

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE SPIRITUAL LEADER (2) 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

What does a real spiritual leader look like? How does he act? What are the evidences that mark the true spiritual leader apart from that false spiritual leader?

It was the heart's desire of Paul for the saints in Thessalonica to see him as the spiritual leader that loved them, cared for them, and ministered before them out of the abundance of the overflow of the love of God.

Paul had recently been asked to leave Philippi, due to the influence that he was having on the people...rather than quit or back down in any way, he moved on to the city of Thessalonica, and ministered to the church there.

The life of Paul depicts the true character of a spiritual leader...and his life depicts a life that is pleasing to the Lord God. Last week we discovered that a true spiritual leader has certain marks accompanying his life.

- 1. THERE IS THE MARK OF A FRUITFUL MINISTRY. (v.1)**
- 2. THERE IS THE MARK OF STRONG PREACHING IN THE MIDST OF OPPOSITION. (v.2).**
- 3. THERE IS THE MARK OF PREACHING THE PURE GOSPEL ACCOMPANIED BY A PURE LIFE (v.3)**
- 4. THERE IS THE MARK OF PREACHING TO PLEASE GOD FIRST. (v.4)**
- 5. THERE IS THE MARK OF PREACHING IN AUTHENTICITY (v.5).** Another mark of the genuine servant of God, that true spiritual leader is the mark of "authenticity". Paul declared that he never purposed to win the people with "flattery" for the purpose of gaining money or support from the people. His life was before then in authenticity.

He did what he did out of the overflow of the love of God and the call of God upon his life. Wherever there is a true spiritual leader...there is the mark of authenticity. He is not into the calling for one penny of what he can get out of it...but rather he preaches, teaches, exhorts, proclaims, rebukes when necessary, out of the fact that God has called him, and he desires to be a "true witness" before both God and men.

In the days of Paul, just as there are now, there were many that were "seemingly true spiritual leaders" yet behind their lives were "ulterior motives" of greed, and a desire for money and riches. God will make it His business to reveal all "spiritual leaders" that are deceptive in their motivations.

The fact that Paul mentions the words “flattery and “covetousness” reveals that some were accusing him for being in the ministry out of greed. Some thought he had chosen the ministry to earn a livelihood and to make money. Paul emphatically denies these claims. Paul reminds the church...that they know and bear witness of the truth.

However, wherever there is a minister that is preaching for flattery, or to win approval, or to win a larger financial package...that spiritual leader is not pleasing to God, and God will in His time deal with that servant.

6. THERE IS THE MARK OF PREACHING NOT FOR GLORY OR FOR PRESTIGE (v. 6). There are two important truths that come out of verse 6. First, Paul made it clear that he did not seek the glory, prestige, honor, or recognition of a single person. Paul was not out to be recognized as a “good preacher”, “a great preacher”. While Paul declared that he was not inferior to the “super-apostles”, his motivation in life was not to earn approval in the sight of man. Scripture is clear in Mt. 20:26-28, *“But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”*

Paul was very conscientious of who he was living for, and who he was ultimately pleasing, and such is the same among every true spiritual leader. They know who it is that has called them. They know the purpose of their calling, and they know that they will be ultimately accountable to Him, the Lord Jesus Christ.

When a preacher guards his words, so as not to preach the truth, to spare feelings of those who are in need of the truth, he has lost sight of his calling, and the fact that he will be called into accountability for withholding the truth. While Paul had the right to assert his position as an apostle, he made it clear that was not his focus. Quite the contrary, he was not demanding, but responded in gentleness and kindness before the people of God. One of the genuine, and most evident components of that true spiritual leader, that is often overlooked is “genuine kindness”. While spiritual leaders are expected to “know the Word”, often times the benchmark of “kindness” is overlooked. Yet, Paul declared that he made kindness and gentleness of high priority...as it is a high priority in the heart of God.

7. THERE IS THE MARK OF PREACHING AND MINISTERING IN GENTLENESS AND LOVE (vv.7-8). First, when Paul talks about his disposition toward the saints he declares, “we were gentle among you as a mother feeding and caring for her own children...” (LB). Paul’s life was one of gentleness toward the people of God, in a similar way as a loving mother takes great care for her child or children. It was not Paul’s desire to ever hurt, offend, but to minister in gentleness and love for the people of God. If they needed confrontation, it was done in love. If they needed rebuke, it came from a servant that had a heart of love for them. Paul treated them as “precious” for they were precious to God, to Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, and they were precious to Paul as well. One of the missing components in the hearts of many spiritual leaders is the fact of “ministering in love”.

Second, Paul's affection for the people was so strong that he was going to preach in spite of all the adversity and opposition that came upon him. Paul was not only willing to "give God's Word", but to give "his life" as well. Paul poured his soul out for the people of God, in order that they could learn the Word and the Ways of God, and be conformed to His image and likeness. The reason that he would sacrifice for them was because they were "dear" or beloved by him.

When a spiritual leader demonstrates a genuine love (agapetoi) for the people of God, that love will be reciprocated, and the people will also know that all is done and said, is done out of a spirit of love...even when stern messages must be preached. Paul loved the people, not because they were always loving, but because God had placed in his heart a love for them...a love that stems from the grace of God.

8. THERE IS THE MARK OF LABORING AS UNTO THE LORD. (v.9) Paul didn't have a five day nor a 40 hour week. He did not labor until 4:00 or 5:00 and then use the remainder of his time as he desired. Paul was a servant of God, to meet the needs of the world and to reach men with the glorious gospel of Christ. Paul's labor was in part done in order that he would not be a burden to anyone in order to reach and minister to all that he could. The life of Paul reveals a life given to work, given to the work of God, given to writing and ministering to all that God would allow Him to.

The heart of Paul was to use his time wisely. Since God had entrusted him with so much, there was a "weight" upon his heart to get the gospel out to all that would hear and receive the Word of God.

When God places across our life people to bear witness to and we overlook and shun the chance to witness, there is the sobering reality that their blood may very well be required at our hands, as we have overlooked and passed by opportunities to witness.

Paul wanted nothing to hinder the gospel, the message that he preached, as it was his desire to get the message of the good news of Jesus Christ out to all peoples.

9. THERE IS THE MARK OF PREACHING WITH A CLEAN, PURE, IMPECCABLE LIFE. (v.10) **While the minister of God has feet made of clay, and lives in a human body, it is a major deal in his life and heart to have a clean and pure life. Paul declared that the people were witnesses as was God about his life. Paul's life was a holy life, lived separate and apart from the world, for the glory of God.**

Paul didn't get caught up in the affairs of the world, but used his life as unto the Lord, to bring honor and glory to Him. Paul didn't get sidetracked with political agendas, social issues, but rather was focused on preaching the gospel...that liberates all men. Paul's life was effective, for the reason being that his life was a "righteous life". His life both publicly and privately was in synch. It is much on the heart of the true spiritual leader to be pure, clean before both God and men. When there is the slightest hint of sin, there is immediate confession, repentance before God and others if necessary.