



Title: A Gospel Approach

Text: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-9

*“For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: **2** But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. **3** 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: **6** Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. **7** But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: **8** So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. **9** For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.”*

Introduction:

After sharing a word of praise to God for the work that He had done, and was continuing to do in the lives of the believers in Thessalonica, Paul begins to recount the time that he spent with them. As Paul gives his account of what happened, he offers fascinating insight into his approach to Gospel ministry. If we are going to be effective witnesses for Jesus, then we need to take our approach to Gospel ministry seriously! As we study this section of the letter, we will see how Paul followed the example of Jesus' public ministry, was bold in his Gospel witness, and showed us what it looks like to truly care for people!

- Paul's approach can be summarized with two words—Boldness and Gentleness.
- This approach follows the example of Jesus!

John 1:14 *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”*

- While we would not argue that there is a direct connection between this description of Jesus and Paul's description of his ministry, there is a practical application that can be made.
- During Jesus' public life and ministry, he unapologetically proclaimed the truth while simultaneously showing unbelievable grace to undeserving sinners. We should follow His example as we endeavor to be faithful witnesses for Him!

I. Boldness

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 *“For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: 2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.*

A. What Boldness Is

1. Boldness is a willingness to share the truth of the Gospel

- We mean specifically to verbalize the truth of the Gospel—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

I Corinthians 15:1a, 3-4 *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you....For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

- We are bold about so many things, but are we bold about the Gospel?

Romans 1:15-16 *“So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”*

2. Boldness is of the Holy Spirit

I Thessalonians 1:5a *For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost,*

- If we want to have a witness that is effective, it needs to be empowered by the Holy Spirit!

Acts 4:31 *“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”*

- We must be walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16), and seeking the filling of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), so that we can have a Spirit empowered witness.
- We do not just want to be loud witnesses for Jesus, we want to be Holy Spirit empowered, bold witnesses for Jesus!!

B. What Boldness is NOT

- It is important for Paul to clarify what boldness is all about, and what it is NOT all about

1. Boldness is not deceitfulness

I Thessalonians 2:3,5 *“For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:....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! The greatest truth we can share is the truth of the Gospel!
- There was no hidden agenda! Their love for the Gospel and for people was genuine.
- They were not hypocrites! They did not preach one thing, and do something else!

2. Boldness is not pridefulness

I Thessalonians 2:4,6 *“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....Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.*

- Paul understood that they were stewards of the Gospel! It was not their message to preach however they wanted to preach it!
- We live our lives to please God! This is a statement of humility!
- A truly bold Gospel witness puts the focus on Jesus!

John 3:26-36 *“And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. 27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. 28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. 29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease. 31 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. 32 And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. 33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. 34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. 35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. 36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”*

- We do not want to mistake pridefulness for boldness! We need a witness for Christ that is characterized by humility!!

II. Gentleness

I Thessalonians 2:7 *“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: “*

A. What Gentleness is NOT

1. Gentleness is not deceitfulness

- Gentleness is just as much committed to truth as boldness is!

I Thessalonians 2:9 *“For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.”*

- Paul’s sincere love for them was what motivated him to share the truth of the Gospel with them!

2. Gentleness is not permissiveness

- To be gentle in our gospel witness does not mean that we avoid talking about sin, repentance, confession, or holiness.
- What we actually see is that gentleness is what helped Paul earn the trust and credibility needed to call the Thessalonica Christians to lives of obedience!

I 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.*

B. What Gentleness Is

1. Gentleness is to place value on people.

1 Thessalonians 2:8 *“So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.”*

- People matter more than our opinions and preferences!

1 Timothy 1:15 *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”*

2. Gentleness is to genuinely care for people.

- The analogy of a nurse cherishing her children is best understood as a reference to a nursing mother. The time and attention spent is offered without the expectation of anything in return!
- Gentleness in witnessing and discipling is about coming alongside people, and walking through life with them! It is about showing what the love of God looks like!

Conclusion:

If we want to have an effective Gospel witness, we need to be bold and gentle. When we unashamedly proclaim the truth of the Gospel, and show people genuine love, we are positioning ourselves to have meaningful Gospel conversations and to see Gospel change!

Boldness with no gentleness becomes harsh. There is a heavy emphasis on truth, but no grace. This opens us up to the danger of legalism! People get discouraged and give up!

Gentleness with no boldness opens us up to the danger of pragmatism. We never talk about the difficult things, and so people are not prepared for a life of following Jesus in a hostile world!

When both boldness and gentleness are present, the truth is being preached in love! The result is true, and lasting change—Gospel change!

