

The Steps of a Good Man

1 Thessalonians 2: 1-3

As we consider the social climate of our modern society, we would have to agree that we stand in desperate need of leadership. Things have certainly changed in recent years, and much of that change has not been for the better. There seems to be a lack of godly men and women who are willing to stand for the cause of Christ and reach the world with the gospel.

I am certainly thankful for my heritage. I grew up in a farming community and attended a small, rural Baptist church; but I was surrounded by folks who knew the Lord and made a difference in the lives of others. They may not have been educated or refined by the world's standard, but they were committed to the Lord. The leadership and influence of those godly saints has helped me more than they will ever know.

Paul was called to minister at a time much like the day in which we live. The gospel was being preached, countless souls were coming to the Lord, and yet there was opposition on every hand. There was a great need for those who would rise above the challenges and serve the Lord. Paul accepted the challenge and was determined to serve the Lord.

As I considered this passage, a verse of Scripture came to mind: [Psalm 37:23 – The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.](#) It is evident to see that Paul's steps were directed by God. I want to consider the unchanging [principles](#) that affected Paul as we think on: [The Steps of a Good Man](#).

I. The Coming of Paul (1) – [For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain.](#) Paul spent the opening chapter of his letter to the Thessalonians greeting them and encouraging them concerning the importance of the gospel. Now he turns his attention to the personal ministry God had given him. Consider:

A. His Entrance (1a) – Paul simply reminds them of his initial entrance to Thessalonica. That may seem insignificant, but it serves as a reminder of his faithfulness to the call of God, and a challenge for them to continue serving the Lord in whatever capacity He chose to use them.

- Remember, Thessalonica was a prominent city. It boasted a large population and great wealth. This was certainly not an easy environment in which to minister, and yet Paul was faithful to the call. He did not look at outward circumstances, but choose to follow the Lord. Those who are unwilling to move cannot lead. We will never accomplish anything of lasting value for Christ if we are not willing to go where He calls.

B. His Efficiency (1b) – As you study the New Testament it becomes apparent that Paul had an effective ministry in Thessalonica. The Lord moved in great power and many were saved. The church began to send out missionaries and the gospel was taken to the world. Thessalonica was being used of the Lord because Paul had been obedient to the call. [Paul's labor had not been in vain](#). It was not “*empty, void of truth, or ineffective.*” That ought to stand as a challenge to us. We need the presence and power of God if we are to be effective.

II. The Conflict of Paul (2a) – [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.](#) Here Paul reveals the difficulties and conflict that often comes with commitment to the Lord. Rest assured that opposition will come to those who are committed to the work and seeing fruit for the glory of God. Notice:

A. His Suffering – [Paul had suffered at Philippi.](#) This has the idea of physical abuse. Clearly, we know that Paul was abused for preaching the gospel. The account of the abuse in Philippi is recorded in [Acts 16:22-23 – And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.](#) ^[23] [And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely:](#)

- I don't know of any physical abuse that we have suffered for the Lord. It may come to that and we must be settled in our faith if we are to endure. That ought to challenge us to do more than we are doing now. We are not faced with grave adversity; there is no excuse for silence!

B. His Shame – He was also [shamefully entreated](#) at Philippi. This has to do with public disgrace. Paul was publicly humiliated for the cause of Christ. Those who should have supported him and embraced the gospel made a mockery of him and his Lord. [Acts 16:20-21 – And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,](#) ^[21] [And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.](#)

- There may come a time when we are faced with public mockery for our faith, but we must endure, keeping the attitude of Paul. [Rom.1:16 – 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.](#)

C. His Severance – I am well aware that God had a plan for Paul to take the gospel to the Thessalonians, but we must also consider that he was forced to leave Philippi because they refused to receive the gospel. [Acts 16:39-40 – And they came and besought them, and brought them](#)

out, and desired them to depart out of the city. ^[40] And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

- This is tragic but it is not uncommon. Even in our day, there are places in the world surrounded by darkness because they refused the gospel. We need to be obedient to the call and share with all we can, but we cannot force anyone to accept Christ. Ultimately, they must decide.

III. The Commitment of Paul (2b) – 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. This reveals Paul's commitment even after much adversity. Consider:

A. His Assurance – We were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God. Even though he had faced great opposition in Philippi, Paul was not deterred. He came to Thessalonica in boldness. This speaks of his “*confidence, assurance, and unhindered speech.*” Philippi may have rejected the gospel, but Paul knew he had to keep on preaching. He knew this was not his message, but that of God. He was not bold in his personal ability, but in the power of God.

B. His Affection – Paul had spoken the gospel with boldness unto them. He knew their need. He knew they needed Christ in their lives. He knew Jesus was their only hope and he was determined to share the gospel with all he could regardless of the cost or danger!

- That clearly reveals the compassion Paul had for those who needed Christ. He was willing to face suffering, mockery, and even death for the gospel. Really when we think about it, that is how each of us should view the call of God. I know that is easy preaching and hard living, but we must not lose sight of all that Jesus endured for us. He loved us enough to go to Calvary; surely, we ought to love Him enough to share the gospel.

C. His Audience – He shared the gospel with boldness among much contention. The word *contention* literally means “*an assembly, an arena or stadium, a place where contests were held.*” Paul had a large audience at times with which to share the gospel. He took it to the public square. He sought to share Jesus with as many as he possibly could.

- Also, we need to consider the atmosphere this reveals. This is the Greek word *agon* from which we get our word agony. It has the idea of “*a struggle, fight, or conflict.*” Philippi had brought great adversity, but Thessalonica was not without opposition. Paul faced struggles there as well, but he refused to give up.

- We need the attitude and commitment of Paul. We can speak the Word with boldness in the Lord. We must endure for the Lord. There are souls in the balance. We will face adversity, but we must press on!

IV. The Conversation of Paul (3) – For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: Paul declares the manner of his exhortation, “an urgent cry, appeal, or call.” He sensed the urgency of the gospel message and desired all men to receive it. Let’s take a moment to consider this exhortation.

A. His Message of Truth – Paul did not speak with words of deceit. Paul was not deceptive. He did not seek to lead men astray with a false message or doctrine. He sought to lead them in the ways of God. We spoke of the need for leadership in our day. Many today who seek to lead, try to do so by deception. We need to share the message of truth, even if it hurts. Jesus is the only hope of redemption for humanity.

B. His Manner of Life – As Paul preached the gospel, he did so in an upright manner. There was no uncleanness in him. That word means exactly what it says. Paul was not guilty of filth and reproach. That is not to say he was perfect, but he lived a life pleasing to God.

- We could spend a great deal of time on that subject. You will have to agree that we are lacking in purity in our generation. God desires that we live lives that are clean and upright. We can’t live a perfect life, but there is nothing wrong with striving for perfection.

C. His Method of Ministry – Lastly Paul reveals that his exhortation was not spoken in guile. This is an interesting word. It literally means “a fishhook, a trap, dealing with trickery.” He was not seeking personal gain or glory. Paul did not seek a ministry that glorified the flesh, but he sought to glorify Christ. He was not seeking to manipulate men for his own gain. He was not seeking to trap them in a false doctrine that offered no hope.

- Much so-called ministry today is guilty of this. Some seek to keep people bound by their religion. They are taught that a certain amount of works must be performed if they are to be acceptable to God. Some are made to feel that financial contributions to the ministry are imperative to righteousness. Paul’s ministry was simple: he preached Jesus crucified, buried, and risen. He preached that Jesus was the only way of salvation. His ministry focused on Christ!

Conclusion: I trust the message has helped you in your journey with the Lord. It stands as a challenge for all of God's people. We are called to serve the Lord and proclaim the gospel. There will be times when that is difficult, but we must continue the race. We are also obligated to live lives that are pleasing to the Lord and above reproach. I pray that we will all seek to be more like Christ. If there is a need in your life, Jesus is the answer.