers of life. We don't burden people. A mother doesn't burden her children. We must be open, generous and sharing our lives. As Paul says in verse 8, yeah, we shared the gospel with you but we also shared our lives.

We gave you ourselves. The people we're witnessing to, as they see what we're like, as they see how the gospel does impact me now, and they hear the words of truth we speak, they will be convinced that this is true and that they must come to know Jesus.

We are the living proof. The church, in a way, is the living proof. The multimedia presentation of the truth of the gospel, that's us sitting here. So are we?

Are we sharing our lives with one another? With unbelievers? Do you know one another here well enough, not just to pray for one another and to know who it is you're wanting to witness to, so that you can pray for one another, that you would have those opportunities to share with them, but also that you could meet each other's needs when they arise, practically.

Second implication. This is obvious, but it's worth saying. It means you need each other. We need one another. There's no such thing as a solitary Christian.

[ 20 : 18 ] This ongoing lifestyle of open sharing and giving out from yourself, you can't do that by yourself, can you? That's why, you know, God is a triune God.

The Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father, and they love each other in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. If God is one singular being, he cannot give out from himself in eternity.

The Father gives to the Son in all eternity, and has done. And so we, we're not to be on our own in church. We can't be solitary.

As we go about our witnessing, wherever we're sent, whether we're sent to school, or to the workplace, or to our neighbourhood, or to our clubs, that wherever Jesus has placed us, wherever we're witnessing, we're going to need each other.

We need to be backed up by one another as a church, praying for each other, involved in each other's lives. Perhaps you have a prickly colleague who asks a lot of difficult questions.

[ 21 : 28 ] You need a bit of help. That's okay. Ask for help. We're here to do that. We're a family. That's the church. We share our lives. We're open to one another.

Perhaps we have a friend who we think, they're really lonely, but we could invite a load of people from church around, and they could meet a few other people. Use one another.

Be involved with each other in this mission that we have together of witnessing to Christ. Perhaps you're a quiet sort of person.

The prospect of speaking about Jesus is a little bit scary. Why don't you invite some people round to your house? Invite your non-Christian friends, but also invite somebody who's a real gifted speaker who just can't shut up about Jesus.

Bring them round. Get them to do the donkey work. We're a family. We're involved in each other's lives. We share life together. Together, we're not on our own.

[ 22 : 29 ] God has given us a wonderful church family. And when the unbeliever, when the outsider comes and sees this incredible sight of people giving and sharing and supporting and loving one another on this most important mission, Again, they will hear the words, but they'll see them, and they'll see God's power at work among us.

This is when the reality of the gospel is seen in action. We read, didn't we, John 13, 35, By this all men will know that you are my disciples. You could go to many other verses.

Matthew 5, 16, Let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. 1 Peter 2, verse 12, Live such good lives among the pagans that they, Though they accuse you of doing wrong, That they would actually come to praise the God on the day that he visits us.

So, are we sharing life? That was the first one. And we can't do that on our own. We're a body. The third implication. Doing this can make you vulnerable.

It's very important we recognize that. Doing this can make you vulnerable. In some ways, it sounds lovely, doesn't it? Sounds very, it's a good aspiration to have.

[ 23 : 52 ] Sharing one another, using each other, being a help to one another. Wonderful truth. But it does rub against our British reserve. Particularly for us guys.

Asking for help is not easy. But we must. We need to be open. We need to be honest. And you know, as we do get closer to one another, We're going to start to see each other in a different light.

We're going to start to see the mess of each other's lives. We're going to be vulnerable as we do this. But don't hide your mess.

Sin thrives in the dark, doesn't it? It's like mold. Thrives in the dark. Bring your sin into the light. Confess your sins. So that you might pray for one another and be healed.

Verse 10. You are witnesses. I mean, I can't believe Paul can say this. But he does. It's amazing.

[ 24 : 54 ] You are witnesses. And so is God. Of how brilliantly we lived among you. How blameless, how righteous we were. Among you who believed. Paul and Silas, and then later Timothy when he came to them.

They lived good lives. Brilliant lives. They saw their lives. The Thessalonians saw their lives. They saw the way that they lived. And even God would agree.

Yet, the unseen father who sees all things. Who sees the private things. Yes, they were exemplary. They weren't hiding stuff in the dark.

Vulnerable can be painful. But it's surely right. So as we get closer. Sharing lives together. We are going to get more vulnerable. But you see, when we're here.

In this position of vulnerability. Then verse 11. We are to be as fathers. Be like fathers. You see, that's what you need when you're vulnerable, isn't it? If you're vulnerable.

[ 26 : 01 ] A father is something wonderful. We're not going to be shocked by what we see. To be fatherly is not to be shocked and be harsh.

What does it say? Full of encouragement and comfort. That's what's great about dads, isn't it? Good dads encourage and comfort.

And so, as we encourage and comfort struggling, vulnerable people. That creates an environment where we can also show fatherly strength.

And urge one another to live lives worthy of God. That's how we're to deal with our sins and that vulnerability. We saw this morning that the Thessalonians were known.

They were famous because they, excuse me, had turned to God from idols. And there is a wonderful power when people see broken, messed up people.