

October 8, 2000 by Steve Brandon



A Successful Ministry (part 1)

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2

1. Bold speech (verse 2)
2. Pure speech (verses 3-6)
3. Genuine love (verses 7-12)

We come again this evening to the exposition of God's precious Word that he has given to us. And so I would invite you to open your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2. As we begin chapter 2, we begin a new emphasis in this epistle.

In chapter 1, Paul expressed his thankfulness to God for all that God had done in the life of the Thessalonians. God had chosen them to be vessels of mercy. God had poured forth His Spirit upon them. They had become tremendous examples of what it means to live an obedient, Christian life. They had become workers for the kingdom. Paul said that he constantly remembered their "work of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope." 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1 is all about Paul giving thanks. God had worked mightily among those new believers in Thessalonica. And for that, Paul was very thankful.

However, while God was at work in the life of the Thessalonians, Satan also was at work. Not only was Paul simply thwarted from returning to the Thessalonians (as 2:18), but accusations began to fly against Paul and his ministry among the Thessalonians. As I alluded to last Sunday morning, Paul was accused of having self-centered motives and teaching deceitful heresies, which was motivated by Paul's greed and his desire to exalt himself in the eyes of the Thessalonians.

Now, the reason that we know this is that these are the sorts of accusations that Paul emphatically denies in chapter 2. And the first 12 verses of chapter 2 consist of a defense of Paul's ministry. Paul is defending himself against the accusations that the unbelieving Thessalonians are accusing Paul of.

These enemies said, "Paul didn't tell you the truth" (verse 3). They said, "Paul's motives weren't pure" (verse 3). They said, "Paul was simply trying to deceive you" (verse 3). They said, "Paul was simply greedy -- all he wanted was your money" (verse 5). They said, "Paul was trying to build you up with flattering speech" (verse 5). They said, "Paul didn't really care for you, he only cared for himself" (verse 7). They said, "Paul hasn't come back, because he never really loved you" (verse 7).

I have personally seen even the most blameless of God's servants receive the brunt of such accusations. Many times, these accusations are entirely without a single shred of evidence. The goal is merely to discredit the man of God, and thus, by discrediting the man, the ministry is discredited as well.

But I do find interesting that each of these attacks (if true), are significant attacks. One needs to simply read 2 Peter, chapter 2, and you will find the very same accusations leveled against Paul in 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2 to be identified as a sign of a false teacher in 2 Peter, chapter 2. If true, they are legitimate reasons for alarm!

2 Peter 2:1-3

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in [their] greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

False teachers teach "destructive heresies" (2 Pet 2:1). False teachers "follow their sensuality" (2 Pet 2:2). False teachers "exploit with false words" (2 Pet 2:3). They "are greedy" (2 Pet 2:3). They "don't care for the flock" (2 Pet 2:7). False teachers "are in the ministry for personal gain" (2 Pet 2:7). But, such was not the case for the apostle Paul. And in this 2nd chapter of Thessalonians, he felt the need to defend his ministry. 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 is about Paul defending his ministry.

Now, if your Bible is like mine, you might have a heading for chapter 2 which reads, "Paul's ministry." Now this is true, but Paul didn't really give the details of his ministry among the Thessalonians to point out what his ministry was like. Paul gave some of the details of his ministry to defend his ministry from the false accusations that were leveled against it. And this isn't unfamiliar with the servant of God.

You remember in 2 Corinthians, chapter 11, in order to prove a point, Paul pointed out his own conduct in the ministry so as to demonstrate that he was in no way inferior to other so-called, "super-apostles." At that time, we were a little hesitant about doing so, even calling such an engagement, "foolishness." And yet, he did, because he needed to defend his ministry. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul spent much of chapters 1 and 2 defending his own reception of the gospel and subsequent ministry.

And even the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, faced railing attacks against His ministry. The Pharisees accused Him of teaching heresies - "For

this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18). The Pharisees accused Him of being deceitful. They charge Him of falsely professing to being godly: "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons" (Matt 12:24). The Pharisees accused Him of dwelling with sinners (and thus, being one): "Why is He eating and drinking with tax-gatherers and sinners?" (Mark 2:16; Luke 5:30).

So, here in these first 12 verses, Paul is giving a defense of his ministry. As you remember, chapter 1 was about "Paul's Thankfulness," so I would like you to remember that chapter 2 is about "Paul's Defense of his ministry." Let's read the passage together, ...

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, 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. For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; 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. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed--God is witness-- 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. But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. 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. For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

And I know that I have taken a little extra time tonight to introduce this passage, but it is for the sake of the overall broad context of the epistle that I do this.

Now, as we begin to dive into this passage, I would like for you to make one observation (and I have mentioned this before). Notice how important it is for the people to know their leaders. In this passage, Paul appeals to the Thessalonians to confirm what he is saying. He says things like "As you know," "as you recall," "you are witnesses of these things." In fact, no fewer than 7 times in these 12 verses does Paul make such an appeal. In your Bibles, you can circle any time when Paul writes "you know" or "you recall" or "you are witnesses" or "God is witness." You can see the emphasis, ...

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2

For YOU YOURSELVES KNOW brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, 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 Thessalonians 2:5

For we never came with flattering speech, AS YOU KNOW, nor with a pretext for greed -- GOD IS WITNESS

1 Thessalonians 2:9-11

For YOU RECALL, brethren, our labor and hardship, [how] working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. YOU ARE WITNESSES, and [so is] God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just AS YOU KNOW how we [were] exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father [would] his own children,

I think in the future of the ministry of Rock Valley Bible Church, when accusations come (and they will), the best way to combat them is to simply let the ministry stand, and appeal to the common, general knowledge of the ministry - "As you know, as you know." I think of the present ministry of Kishwaukee Bible Church, when accusations come, the best way to combat them is simply to appeal to what is known as established fact concerning the ministry - "as you know, as you know."

It also strikes me as an important thing that you all know well what the character of the pastors and elders are like, so that accusations won't stick. It is important that you all know why our teaching is in accordance with the truth of the Scripture, what kind of motives we have in the ministry, how we behave, what kind of work habits we have, what kind of love we have for you, and what kind of care we have for you.

I have entitled my message this evening, "A Successful Ministry." In defending his ministry, Paul gives 3 characteristics of a "successful" ministry.

1. Bold speech (verse 2)
2. Pure speech (verses 3-6)
3. Genuine love (verses 7-12)

Now, the reason why I have entitled my message this evening, "a successful ministry," is because of verse 1.

1 Thessalonians 2:1

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming (i.e. our entrance) to you was not in vain.

For Paul to have written this, "that his ministry wasn't in vain," people must have been saying that it was in vain. This word "vain," simply means, "empty, meaningless, void." And accusations were coming against Paul and Silas that their time among the Thessalonians really accounted to nothing. These people would say, "Paul and Silas were with you for only a few weeks - and then they left. Their ministry was nothing! Their ministry had no effect." And this was the goal of all of the other accusations - to show that Paul's ministry among the Thessalonians was really to no effect.

I find it interesting to note that, even Paul, when he had been away from the Thessalonians for some time, was greatly concerned as to the effectiveness of his ministry among the Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians 3:5 tells us, "For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor should be in vain." In other words, "lest all of our time spent with you comes to no effect, and you turn out not to be true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ." For Paul, he would see his ministry among them to be vain if after they received the gospel, and professed to believe, they really didn't believe. In this case, his ministry among the Thessalonians would be equivalent to him never having ever come to the Thessalonians.

However, despite Paul's worries to the contrary, he staunchly and steadfastly, affirms his effectiveness while among them. We see the fruit of Paul's ministry in chapter 1. Chapter 2 gives us the character of his ministry. He says "our coming to you was not in vain." More literally, he says, "our coming (i.e. our entrance) to you has not been in vain."

In the Greek text, the word for "has not been" is in the perfect tense (a past event with present results). Perfect tenses are usually spoken of using the helping verbs "have." For instance, somebody is telling you a story about this experience that they had recently in Chicago when they were up in the Sears Tower looking down upon the beautiful city. The person then asks, "Have you ever been to the top of the Sears Tower?" The answer, is, "Yes, I have been to the top of the Sears Tower," meaning that there was a past event, with a present result. In this case, not only did you go there, but you can relate to the story, because you have been there and have experienced much of the same things. You can share in the story.

So, in this case, when Paul says, "our coming to you has not been in vain," he is saying that what Paul did in the past still has present results - the ministry still continues to bear fruit! And we dealt with many of the continuing, present results of Paul's ministry in chapter 1. We see their "work of faith, labor of love, steadfastness of hope ..." (verse 3) and the great way in which they became examples in how they received the gospel (verse 6).

Let's look at the first characteristic of a successful ministry. This is all we will get to tonight.

1. Bold speech (verse 2)

1 Thessalonians 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.

Paul reminds the Thessalonians of the circumstances surrounding his coming to be with them. He said that he had "suffered and been mistreated in Philippi" before he came to Thessalonica. They had suffered in Philippi. By this phrase, Paul is focusing on the bodily suffering which was inflicted upon him. As we shall see in a moment, he was publicly stripped of his robes and beaten with rods. They had been mistreated in Philippi. By this phrase, Paul is focusing more on the injustices and indignities imposed upon him. Again, as we shall see in a moment, the fact that Paul was a Roman protected him from many of the injustices that he received from those in Philippi.

And let's look at this, for the events leading up to Paul's entrance into Thessalonica is quite significant!

Acts 16:11-40

Therefore putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis; and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a [Roman] colony; and we were staying in this city for some days. And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

And it happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortunetelling. Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation." And she continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans." And the crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them, and proceeded to order [them] to be beaten with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks.

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to

them; and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened. And when the jailer had been roused out of sleep and had seen the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!" And he called for lights and rushed in and, trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that [very] hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his [household.] And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men." And the jailer reported these words to Paul, [saying,] "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Now therefore, come out and go in peace." But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out." And the policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. And they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans, and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city. And they went out of the prison and entered [the house of] Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

Picture it, when Paul and Silas arrived in Thessalonica, they had been beaten with rods. Perhaps they had bruises on their backs from them. Perhaps these bruises were visible to the Thessalonians. Know that this wasn't anything unusual for the apostle Paul - to walk into town, having just been beaten in the previous city. Luke recorded for us (in Acts 14), that after preaching in Lystra, the Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and won over the multitudes there and "stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead." (Acts 14:19). After which, he arose and went the next day to Derbe to do the same thing.

Know that this was important for the apostle Paul, who said, "I bear on my body the brand marks of Jesus" (Gal 6:17). Perhaps this gives us a clue when Paul speaks about "filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions" (Col 1:24). So, here is Paul, coming into Thessalonica, beaten and bruised. And what does he do? He comes into the synagogue and declares boldly the message of Jesus Christ. Was Paul still bold? Yes! And in fact, this is the very thing that Paul said gave evidence to his successful ministry. He said that he spoke boldly amid much opposition.

1 Thessalonians 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.

The crowds were stirred here. They formed a mob and set the city in an uproar. Paul said that despite all of the persuasions to the contrary, he still proclaimed the gospel boldly to the Thessalonians.

With how he was treated in Philippi, Paul certainly must have thought twice before he would open up his mouth again (and possibly receive the same treatment): "After we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi" (1 Thess 2:2a). Furthermore, the fact then when Paul preached in Thessalonica and received opposition from some of the Thessalonians, must have caused Paul to consider his boldness in proclaiming the gospel to them: "amid much opposition" (1 Thess 2:2b). In Thessalonica, were things easy for Paul? No. Was he still bold? Yes!

And yet, despite the hindrances from where he was and to where he came, he proclaimed the gospel boldly. Think about it. What would cause somebody to preach his message when there is great opposition? Only with a genuine belief in your message will you proclaim it amidst much opposition.

I think that this is true of all causes, not just in the Religious realm. Think of the Political realm. Think of what is happening in Yugoslavia with Milošević, the Chinese student revolt in Tiananmen Square, the American Revolution (signing of the declaration of independence), the abortion issue today. If you genuinely believe in your message, you will be bold about it. If you don't genuinely believe in it, when the going gets tough, you will leave. If you are proclaiming your message for selfish gain, like many false teachers do, you will leave at the slightest hint of trouble. Did you know that in general, you don't see liberals going to the brink of civilization to bring the gospel to others?

And so that was the case with Paul. He so believed this message that he preached it even when things were difficult. Now, having said this, let me also tell you that in and of itself, boldness doesn't prove anything about the authenticity of the message. Mormons are bold. Jehovah's Witnesses are bold. Hare-Krishna's are bold. My friend at work, who is in a Klingon (Star Trek) club is bold. The college partier is bold about his drinking. But when Paul said that he had a boldness in God to proclaim the gospel, it demonstrated his genuineness.

Proclaiming the gospel with boldness was a true desire of Paul. He enlists the Ephesians to pray on his behalf, "that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:19-20).

And Paul was a bold proclaimer. During his imprisonment in Philippi (in Acts 16), he was boldly singing praise to His God, which caused the jailer to question the source of his power. When standing before Felix, who could release him, he proclaimed, "righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come" (Acts 24:25). When under house arrest, for two years, he was "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered" (Acts 28:31). This boldness was the apostolic pattern of preaching. This

boldness ought to exemplify our preaching today.

I want to quote next from one of my favorite preachers. His name is James MacDonald, he is a pastor at Harvest Bible Chapel in Rolling Meadows, Illinois. He wrote, ...

The early church appears to have placed no emphasis on evangelistic methodology. Their approach was simple and powerful, they were BOLD! The Greek word translated "boldness", so many times in the New Testament, is a word which literally means "openness" or "candor"; to speak freely especially in the face of hostility. It does not imply using a loud voice, or an obnoxious presentation of spiritual truth that disregards the willingness of the listener. Boldness is the Spirit directed conviction that one must share the good news of Jesus Christ and not fear the response or reproach of the listener. Spirit led boldness has been replaced by "the fear of man which brings a snare" (Proverbs 29.25). Who are we to think that we can share the Gospel in a way that makes people feel comfortable, when Steven, James, Paul and Jesus Christ Himself were beaten ridiculed and ultimately killed for boldly proclaiming the truth. Modern proponents of the "subtle gospel" must consider Peter a fool for saying "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4.13). Would to God that the unsaved in our day could see our boldness and marvel realizing that we have "been with Jesus" (Acts 4.13). It is all right there in Acts 4! We rely on God for supernatural boldness, some respond and receive Christ, others become very angry and reject, or even attack us. Then, we continue in prayer for boldness. Boldness is not the easy way, but it is God's way. Our fear of man is understandable - even Paul asked for prayer "that I may speak boldly as I ought to speak" (Ephesians 6.20) - but timidity is not acceptable. Our problem is that we want to share Jesus and remain popular with those who reject Him. We want the approval of His hearers more than the approval of God (cross-reference Galatians 1.10). We have opted for a sociological approach to sharing the Gospel rather than a supernatural one." For ten years now, we have challenged our people to be bold witnesses for Jesus Christ - to "go out into the highways and compel them to come in". We have not always reached the ones we wanted to reach, but we have discovered that all around us are people whom God has ripened to the gospel through the painful circumstances of life. Though some Christians are more gifted in evangelism than others, all believers are called to be bold witnesses for Jesus. Boldness is not something we can work up ourselves, but it is something that Jesus gives to those who persistently ask. "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28.1). [\[1\]](#)

I think that James MacDonald is right on in his assessment of the situation. When you look to the Scripture, there is one word that describes their evangelism methodology - boldness! And this is what Paul is saying here in 1 Thessalonians - "we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition" (1 Thess 2:2).

Think about how this has always been the characteristic of God's people who proclaim His message. From Noah, who was a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5) and preached the coming destruction for 120 years, to Moses and Joshua, who pleaded with Israel to obey the Lord their God. From the prophets, who proclaimed repentance and forgiveness, to John the baptist, who boldly spoke against the hypocritical Pharisees and told them to "flee from the wrath to come." From Jesus, who boldly proclaimed the truth amid much opposition from the religious leaders of the day, to Peter, Stephen, Philip, and Paul.

They all had several things that were similar. Their message was always the same: "repentance and forgiveness." Their methodology was always the same: "confident boldness." I will be honest with you all. I will tell you that this is "the" issue in my life, in my ministry. I need to be bolder than I am.

This week, I have lamented my feebleness in this area. I have prayed that God would make me bolder. I read things like what J.C. Ryle said about Spurgeon -

"I have often thought that one great secret of the marvelous honor which God has put on a man who is not in our communion (I allude to Mr. Spurgeon) is, the extraordinary boldness and confidence with which he stands up in the pulpit to speak to people about their sins and their souls. It cannot be said he does it from fear of any, or to please any. He seems to give every class of hearers its portion—to the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the king and the peasant, the learned and the illiterate. He gives to every one the plain message, according to God's Word. I believe that very boldness has much to do with the success which God is pleased to give to his ministry. Let us not be ashamed to learn a lesson from him in this respect. Let us go and do likewise." [\[2\]](#)

And I pray, God, make me like Spurgeon! I read about Hugh Latimer, who was once called upon to preach before Henry VIII, and began his sermon in the following manner (I quote from memory, and do not pretend to verbal accuracy).

He began: "Latimer! Latimer! do you remember that you are speaking before the high and mighty King Henry VIII; who has power to command you to be sent to prison, and who can have your head cut off, if it please him? Will you not be take care to say nothing that will offend royal ears?" Then after a pause, he went on: "Latimer! Latimer! do you not remember that you are speaking before the King of kings and Lord of lords; before Him, at whose throne Henry VIII will stand; before Him, to whom one day you will have to give account yourself?" Then after a pause, he went on: "Latimer! Latimer! be faithful to your Master, and declare all of God's Word."

And I pray, God, make me like Hugh Latimer. I read about these things and cower in my own response.

Now, I do know some degree of boldness in my life. I mention studying the Bible at the Master's Seminary as often as I can - how my life was changed when I went to a church that simply opened and clearly taught the Bible. I mention our church and my involvement as often as I can.

In fact, I have spoken so much about this in the past, that my boss has told me to cool it off a little bit.

I have known a bit of boldness in my life and I have shared what God has done in my life with others. Even this week, I had an opportunity to declare His praise with my sickness. I think of times in my life where I was most bold about proclaiming the message of Christ. It has been at precisely those times in which I have purposely forced myself to be bold. I think of College Projects where I was forced to go out and share with others. But, I feel as if I could do far better. And I am comforted to know that Paul also felt the same way. I press this upon you all also. Is this not one of your greatest weaknesses as well - boldness to proclaim the gospel?

As I have thought about this, I have thought about a good friend of mine, who was a pastor, who sensed a lack of evangelism in his church. So, he took the next 10-15 weeks teaching on evangelism. I have thought, you know, this is the wrong approach. He has been preaching in his church for years now. His people know well the message of the gospel. He simply needs to instill boldness in them.

How to do this? Create uncomfortable situations for them and push them to be bold. Is that not what Jesus did when he sent the 70 out? He forced them to trust God explicitly! And thus, taught them about boldness. You might say, "But, Steve, I'm not a people person!" Perhaps we should learn from our children. Carissa has been talking with her friend about idols. She told a child in the sandbox, "Repent!" Perhaps we should learn from this minister on the front page of the paper - "A man who has courage in his convictions." Could our boldness put a member of our church on the front page?

I am encouraged with the emphasis that we have had in recent weeks during our prayer time. We need to have evangelistic hearts that desire to share the gospel. And yet, I ask, as much as we need this boldness, "Where does this boldness come from?"

Look closely, ...

1 Thessalonians 2:2

but after we had already suffered and had 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.

The source of evangelistic boldness comes from God, Himself. We will never muster it up on our own. We must pray for it!

A missionary friend of mine said something that has stuck with me now for many years. He said, "Evangelism is 90% prayer" - praying for boldness! And the early church did the same thing!

Acts 4:31 tells us of this after an early church prayer meeting: "And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness" Oh that God might fill us with a boldness to proclaim His name!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 8, 2000 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] James MacDonald

[2] J.C. Ryle