

Taking New Territory in Troubling Times, Pt. 3

Courage & Credibility

Rob Rogers

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Kingdom vs. Culture Resource List

Perkins, J., & Waddles, K. (2018). *One blood: parting words to the church on race*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.

Stevenson, Bryan (2014). *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. New York: Spiegel & Grau.

Diangelo, Robin (2018). *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Barish, H., Duvernay, A., & Averick, S. (Producers) & Duvernay, Ava (Director). (2016). 13th. Unites States: Netflix.

“Racial Wealth Gap.” *Explained*, season 1, episode 1, 23 May 2018. *Netflix*.

Review

Two weeks ago, Pastor Steve began a series on the book of 1 Thessalonians. It was a brand-new church, incredibly contentious time, much going against them — but they didn't relent, kick back, or settle in. They pressed against the culture in their particular time — and as a result — experienced radical explosive growth in and through the Church.

We're talking about Taking New Territory in Troubling Times — NOT talking about just *church leadership* taking new ground, although we are — NOT talking about just *professional church people* taking new ground, although we are. **What we ARE talking about is YOU. You** taking new territory. **You** gaining ground. **You** growing in your obedience to Christ. What we **ARE talking about is every Christian. Every believer**. We're talking about you taking new ground personally. Taking new ground in your family. In your marriage. In your friendships. In your parenting. In your neighborhood.

TODAY in Chapter 2 of 1 Thessalonians, Paul tells us something so simple yet so profound...

Your credibility will make or break the claims you make.

Your credibility will make or break the claims you make.

...the statements you make will never outweigh the proof of your life

Question — *Does the life you live match what you say with your mouth? Because if they don't line up, this is exactly where we need to start taking new ground.*

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. ² But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. ³ For our exhortation *did* not come from error or uncleanness, nor *was it* in deceit.

⁴ But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as **pleasing men, but God** who tests our hearts. ⁵ For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. ⁶ Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. ⁷ But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children. ⁸ So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to **impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives**, because you had become dear to us. ⁹ For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰ You *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; ¹¹ as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children, ¹² that you would **walk worthy** of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

**PAUL'S MESSAGE
PAUL'S MOTIVE
PAUL'S METHOD**

Paul's Message

1 Thessalonians 2:2

...we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.

Paul made claims

- He preached the gospel
- He shared the Good News in the synagogue
- He was proclaiming a countercultural, potentially offensive message to outsiders and skeptics
- He expected people to be antagonistic toward his message

Today

- Many of us expect sharing the gospel in our culture will be painless
- If there is any tension at all, we shy away from preaching the gospel at all

Aware of own imperfections

- No one is more aware of our own shortcomings and inadequacies than ourselves
- We look at the fact that we don't have a perfect track record as a Christian
- We use our past stumblings and failures as reasons not to share the gospel
- The apostle Paul was fully aware of His own shortcomings

Romans 7:15, 18-19

For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

Actually not connected to anyone not a believer

- Actually not connected with anyone who is antagonistic, or ambivalent toward Christianity

And what we see in Paul's life is that not only did he not let His inadequacies and imperfections hold him back... but he went out and sought opportunities to be present with people who didn't believe.

**Paul was on the same mission Jesus was on... to seek and save the lost.
He was intentional!**

How many of us are actively seeking the lost?

How many of us are in relationship with unbelievers and are actively praying that God would rescue them?

How many of us are ready for the opportunity to share the gospel?

How many of us are ready to respond to the cultural objections to our faith?

How many of us are settling for living our Christian life vicariously through pastors or church leaders?

God has rescued you for so much more than that!

He's called YOU. He's chosen YOU! He's given YOU a purpose and a mission!

Don't settle for a mission-less Christianity.

Don't settle for just tuning in online, or attending a service and calling it good enough.

Don't settle for Christian education without Spirit-empowered application.

Paul was fully aware of his shortcomings — but did not let that stop him from seeking the lost, and bringing the gospel to city after city.

Paul's Motive

TODAY — A recent article regarding the modern perception of Christians from secular culture was not flattering — naming the moral failures of high-profile pastors and preachers, the perceived hypocrisy of cultural Christians, and the monetary and material greed found within the walls of the church.

1 Thessalonians 2:3,5,6

For our exhortation *did not come* from error or uncleanness, nor *was it in deceit*. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness; God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.

- we didn't come here to take advantage of you.
- We came to you not to coerce you, or convince you of these things for our own personal benefit.
- We're not seeking the praise of men... we're not seeking fame or glory

And then he says in verse 9, "In fact, we could have demanded that you help us materially, monetarily as apostles of Christ..." He says, "we had the positional and spiritual authority to place demands on you... but we didn't... We didn't want to place unnecessary burden you..."

Paul is saying: "This isn't about us! It's not about me! My motives are pure, we didn't come to take advantage of you... God is my witness..."

Why is he making those distinctions? **Why** is he driving that point home so hard?

- because Paul understood two realities of their day — it's no different today
- on one end of the spectrum we have a church that's *afraid to share the gospel...* a church that's *afraid to talk about Jesus with their neighbors*
- on the other hand, we've got a church that is *preaching the gospel for selfish gain.*

Paul says, *"I'm not afraid to speak up. I'm going to preach, I'm going to share the good news, I'm going to make the case, and argue the objections! I'm not afraid, I'm not ashamed, I won't be silenced! AND I want you to know beyond the shadow of a doubt, that I'm not preaching the gospel to get something from you. I'm not trying to draw you to me, I'm trying to point you to HIM. All this is for YOUR benefit, not mine!"*

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*This next section needs to be viewed on the video available online, in order to gain the full impact, that words cannot capture.*

At this time in the service, Pastor Rob expressed his love for Grace Chapel — because we are not afraid to talk about difficult or controversial issues. He specifically referenced being proud to be part of this

community because of the amount of people who spoke up this week about Ahmaud Arbery's shooting. He challenged the Church to not only speak up, but to demand justice where there is injustice.

**It's not enough to just speak up.  
We've got to stand up!  
We've got to prove our beliefs with more than just words.  
We've got let our actions speak.**

He thanked Grace Chapel's Director of Diversity, Janice Gaines, for her leadership. A "Kingdom vs. Culture Resource List" is at the beginning of this outline.

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## **Paul's Method**

### **1 Thessalonians 2:2,8,9**

But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.

*"We suffered in Philippi for preaching the gospel — and directly after being persecuted, imprisoned, beaten and reviled, we came directly here to preach the gospel to you!"*

*"We were bold in our God to speak the gospel to you in MUCH conflict... and not only did we give you the gospel of God, we gave you our own lives... we laid it all on the line for you... we toiled and labored all night and day for you... to not burden you... and we took all that weight, all the scorn, all the abuse for your benefit."*

**Nothing proves the sincerity of your beliefs  
like your willingness to suffer for them.**

**Nothing builds your credibility like suffering loss and hardship for what you believe.**

***This is why the early church exploded like it did.*** People were looking in on the early church from the outside saying, "Look at these people who are making enormous sacrifices for one another and for this crucified Jesus... what would compel somebody to live like this? Their brothers and sisters are being martyred and yet they still rejoice! How is this possible!?"

**Throughout the history of the church, wherever there is serious persecution— it grows. The only explanation for this is their unshakable joy, their unwavering commitment to the gospel.**

*Looking through the lens of church history, the time that Christianity's explosive growth began to slow down — was when Constantine made it the religion of the Roman Empire.*

***Why did it slow down? Because —  
when Christians are comfortable, we get complacent  
and when we're complacent, we compromise  
and when we compromise, we lose our credibility and when we've lost our credibility, our  
claims are meaningless.***

**Application** — *Maybe you'd say, I've lost my credibility. I've got unbelieving family members, and friends... unbelieving adult children... neighbors, coworkers — there's no way they would believe a word I say about Christ... I have no credibility.*

If you don't ever talk about Christ because you've blown it as a Christian, the **WORST** thing you can do is let that keep you from talking about Christ.

**The BEST thing you can do where you've compromised your credibility is go to those individuals and own it.**

*Go to them and say, "Remember back when I said this, or did that — that wasn't right for me to do... especially as a Christian. And I need to apologize to you for not representing Jesus well."*

**Question** — *Do you realize how much credibility that one decision will gain you?*

Not only are you just simply admitting that you're human,  
But at that very moment you're proclaiming Christ and opening the door for further conversation  
For some of us, owning our mistakes as followers of Christ IS the very thing that could lead someone else TO Christ

Don't ever let your past mistakes keep you silenced.

Own your mistakes.

Don't dismiss them, don't deflect.

Seek forgiveness in humility.

Own them.

And move forward into the opportunities God has put right in front of you.

### **1 Thessalonians 2:7,8,11**

But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children...affectionately longing for you...because you had become dear to us...as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children...

*Gentleness... not arrogance, not violence, not impatience*

*Gentleness, loving-kindness, affection, comfort*

**If you have credibility without proclamation, it only leads to admiration.**

- People admire you. They admire your life. You're humble. You're generous... But their admiration of you doesn't lead to anything beyond you.

**But credibility AND proclamation, only then will your life lead to transformation...**

- Why? Because you're taking the attention that's on you and pointing it toward the only One who is worthy of it!

**Paul's message** — was built on helping people follow Christ, not himself.

**Paul's Motives** — were pure... it wasn't for his own benefit, but for the benefit his hearers.

**Paul's method** — Love and self-sacrifice.

**2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ came down on Kingdom mission.**

- **His message?** He lived it. He is the Message. His life is the proclamation.
- **His motive?** Jesus Himself said, “I came not to be served, but to serve...”
- **His method?** No greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for His friends.

**No greater message. No purer motive. No greater love.**

*And Jesus tells us, as the Father has sent me, so I am sending you...*

This is exactly why Paul writes...

**1 Thessalonians 2:11-12**

...we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children, <sup>12</sup> that you would **walk worthy of God** who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

***Grace Chapel, may we walk worthy of God who calls us into His own Kingdom and glory.***

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## **Discussion Questions**

How do you relate to Paul in this passage?

Do you have any relationships with unbelievers, and are you actively praying that God would rescue them?

Are you ready to respond to cultural objections to your faith?

How can you be flawed while still growing in your credibility?

Is there anyone that you need to talk to — to apologize for not representing Jesus well?

# NOTES