



Title: A Gospel Influence

Text: 1 Thessalonians 2:10-13

*“Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: **11** As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, **12** That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. **13** For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye 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.”*

Introduction:

As Paul continues to recount his time with the Thessalonian believers, he is careful to emphasize the importance of our reputations and influence. Paul wanted to have a lasting influence in these people's lives beyond just preaching the Gospel. He wanted to teach them the way of Jesus, see them become faithful followers, and watch God use them. If that was going to happen, he needed credibility. Paul had earned the respect and trust of the people, and this enabled him to have a deep and lasting influence on them.

1 Thessalonians 1:5-6 *“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. 6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.”*

- The word “followers” means to mimic or imitate.
- Paul acknowledges that the influence he now has is a result of his actions. **Credibility is not something that is given away for free.** It is earned over time through consistency of character.
- While we live to please God, that does not mean that our reputation does not matter!
- It is true that some people will lie about us, and some people will not forgive us. This does not mean we should disregard what people think about us, or the potential impact of our actions.

I. Gospel Influence is Rooted in Character

1 Thessalonians 2:10 *“Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:”*

A. Holy

- To live a holy life is to live a life that is consistent with the revealed truth of God, in contrast to the sinful ways of the world.
- Paul is saying that they behaved differently because they were getting different instructions from a different source than the culture.
- Holiness is the calling of every believer in Christ, because of the work of salvation.

1 Thessalonians 4:7-8 *“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. 8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.:*

1 Peter 1:13-16 *“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: **15** But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; **16** Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

B. Just

- To live a just life is to live a life that is honest and genuine.

1 Thessalonians 2:3-5 “For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: **4** But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. **5** For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:”

- Jesus followers should be passionate about the truth!
- We should speak the truth, and live truth! No pretense! No hypocrisy!

C. Unblameable

- To live “unblameably” is to live our life conscious of our influence.
- This is not about perfection or performance. It is about positioning ourselves to do Gospel work! Pointing people to Jesus, and teaching people the way of Jesus!

1 Thessalonians 5:22-24 “Abstain from all appearance of evil. **23** And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **24** Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”

- The word appearance means form, kind or type. The challenge is to identify evil and stay away from it!
- Do you feel like you fall short in this? We ALL fall short in this! Thank God for forgiveness, redemption, and deliverance through Jesus Christ!
- Ultimately, people can always let us down. Do not put your hope or confidence in people. Keep your eyes on Jesus! He is always faithful!

II. Gospel Influence is Focused on Discipling and Mentoring

- The Great Commission is “preach and teach”!

Mark 16:15 *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”*

Matthew 28:20 *“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*

- Once people believe in Jesus for salvation, they need to be taught the way of Jesus!

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 *“As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, **12** That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.”*

- **The church needs followers of Jesus who are wholly committed to the whole Great Commission!**
- Paul uses the analogy of a father to communicate both authority and influence. A good father does not rule like a dictator. A good father lovingly and directly speaks truth into the lives of his children.

A. Teach

- The words “*exhort*” and “*charged*” both carry this idea of speaking truth and calling people to obedience!
- There is a “way” to walk. Jesus taught us that way, and we need to teach it to others.

John 14:15, 21a *“If ye love me, keep my commandments....He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me...”*

- To keep them, we have to know them. If people are going to know them, we are going to need to teach them!
- People do not need our opinions, preferences, or traditions. They need the Word of God!

1 Thessalonians 2:13 *“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye 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.”*

B. Encourage

- People need encouragement! They need to know that they can do it!
- In our sinfulness, the call of Christ on our lives can seem so overwhelming!

Romans 7:14-25 *“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”*

- The struggle is real, but in Christ we have victory!!

C. Exemplify

- We can **teach the truth**—here is what is true and you should do it! **We can encourage**—here is what is true and you can do it! But we also need to be examples—**here is what is true and let me show you how to do it!**
- Jesus is our ultimate example!

Matthew 5:43-47 *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? **47** And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?"

1 Peter 2:19-25 "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. **20** For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. **21** For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: **22** Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: **23** Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: **24** Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. **25** For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

- Paul laid out a vision for what discipleship and mentorship in the church should look like in his letter to Titus.

Titus 2:1-8 "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: **2** That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. **3** The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; **4** That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, **5** To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. **6** Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. **7** In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, **8** Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."

- Age is not the primary qualification for mentorship. Spiritual maturity is the primary qualification. Anyone can have
- Age+Spiritual Maturity=A significant influence for truth.
- We can teach people the truth, but are we prepared to come alongside people, do life with them, and to show them what obedience actually looks like?

