

Stewards of the Gospel

Imitate Us as We Imitate Christ (Part 8)

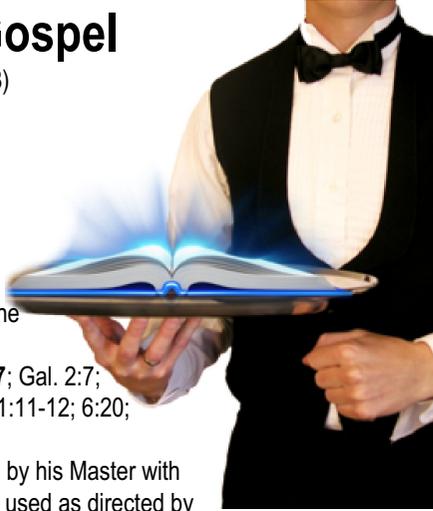
1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Colossians 1:24-29; 1 Peter 4:1-11

Entrusted with the Gospel

(1 Thessalonians 2:4)

- (v. 4) Paul saw himself as a STEWARD entrusted with the Gospel by God, his Master. (1 Corinthians 4:1-2; **9:16-17**; Gal. 2:7; Colossians 1:25; 1 Timothy 1:11-12; 6:20; Titus 1:3, 7)
- STEWARD: A servant entrusted by his Master with his Master's resources to be used as directed by the Master for the Master's glory.
- (Jude 3) Each Christian is a steward of the Gospel.
- (1 Peter 4:10) We are stewards of God's grace. **MEDITATE!**
 - We are to be **good stewards** of the **manifold** grace of God.
 - ★ Grace belongs to GOD and is **given** to us. (1 Cor 15:10)
 - ➔ "each one" – ALL Christians are recipients of God's grace.
 - ➔ "gift" – God gives gifts. He does not offer gifts. He demands that we use the gifts He gives. He does not just give gifts to be nice.
 - ➔ "minister to each other" – Gifts are to be used to *minister* to others.
 - ★ We exist to serve God and to serve others. We deny ourselves.
 - ➔ "good": excellent, surpassing, precious, commendable
 - ★ Matthew 25:14-30; 2 Corinthians 5:9
 - ➔ "manifold": (Acts 17:25) Life (time), breath, and all things are GIFTS from God! They are expressions of His GRACE towards us! All that we have is from God and we are to be **good** stewards of them. (1 John 3:16)
 - A steward possesses only what is the Master's and uses the Master's things as the Master has directed. (i.e. Joseph in the house of Potiphar/Genesis 39).
 - A steward works to please his master — not others. (Colossians 1:10; 1 John 3:22; Colossians 3:17, 23; Hebrews 13:21)
 - Paul tells Timothy to entrust the teaching of God's word to faithful men. (2 Timothy 2:2)
 - The Gospel is a TREASURE to be used and handled as directed by God, the Master of masters.
 - **WARNING:** One cannot SERVE to Masters. (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13)



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Paul, Our Model for Stewardship of the Gospel (1 Thessalonians 2:1-6)

- (1 Corinthians 11:1) Paul could say, "Imitate me just as I imitate Christ." (1 Cor 4:16; Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2 Thess 3:9)
- (Hebrews 6:11-12) Imitate those "who through faith and long suffering inherit the promises."
- (v. 2) Paul was NOT a **QUITTER**.
 - Before coming to Thessalonika Paul suffered GREAT persecution along with Silas in Philippi. (Acts 16:16-24)
 - But even in prison Paul was doing the work he was commissioned to do. (Acts 16:25-31)
 - (Acts 17:1-9) Paul was even abused in Thessalonika!
 - Paul never QUIT despite all of his troubles! (See 2 Cor. 11:23-28)
 - Paul says that they (he, Timothy, and Silvanus) were **BOLD** in speaking the Gospel in much **CONFLICT** or **CONTENTION**.
 - This word in the Greek is an athletic term to describe a contest; a struggle; a battle.
 - Just like an athlete has to be determined, dedicated, and committed so must we in the furtherance of the Gospel. (1 Cor 9:24-27)
 - Paul **labored** - **striving** - in doing the will of God. (Colossians 1:29)
 - Paul **struggled** in prayer for his brothers and sisters. (Colossians 2:1)
 - Paul would say to weary, tired Christians: **NEVER GIVE UP!**
 - ☆ "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong!" 1 Cor. 16:13
 - ➔ **BE STRONG!** (Joshua 1:6-9, 18; 2 Chronicles 28:10; Psalm 27:14; Isaiah 35:4; Daniel 10:19; 11:32; Haggai 2:4; Zechariah 8:9, 13; 2 Cor 12:9-10; Eph 6:10; Philippians 4:13; Colossians 1:11-12; 2 Timothy 2:1)
 - ☆ "Always be abounding in the work of the Lord . . ." (1 Cor 15:58)
- (v. 3) Paul's message is from God – not from ERROR or DECEIT.
- (v. 3) Paul's motives were PURE. He had no IMPURE motives or any intent to DECEIVE.
 - There were and are those who preach with wrong motives. (Philippians 1:14-19)
 - (2 Cor. 2:17) Many have corrupted and are corrupting the Word.
 - (2 Cor. 4:2) Many were and are, today, handling the Word deceitfully.
 - (2 Cor. 7:2) Paul affirms that they have wronged, corrupted, and defrauded no man.
 - (2 Cor. 11:13) There were, are, and always will be many false apostles (messengers) in the Church. (2 Peter 2:1-3; Acts 20:29-30)
- (v. 5) Paul hated (as we ought) flattery. (See **Psalm 12:2-3**; Proverbs 26:28; Isaiah 30:10; Romans 16:18; 2 Timothy 4:1-4)
 - We need to preach Christ crucified! (1 Corinthians 1:23)
 - Flattery is lying.

- (v. 6) Paul was NOT SEEKING glory from men – not from the Thessalonians or any others.

Paul, the Nursing Mother (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8)

- Paul could EXHORT with gentleness and real love.
- He compares himself to a nursing mother.
 - To mother children takes time, patience and lots of energy.
 - He cared for HIS OWN!
 - **“A nursing mother imparts her own life to the child.”** (WWW)
- A nursing mother will PROTECT her child with her own life.
- Paul says, “I not only gave you the Gospel, but I also gave you my life.” (v. 8)
 - See 1 John 3:16.

Paul, the Strong, Proud Father (1 Thessalonians 2:9-12)

- (v. 9) A father WORKS hard to bring the BEST to his children.
 - Paul worked a SECOND JOB so that he would be able to PREACH.
 - A father will instruct/command his children in the truth. (Proverbs 4:1; 6:20-23; 7:1)
- (v. 10) A real father sets a GOOD EXAMPLE before his children.
 - As a father, Paul could say, “Imitate me! As I imitate Christ.” (1 Cor. 11:1)
 - **Paul not only preached to his children he LIVED what he preached!**
- (vv. 11-12) Paul wanted his “children” to “walk worthy of God.”
 - **THE GOAL OF PARENTING OUGHT TO BE THAT OUR CHILDREN GROW WALKING WORTHY OF GOD!**
 - ★ (2 John 4) There is no greater joy for a parent or a pastor “than to hear that my children walk in truth.”
 - Paul did not PAMPER his children. He EXHORTED them.
 - “exhorted” is παρακαλέω (parakaleo) meaning “to call to one’s side”; “to instruct”; “to strengthen”; “to teach”
 - Paul CHALLENGED his children to be what they OUGHT to be.
 - Paul, the father, took time to teach his “children” how to walk properly.

It’s Our Turn Now

- WE have been entrusted with the Gospel/Word of God. Are WE faithful STEWARDS with what God has given us. (Jude 3)
- WE have been SAVED to WORK. God’s work is not EASY work, but it is REWARDING work. (Ephesians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:58)
- WE must share the PURE Gospel with PURE motives. There is only ONE Gospel. (Galatians 1:6-9)
- God hates deceitfulness and flattery. (Psalm 12:2-3; Proverbs 20:19; 26:28; Romans 16:18; Jude 16)

- As we GROW as disciples Christians we must become mothers and fathers for new Christians:
 - ① Young Christians (as well as unbelievers) will listen and learn from what we say.
 - ② Young Christians (as well as unbelievers) will learn from what we do.
- Our goal in life ought to be to walk worthy of our God. (Ephesians 4:1; 1 John 2:6; Colossians 1:10; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:12)
- We should be able to say to each other, “Imitate me just as I imitate Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:1; John 13:12-17; 1 Peter 2:21)
- We, as a Church, should be able to say to other churches, “Imitate us just as we imitate Christ.”

**What if all Christians in the world
were just like you?**

**Can you say,
“Imitate me, just as I imitate Christ”?**