

- Alright, guys, welcome back, and good to see everyone this morning.
 - So, it's been a couple of weeks, so I want to back up and grab the previous verses we studied from our last time together.
 - And then of course, bring us forward in context.
 - So, turn with me if you will, to 1 Thessalonians Chapter 1, verses 5:10. And let's see what Paul had to say.
- Now, as we begin, I want us to remember why Paul is writing this letter to the church in Thessalonica.
 - And of course, he is writing this letter because he has something he wants to explain to them.
 - At least as it relates to what he has heard specifically about this church's behavior.
 - Or issues they have been facing or dealing with, or even causing themselves.
 - This letter, along with all letters or Books of the Bible, was written with a specific purpose and or intent in mind.
 - Which, almost always (not always) but almost always, revolved around correcting the church's messed-up thinking, and or their behavior.
 - But what was it specifically that Paul wanted to say to these people, what was it they needed to hear?
- Well, I'm glad you asked because Paul had at least 8 purposes in mind when he wrote this epistle, and we addressed each one of these in our introduction of this letter, but due to the fact that I was off last week, coupled with the fact that we will be entering into the next chapter of this letter, I want to highlight his reasoning one more time. And here it is:
 - 1 – He wanted to express his thanks and praise for the Thessalonian believers.
 - 2 – He wanted to encourage the Christians in Thessalonica who were making good progress in their faith.
 - 3 – He wanted to defend himself against attacks by his enemies, specifically his Jewish opponents.
 - 4 – He wanted to exhort his readers (lifting them up), reminding them to stand firm in the face of great persecution, and he also wanted to encourage them not to return to paganism.
 - 5 – He wanted to encourage his readers to continue growing in Christ.
 - 6 – He wanted to clarify the destiny of Christians who die before the Lord calls His own to Himself.
 - 7 – He wanted to urge his readers to indeed watch for the Lord's return.
 - 8 – He wanted to deal with certain aspects of church life.
- Which we will find very applicable in our everyday life as well. And so with that brief introduction behind us, let's pick back up with [1 Thessalonians 1:5-10](#)

[1 Thess. 1:1](#) Paul and Silvanus and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
Grace to you and peace.

[1 Thess. 1:2](#) We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;

[1 Thess. 1:3](#) constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

[1 Thess. 1:4](#) knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;

[1 Thess. 1:5](#) for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

[1 Thess. 1:6](#) You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

[1 Thess. 1:7](#) so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

[1 Thess. 1:8](#) For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.

[1 Thess. 1:9](#) For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God,

[1 Thess. 1:10](#) and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

- Verses 1–10 lay out the first chapter of 1 Thessalonians.
 - And from there, we now move into Chapter 2, where the translators entitle this section *Paul's Ministry*, and here is what Paul wrote:

[1 Thess. 2:1](#) For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain,

[1 Thess. 2:2](#) but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.

[1 Thess. 2:3](#) For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;

[1 Thess. 2:4](#) but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.

[1 Thess. 2:5](#) For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness—

[1 Thess. 2:6](#) nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.

[1 Thess. 2:7](#) But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly

cares for her own children.

[1 Thess. 2:8](#) Having so fond an affection 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 very dear to us.

- There is so much to unpack in these verses, it's hard to know where to start, so I will do what I always do and start in the beginning.
 - Right out of the gate, Paul begins in verse 1 by establishing a principle, a principle that says vanity has no place in ministry.
 - And Paul begins Chapter 2 by letting us know, these people are brothers and sisters in the faith.
 - And we know that because he calls them brethren.
 - Just a side note here, if you are a believer, you are my brothers and sisters. Which means we are family.
- And I find that interesting somewhat, because there are really no more contentious relationships on the planet than that of family!
 - It's unfortunate, but it's true.
- But having said that, as contentious as some of our family relationships are, there is something somewhat unique about the family dynamic.
 - Something the institution of the family has that no other institution possesses.
 - Which is the concept of "Blood being thicker than water."
 - Have you ever heard that saying before?
 - If you haven't, that's okay, I'll tell you what it means.
- It means that when the chips are down, and the world is against you, and even when one family doesn't care for the other, when someone from outside the family comes against another member of the family, the family (despite their differences) will almost always come to the defense of one another.
 - Even when it's two family members who don't care for each other.
 - And why is that?
 - First, it's because of love.
 - And second, because there is no stronger bond than that of blood.
- Now, you might be sitting here this morning, and thinking to yourself ok, preacher what's all this got to do with Paul's words?
 - It has a lot to do with it, and the thought of all this leaves me asking the question, why did Paul call them brethren?
 - Why didn't he just call them friends?
 - Why didn't he open Chapter 2 by saying "For you yourselves know, friends."
 - Why does he call them brethren?

- And why are Christians often referred to as children and brothers and sisters throughout the scriptures?
 - It's because when you are saved, there is something supernatural that happens to you.
 - You are reborn into a new family, the "Family of God."
 - And believe it or not, your new heavenly family replaces your earthly one, which upsets some people, but it shouldn't.
- It's not as if God is saying, abandon your family and never speak to them again.
- When I say that our new family replaces our current earthly family, they don't replace them from an earthly standpoint.
 - They replace them, spiritually speaking, and just like your earthly family, your new spiritual family possesses a bond that cannot be broken.
 - And just to reinforce this concept, I want to read from Matthew 12
 - Where Jesus himself will be espousing and reinforcing what I am saying.
- Now, before I delve into this topic, let me begin by setting the scene for the verses I will be teaching you.
 - In Matthew 12, we will be picking up with Jesus ministering to the people, and as usual, the Pharisees (the religious rulers) are following him around trying to catch him doing something wrong.
 - This dissertation begins in Verses 1-7 with the Pharisees trying to reprimand Jesus about allowing the disciples to pick heads of grain from the fields on the Sabbath, and as you will see, they are doing so because they are hungry.
 - The Pharisees say it's unlawful to do this on the Sabbath (essentially work on the Sabbath).
 - At which point Jesus reminds them of what David did all the way back in the OT, when he became hungry and entered the house of God and ate the bread that the Priest had consecrated.
 - Which (according to the Law) was not lawful for him to do.
- In His dialogue with the Pharisees, Jesus makes it really simple.
 - When he says, was it not lawful for David to enter the house of God and eat the bread in the temple?
 - When in fact the priests themselves do the same thing (when they break bread on the Sabbath), which is also against the Law.
 - Yet they are considered innocent when they do it.
 - And then, from there, Jesus makes another statement that will summarize it all.
 - And before I read it to you, let me go back and read the preceding verses for context, and I want you to listen specifically to how this encounter ends.

Matt. 12:3 But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions,

[Matt. 12:4](#) how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?

[Matt. 12:5](#) “Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent?”

[Matt. 12:6](#) “But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here.

[Matt. 12:7](#) “But if you had known what this means,
‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.

- Parlaying off of our teachings from two weeks ago, where I said it’s all about the “heart.”
 - When I talked specifically about Halloween and Christmas, and even Easter.
 - How all those holidays began as Pagan Holidays, but regardless of all that – I said, “It’s not about how the holiday began,” rather it’s all about the reason why you celebrate those Holidays.
 - And as we discovered a few weeks ago, it all boils down to a heart issue.
 - And sure enough, this is exactly what we see Jesus saying when He said ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.
 - This is just another way of saying, it’s all about the intent of the heart.
 - And to just reinforce or somewhat prove what I am trying to convey, I would like to give you another perspective, or another way to look at it, this concept of the heart.
 - And to do so, I’ll do it by giving you the inverse of this concept.
- Meaning, I want to teach you this concept of the heart by giving you a reverse look at it, by giving you another way to look at it.
 - And I’ll do that by saying this: if you participate or celebrate anything, even something that is Christian in its origin, say something like Church on Sunday morning, and you do so, without your heart being in the right place.
 - Meaning, for example, if you attend Church for any other reason than for the right reason, you would be committing the same sin as that of the Pharisees.
 - Which is the Sin of rule following.
 - The sin of doing something so that you could say look at me, I am better than you, because I follow the rules!
 - It still boils down to a heart issue, and as I said, if you do it with the wrong intent, it’s still sin.
 - And it makes no difference whether it’s a pagan holiday or not.
- So, Jesus will be dealing with this concept throughout Matt. 12, and the chapter culminates with Jesus explaining the following about “family.”
 - Speaking specifically about His Mother and Brothers.

- Listen to what He says in [Matthew 12:46-50](#), where the translators entitle this section of scripture *Changed Relationships*.

[Matt. 12:46](#) While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him.

[Matt. 12:47](#) Someone said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.”

[Matt. 12:48](#) But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?”

[Matt. 12:49](#) And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers!

[Matt. 12:50](#) “For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

- From Jesus’ own words, you can clearly see why the translators entitled this section “Changed Relationships.”
 - Jesus is being crystal clear about the importance of the change in the relationship from an Earthly family to a new Spiritual Family.
 - Once you become a believer, this is so important for us to understand.
 - Well, for at least two reasons.
 - First of all, when you understand this concept, it will liberate you as it relates to any contentious relationships you may have with your family.
 - Because it clearly tells us that the most important relationship you can have on earth lies in that of your Spiritual Family.
 - This liberates you by giving you a break when it comes to worrying about any rocky relationship you may have with a family member.
 - And why is this the case?
 - Because your Spiritual Family is the one that will live on forever, whereas our earthly family relationships will eventually die (because we all eventually die).
 - So, what Jesus is telling us is that eternity is where our focus should be.
 - The second reason we should understand why our spiritual family is so important is because “Birds of a feather flock together.”
 - Meaning every relationship you have should promote and or improve your relationship with God!
 - Because, plainly put, as we all know, this life is very difficult.
 - And the only way we can stay at peace within ourselves is to improve our Spiritual Growth.
 - Which comes by way of growing closer to God.
 - Which means spending all your time with non-Christian people (even your earthly family), does not help promote your Spiritual Growth; on the contrary, it

actually stifles it!

- So, don't beat yourself up over family members with whom you may not get along with it's okay.
 - And why is it okay?
- Because God said it's okay, matter of fact, God said if your earthly family are not believers they are in fact not your family at all.
- Now, for all of you sitting here today, as well as all of those who may be listening in internet land, and for those of you who may have a great relationship with all your family (or even part of your family), if what I said upsets you, listen closely to me, I am not saying do away with your earthly family.
 - I am saying put them in the rightful place in your life, because ultimately what matters most is eternity.
 - And by the way, I didn't just make up this statement, Jesus said it!
 - But with all this said, if your family is Christian, then congratulations, you're in luck, welcome to the best of both worlds!
 - So, enjoy that fact, but if they are not, and you are not drawn to them, don't feel bad about it, do the best you can do, and move on!
- So, pressing on from here, when Paul calls them "brethren," it's not just lip service; it's the truth.
 - They are truly family, and therefore, they should listen to what he is saying.
 - Essentially, what he's doing is establishing credibility.
 - Pressing on enough about all of this brethren stuff, let's move on.
- So far, we are making great time. I am 5 words into Chapter 2, so at this rate, we should finish today around midnight.
 - I guess so much for shortening the service today.
 - Anyways, re-reading verse 1, Paul says,

[1 Thess. 2:1](#) For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain,

For our coming to you was not in vain

What does that mean?

It means a lot, and to answer the question, we must begin by asking ourselves, what does it mean to be vain?

And in studying this word, I wanted to see what word was in the original Greek, and sure enough, it was the same word the translators used.

- It was the word vain.

So what does it mean to be vain?

- The Webster's dictionary defines Vain as "Having or showing an excessively high opinion of one's appearance, abilities, or worth."

Man, oh man, does this speak volumes.

Paul says, we didn't come to you in a way that elevated ourselves.

Another way to say it is, we were humble.

- Humility is the key here.

And all I would say about this is, does this resonate with you in any way?

Have you ever been to a church where the music guy or pastor has become a Rock Star?

- I call it The Church of Entertainment.
- It's like going to the Movies.
- Just come on in, sit right down and hold onto your hat, and get ready to be amazed!

In the modern-day church era, we see this all the time, and if you haven't ever really experienced it, just turn on TBN!

The concept here is that the Pastor and Music guy must be electric, well spoken, and well presented.

- Essentially, they must bring the Wow factor!

All so that the people can say, I have truly been in the presence of the Lord today.

Unfortunately, for the most part, this doesn't actually happen.

But because Satan is a deceiver and a "Master Counterfeiter," he has been able, through the church, to counterfeit the work of the Holy Spirit.

- And he does this, through Music and Oratory Presentations, and by the way, it works!
- At least as it relates to making you feel like the Holy Spirit moved!

But what's interesting is God goes out of his way both here and in Paul's other letters, letting us know that is not how He works!

Matter of fact, He goes out of his way to show how Paul could not be a vain person even if he wanted to.

- And we know this primarily because of 2 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians, where in these letters Paul is described (in detail, I might add) as being the opposite of vain.

On the contrary, the scriptures tell us he wasn't much to look at, and he wasn't a very good speaker.

Matter of fact, listen to how his detractors described him in 2 Corinthians 10

[2 Cor. 10:8](#) For even if I boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be put to shame,

[2 Cor. 10:9](#) for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.

[2 Cor. 10:10](#) For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal

presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible.”

Then again, in the letter we are studying here today, where Paul says this in:

1 Thess. 2:5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness—

So, throughout the scriptures, we see a consistent theme.

- God chooses the most unlikely candidates to carry out His work.
- He does not pick the best-looking or the best speakers.

And why is this the case?

- Because no man will ever get glory for the things of God.
- And I want you to think about this for just a second, NO man will ever get glory for the things of God.
- No man will ever be elevated on earth as a representative of God.

So, when you see this happening in church, you can automatically know something isn't right.

Now, you might be sitting here today and saying to yourself, Well, Pastor Greg sure is painting with an awful broad stroke.

I am, but I am simply teaching you a fundamental principle of God.

Paul goes out of his way, letting us know neither he nor his disciples will ever be elevated; on the contrary, they are in fact the opposite of that.

- Which tells us we should always be vigilant when it comes to this sort of thing, because when the man gets elevated, it's almost always the beginning of the end.

And we see this played out most prominently with the affairs that Pastors get caught up in over and over again, I find myself asking the question, How does that happen?

How can a preacher enter into a pulpit and preach, knowing he is engaged in adultery?

- And the only answer I can come up with is vanity and pride.
- He becomes elevated, and his pride gets the best of him!

And so, it's for that reason we are given strict warnings in the scriptures as it relates to this topic.

Just as King Solomon told us in [Proverbs 16:18](#) where he says,

**Prov. 16:18 Pride goes before destruction,
And a haughty spirit before stumbling.**

So, Paul makes it clear to the people in Thessalonica that neither he, nor his disciples came to them in vain.

- And their actions and behavior prove this to be true!

And so, as I close us out this morning, I want to ask a question: how do we stay humble?

And how do we prevent this from happening?

- The answer lies in the pages of God's Word.
- You see, when you study God's Word correctly and in context, something will happen to you!

And I talked about this a few weeks ago, when I explained to you how studying God's Word places a mirror in front of your face!

Causing you to reflect and become self-aware!

- And the result of that is Humility.

On many occasions, when studying, I have found myself emotional and in tears.

Another way to say it is, I found myself convicted about sin, and through that conviction, God humbled me.

- And let me say, this isn't a one-time thing; this happens all the time.
- And so, if I stay in God's Word and I commune with Him in prayer, I will experience this constant battle of coming face-to-face with who I truly am, not who I think I am!

I will leave you with the words of Paul in another great book of the Bible: Romans 12, where Paul titles the following, Dedicated Service.

[Rom. 12:1](#) Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

[Rom. 12:2](#) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

[Rom. 12:3](#) For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Now, even though studying God's Word is the main mechanism by which God humbles, there are other ways.

- And one of those ways is by participating in the Lord's Supper ceremony.

You see, when you take the Lord's Supper, and you do so correctly (which cannot be done unless you think about what you are doing).

When you do that, I mean, really think about what this sacrament really means, it will humble you!