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March 29, 2020

# 1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-6

Series: Real Christians in Challenging Times

I want to encourage you to pull out your book, 1 Thessalonians. I'm going to be referring to that as we go forward. Let me just review where we've been because in chapter 1 we learned about this gospel power that we have that God wants us to experience. It's really encouraged by these three things we looked at last week: This faith and hope and love that what God does He just kind of churns and builds that gospel power inside of us. We learned that we are to imitate other people and be an example. That is we're always needing to imitate the Lord and imitate other believers while at the same time we are an example to others. It's God's way of transmitting this message on, translating as it were. We are the translators of God's message. It's the gospel according to you. So what we want to do is we want to be thinking about how God is going to do specific things inside of our hearts and then when He does we can pass those onto other people. Knowing all that information from the first chapter of 1 Thessalonians, I want to take you now to the second chapter of 1 Thessalonians. As we do, I want to read it to you and I want to catch you up on where we are in the passage and then we're going to take it apart together.

Let's look at 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6. It says – *For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. That means it's not empty, it's not failure, it's not in vain. But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi (and if you remember Philippi was the city he was in before he came to Thessalonica, he says as we were shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity (he's going to talk about his motives here) or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel (that's where we're going to focus today), so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.*

So in this passage what we're seeing is that God is sharing more about this gospel message. And what I want to do is I want to zero in on those words in verse 4 that say *entrusted with the gospel*. Do you see I've underlined them there in the text, *entrusted with the gospel*. Those are the words I want us to zero in on so that we can understand what that means. Just imagine that God has entrusted to us something. He's entrusted this gospel to us. What does that mean in words for us today? The gospel is this something I want to take apart.

Now in the side margin of your book that you're writing in you can circle the word gospel there and you can write the word *euangelion*. *Euangelion* which is the word gospel and you can spell it

any way you want. It's a Greek word transliterated, so the spelling isn't that important. *Euangelion* and it means good news.

Now it is the fifth time or we'll see that it's used five times in chapter 1 and chapter 2. So if you look at the different word *gospel*, you just circle it, the number of times it's being used. I want to take apart that word *gospel* for you. I want you to understand what the word *gospel* means in this passage and what was happening. You can see it's used there up in verse 2. The word *gospel* is used there. And also in verse 4. It was used in chapter 1. It's also used further down in our passage in verses 8 and 9.

This gospel is the rescue package is what it is. It's the good news, that we have a solution. When we recognize that the brokenness of our world is so big and it's affecting us in so many ways, we recognize our own brokenness and the need that we have for God Himself. Sometimes the sin that we have in our world is because our own personal sin that we got ourselves into a mess. Sometimes it's because of other people we know or we don't know that have caused problems in our lives and other times it's because there's just brokenness in our world. The Bible says that sin came into our world and even the world itself groans. So much of the disease and pain that exists in our world is caused because of brokenness that came in and we need a rescue package. That's the good news. That's the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's this idea that Jesus Christ came to be our rescuer or our Savior. That God designed a plan so that we could have Jesus Christ be our righteousness, our Savior so that we in turn would trust Him. And when we believe in Jesus Christ and we trust Him, then we receive something inside of our hearts that's powerful. That's the gospel message.

If today you've not accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I just want you to know there's a whole rescue package waiting for you that you need in your life and those around you need as well. You want to accept that message into your life. So what I'd like to do is illustrate that by looking at a picture.

I just took verse 4 out of the text and I put it at the top of this slide. It says – *but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.*

Now the word *believe* is not used in verse 4, but if you turn the passage and look at verse 13, you'll see that in verse 13 it says the word *believers*. That's the same word here used in our passage, which is the word *believe* and it means that we become believers. It's not just mental ascent, but we actually give ourselves to the Lord. We say, "God, I want to give myself to you. I'm going to give my life to you." It's not just mental ascent. It's this sense of believing with all of my heart that I believe in you and want to give you my life and trust you in my life. That's what the word *believe* means.

So what God does now is that it says He *entrusted*. Notice that it's the same word, a different form of the word. But *pisteuthenai* is to entrust. So God believes in us enough to give us something, to entrust us with His gospel. Oh this is big. I mean when you just ponder this for a minute...and to think that when we trust God as our Lord and Savior and we then receive something, He entrusts something to us that's really big that we need in our lives. He wants to

give us that and He wants to make that very special. It's something very personal for each one of us.

I would just suggest that each one of us needs to embrace God in that very special way and believe in Him. When you do, He believes in you enough to give you something. I call it this rescue backpack as it were. And that rescue backpack is something that not only do you need, but everyone around you needs. He's giving you this rescue package and He's entrusted that to you. That is so amazing to think that God would entrust us with something like that. I'm sure that you might feel wow this is so hard for me to embrace and understand. What it means is that God has now given me something. And I can imagine you saying to yourself and I say to myself, "I'm not worthy for that. How can God give me that? I don't have the righteousness for that." The beauty of the gospel is that we don't rely on our own righteousness, we rely on Christ's righteousness. So when we understand the gospel, it's not about us earning our way to heaven. It's about us relying on something that God has done. We give ourselves to the Lord and His rescue package because He has done something very powerful for us. He's given us His Son.

So if you say, "Well look, I'm not qualified for this," then look back at verse 4 again. I just want you to see what He says now in verse 4. He uses the word *approved and tested*. It is the same word *dokimos*, to approve or to test. Here's what he's saying. You've passed the test. You've been approved by God because He's tested your heart. What is He looking for? He's looking for that faith that you believed in God. If you have that faith and you believed in God, then you've passed the test. Not because of anything you've done, but because you've trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior. He's the one that allows you to pass that test. It's just a beautiful picture here that you are worthy and you are qualified and God loves you. God has entrusted and He believes in you. He's entrusted you with this rescue backpack to share with other people this message, this ultimate message of rescue that our world needs today. You have it. God has entrusted it to you.

We could stop right there in this sermon and we could have everything we need just from that. Just to imagine this. We could walk away with our heads up high, knowing that God is in control He's given me something that I have that I can share with the world. But I want to continue right in these verses, verses 1-6. Because there's four things that characterize this being entrusted with the gospel. So let's look back now at verse 1.

In verse 1 it says – *For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain*. See Paul had the rescue package. He had the rescue backpack. And he's coming to them and it's not in vain. It's not empty. He's not failed. So I want to suggest to you that the gospel is full instead of empty. So when we say it's full instead of empty, what we're saying is that God has given us just this fullness. In fact let me take you back to another verse here in Ephesians 3:19. Paul describes it this way. He says – *to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with the fullness of God*. That fullness that we have with God is so big. It's just it fills us to overflowing. That's one of the characteristics of the gospel and we've been entrusted with it. It is not empty, it is full. That's one of the things we can recognize.

Let's continue on. Let's go to the next thing that characterizes the gospel. It says in verse 2 – *as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict*. Notice what we have here. That there is boldness that Paul had. Why does he have

boldness? Because he has the solution. I have the rescue package. I have what you need. I have the antidote for the anxiety and the struggles that you face inside of your life. That is an amazing message and God has entrusted that to Paul. So Paul says I've got boldness as I share that with you.

So the second thing we see in this passage is that we have this entrusted with the gospel means that we have boldness instead of fearfulness. Listen to these words from 2 Corinthians 3:4-6 and verse 12. You can read the whole passage, but for the sake of time I'm just going to read to you verse 4-6 and verse 12. It says this: *Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Notice that confidence Paul is speaking of. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Since we have such a hope, we are very bold.* That boldness that we experience in God is powerful and we want to recognize that as we're understand who God is and what He wants to do in our lives. Amazing things take place.

You see we can go out and we know that our message, as he says in the passage, isn't from us, it's from God. It's not something we have to manufacture and drum up. It comes from the Lord. It comes from this gospel power that He's entrusted to us and that's what we're sharing with other people and that is tremendously valuable.

Well let's go on in the passage. Let's look at and notice I've taken parts from verse 3 and down from verse 5 because he wants to look at his motives here. He wants to see about his motives as he's coming to them. In verse 3 he says – *For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity (that is we're not just an error, we're not making a mistake) or any attempt to deceive (that is it's not that we believe something we're just deceived he says).* So he's checking his motives here. He's making people understand that he is sincere in what he is saying.

In verse 5 he says – *We never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed.* We're not trying to get money out of you. *God is our witness,* he says. So what he's saying here is that there is sincerity in the message of the gospel. See when we come, we don't have to put something on. We're not trying to create a show. We're not trying to advertise something. What we're doing here is we're looking at the Lord and we're trying to understand what that sincerity looks like in very practical terms. We want God to be working in our lives and that is just genuinely going to come out. That genuineness is important as we're trying to understand.

Let's look at what that means then. When we say that we're being sincere instead of fake, that's powerful. Look at this verse from 1 Timothy 1:5. Now you have to remember Timothy is with Paul when he's writing to the Thessalonians. You can see that in verse 1 of 1 Thessalonians. And what he's saying here now is Timothy is with him and he's writing to the Thessalonians, but later Timothy is going to be pastoring a church in Ephesus. While he's there he's going to be saying these words. He's going to say – *The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.* What Paul is saying here is that Timothy, what you're doing is coming from a genuineness of what God is doing inside of your heart. The gospel

message that we have that God has entrusted to us comes from a genuineness, something that God has given to us that we need and we can share with other people. It's powerful.

Let me take you to one more piece in this passage from 1 Thessalonians 2:6 to give you one more idea that's described in this entrusted with the gospel. It says – *Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.*

What he's saying here is that we didn't seek glory from other people. We're not trying to build ourselves up. What we're trying to do is we're trying to be selfless. What we want to do here is we want to acknowledge the fact that other people are important. It's not just about me. It's about other people and what God is doing in other people's lives. When we share this message of this gospel with this rescue backpack with other people, we're doing it because God has something very powerful that He wants people to have. The neat thing about this is people get this for themselves and they are then carrying around this rescue package that they can share with other people. God is doing an amazing thing in each one of our lives and it becomes genuine, it becomes sincere, it becomes powerful in our lives. Because then when that takes place, God does something very powerful in our own lives. It's selfless instead of selfish.

Philippians 2:3 says this: *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.* What God is saying here is that we need to think about other people. You know we share this message with other people about the gospel because we love them, we care about them, and we have the solution. If people are sick and they need an antidote you would not hide it away. You would present it and share it with them. The people are suffering inside now with all kinds of challenges inside of their heart dealing with guilt and dealing with isolation and dealing with loneliness and dealing with anxiety. You have the antidote for that and that is the powerful gospel of Jesus Christ. He wants us to be able to share that with others.

You know this week I spent some time with Caleb on the phone. I was just caring for different people. As I talked to Caleb he wants to come to our Wednesday study. He hasn't been a part of that study yet, but he wants to be a part of it. So I was telling him about it. I said, "We talk about what's going on in the small group and we share concerns, we pray for each other. We talk about last Sunday's sermon and we talk about what's happening next week." So I started sharing with him about today's sermon. I said, "Here's what we're going to be talking about and being entrusted with the gospel," because that's what we talked about last Wednesday in our small group. And he says to me, "That really reminds me of the passage in 2 Corinthians 5." And so I went back and I read that. Caleb, thank you for sharing that. I hope you join us this Wednesday at the small group. But I just thank you for sharing that.

As I pondered those verses in 2 Corinthians 5 I just felt like they summarize everything that we're doing here. Everything we're talking about in this passage in 1 Thessalonians is summarized in this passage in 2 Corinthians 5. Let me read this passage. Read along with me as you can see it in these verses and just take everything that we've talked about so far and see it here.

It says – *Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.* This isn't the fear of the Lord like I'm afraid of God's anger or something. This is the total respect of God and for the package that He's given to us. Because I totally respect God. We persuade others. *But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart.* You see this is genuineness. This is something that's inside of the heart.

*For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God.* The people were saying, "Oh Paul, he's crazy. He's out of his mind." He's saying well, *if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us.* That's what Paul is saying. It's this love of Christ that we have, that's what constrains us or demands that we share this message. *Because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died.* The reality is that as we look at what God is doing in this gospel package, Jesus Christ died for our sins. He died so that we could receive that message, each one personally. And when He died, He died for all so that each one of us could die. And there is a dying that needs to take place in our hearts. A dying to self and selfishness that says I'm going to live for Christ and I'm going to proclaim the message of this gospel that God has given to me. That's what he's saying.

Let's read on the passage. It says – *For the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.* You see we live for the Lord.

*From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* That means that if you were characterized by being an angry person, angry all the time, God transforms you from the inside-out and changes your heart to be a person who embraces this love, that understands this joy that God has for you. If you were a person that was consumed by anxiety in the past, you are now someone who has the Holy Spirit's power to experience the peace that passes all understand. God wants to transform us. He makes us from this old person into something brand new, and that's the powerful thing that He's doing.

Let's read on the passage. He says in verse 18 – *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation* (that's the package that we share with others); *that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.* So what God has done is He's given us something. He's given us a message that we can share with others and we can pass that message on. It's this rescue package that we have that we have to share with others. It's the message that God has given to us.

Notice that as we go on in the passage it says (verse 20) – *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* First be reconciled to God. First get yourself together so that you can see

what God is doing in your own heart and you'll have that rescue package in your own life that you will be able to use and then share it, take it, give it to other people who are waiting for that message.

Each week the pastors in Robbinsville meet with the mayor, Mayor David Fried. He's a believer and he's doing a great job at trying to care for and minister to the people under his charge, the people in Robbinsville. I don't know if you know this or not, but one of the tests, the detection devices to determine if someone has COVID19 is being developed in Robbinsville. They're trying to get FDA approval and our mayor is working together with them. Because if it gets approved, we're going to have access to it right away in Robbinsville. It doesn't test for the virus. What it tests for is the immune system behind the virus.

The people we divided into three categories. Those three categories are people who don't have it yet. That's one group of people. The second group of people are who have it now (it's acute). So they're experiencing it now, so they're positive. And then there's this other group of people that have had it already and that group of people is an important group of people because that group of people are the ones who have the immune system for this.

Now Mayor Fried was saying that because there were two cases in Robbinsville people were calling his office and there was really prejudice developing against these two people. So he wanted to change this around. One of the things that he's done is he's calling this third group of people superheroes. They're the people who have this immunity now to the virus. They are the people who can go back to work. They are the people who can go into our medical facilities to help care of people. They are the people who can take things to the elderly. They can be the people out there without fearing infection themselves. What a great idea. I just admire what he's doing and I'll continue to meet each week with him and the other pastors and learn more about what's happening in our community, in our county, and in our nation. I'll pass on that information that will help you to be connected as well.

But you know, as I thought about that, I thought we're part of the third group of people spiritually. We're those superheroes that have the backpack, we have the rescue mission. We have what it takes to take the message out to a waiting world who needs what God has to offer. The first thing we need to do is trust Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

If you're listening to this message today and you've never made that personal commitment to trust Jesus, I want to encourage you to do it right now. It means bowing your knee before God and coming before Him in the presence of your own room, your own house, and just saying, "God, I believe in you. I want to give my whole life to you. I receive you as my Savior. I want to trust you personally in my life." And He will do that. God loves you so much. He wants to bless you and He will entrust you with this backpack that you'll receive yourself, that you'll enjoy, and you will appreciate, and God will do amazing things in your life. You will then have a message that you'll just want to share with the rest. You're the superhero and God believes in you. That's the beauty of this passage. He believes in you enough to entrust you with the gospel message that you can share with the rest of the world.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I do thank you so much for loving us and for caring for us. We thank you for the message of your gospel and we're just reminded of the power that it has to transform us. Lord, I pray that you would teach us how to trust you every day of our lives, to rely on you, to allow you to do that deeper work in our hearts. And Lord, make us bold people. We know that people are afraid all around us. They're hurting and they really need your message. So give us ways to share that message with others. And we'll continue to be your church, Lord. We'll continue to act on your behalf as you are allowing us to be entrusted with the gospel. Thank you, Father, for what you're doing. Continue to bless us, Lord. We look forward to what you do in each of our lives. In Jesus' name, amen.