

Christian Leadership

by Colin Anderson

Colin Anderson emphasizes that Christian leadership is about being a positive example and influencing others through actions rather than just words.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 1:2

Topics: "Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being models and leaders in the Christian faith. He shares a personal experience of being mistaken for a model and uses it as an analogy for believers to display the garments of salvation and adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ. The speaker highlights the apostle Paul's ministry as an example of a good leader who renounced dishonesty and manipulation in handling the word of God. He emphasizes that the gospel should not be presented in word only, but with power and the Holy Spirit, leading people to be born along by the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

I'm going to ask you to turn with me, please, to the first epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians. I'm going to warn you that I'm not going to let you go to sleep. I'm going to make four or five points on the subject of Christian leadership, which was a topic that we, excuse me, entered into this morning, and we want to try to develop that very simply, and then get a reaction from the audience.

First Thessalonians, and we're going to read from chapter one. Paul and Silvanus, or Silas and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father, knowing brethren beloved your election of God. For our gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, as you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you were examples to all that in Macedonia and Achaia.

For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves show

of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus which delivered us from the rock to come. I want you to raise your hands in answer to this question, as may be appropriate.

How many of you here have been saved within the last three years? The last four years? The last five years? Okay, so we have a number here, saved five, four, three. How many were saved in the last six months, anyone? The last year? Okay, but however long it is you have been saved, you have become a leader. You have become a leader.

We need to realize what's involved in leadership, and that actually we are all involved in leadership, because whether we preach or remain silent, we influence people in one direction or another. We may be good leaders, we may lead people in a right direction, or we may lead people in a wrong direction, but whatever progress we have made in the spiritual life, we are leaders in that particular phase of the Christian experience. You see, we're all born imitators.

That is why the leadership that we get, and the leadership that we give, is so important. People are going to imitate those who have been a help to them spiritually. They're going to take the color, initially at any rate, of their Christian life, from those people who have been influential in their lives.

I remember a number of years ago, I was working at Galilee Fiddle Camp with our brother James Booker, and we were working as co-directors. Really, I insisted that he was the director, but sometimes I took over when he let me. And he and I were really leaders in that camp, and what we did was, for the boys camp and for the girls camp, we had a program each morning, and Jim would take it one morning.

That is, he would take the message, and I would take the message the next morning, and speaking to the boys or the girls, as the case might be. We did that in the initial stages of the camp, until we got it going. And I remember that one day, when it was my turn to lead the singing, and Jim's turn to speak, I left the auditorium where we were, and made my way around the grounds, because I wanted to get in the car.

I had to go and pick up some groceries for the camp. And as I passed by a tent, I heard Jim's younger son and his daughter playing a game in the tent, and I thought, this sounds interesting, and stopped for a moment to hear what they were playing. And I heard Jim's son say, now this morning I'll be Uncle Jim, and you'll be Uncle Andy.

So, they were obviously imitating the leadership that they had observed in the camp, and David Booker got up, and he apparently, now this is what the, he hadn't got this idea from us, I'm sure, but apparently he opened his Bible just at random, and was prepared to preach from whatever text he felt. And he opened his Bible at random, and this is what he read, and Asa slept with his fathers, and they buried him. Now, he said that was a very wicked thing for Asa to do, to sleep with his fathers.

No wonder they buried him. Now, you see, what that boy was doing, he was following leadership. He was following what we were doing.

He was an imitator, and we're all imitators. I imitate people that I admire. You imitate people that you admire.

So, you were a follower when you became saved, but as soon as you were down the road, half a step, you became a leader for those who were coming behind. And that's what we have in this first epistle to the

Thessalonians. Did you notice that these converts were only converts for a very short while? This was a very young church.

They'd only just begun on the Christian pathway, and notice what it says about their ministry. Verse 7, "...so that you were examples to all who believe in Macedonia and Achaia." Where did they get the idea of being examples from? Well, if you look down, you'll notice it says that, verse 5 I should say, "...our gospel came to you not in word only." See, the pattern that they had gathered, the pattern they had received from the apostles, was not simply a pattern of people who could vocalize the faith, people who could in a very effective way present the gospel. There was that, but there was more than that.

"...our gospel came not to you in word only, but in power and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance or much carrying, so that the people were borne along by this tremendous influence of the Holy Spirit." And what was it that the Holy Spirit used? Not only the word, but notice, "...you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." So that there was an example given to these Thessalonians. They observed the way these men lived who ministered the word of God among them. They caught their spirit, they read their motivation, and they were impressed.

And they admired what they saw, because they came into the family of God as a result of hearing the message and observing the lives of those men. So that they themselves then, in turn, verse 7, became examples. They became, and the word really is, models.

Models. I one time went into a big store downtown in Toronto, and I was uninitiated in these things. In those days I'd been asked to meet a person in a very flashy, very stylish restaurant on the top floor of Eaton's store, as it was.

Eaton's was a big large store like JCPenney, or whatever you have around here, I don't know. But one of these big stores anyway, and they had this big restaurant on the top, very flashy place, and I didn't know, but there was a fashion show on there that day, and I wondered why, as I stood in the foyer waiting to be shown to my feet, waiting for my friend to come, I wondered why this lady was walking towards me in a very sort of stilted fashion, and she was staring right at me. I thought, does she know me? Honestly, I looked back at her, and I sort of smiled, kind of wand'ly, you know.

She didn't smile, she still kept her composure, and then she swept by me, and I thought she was staring at somebody else. Well, I thought, that's strange, she must have known me. I thought she did, she was mistaken, of course.

And I waited a little while longer, there was another lady coming out, and she did exactly the same thing. She stared at me, and I thought, my, I'm popular today. But you see, it suddenly dawned on me that these people were models.

What were they doing? Their object was to display the garments they were wearing, so that a husband would say to his wife, you like that dear, I'll buy it for you. That was the idea, wasn't it? That's what the Lord wants us to be. Models, wearing the garments of salvation, adorning the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, recommending by our lives and our conduct the message that is preached.

Whether we do the preaching, or whether we don't, we all are to become models, and in that sense we become leaders. So, every one of you here today is a leader. The question is this, what kind of leaders are we? Let's notice, secondly, that leadership is not preaching.

It's not preaching, it is that, in part, for some. Let me coin a word, it's not preaching, it's passing. Passing.

Let me explain what I mean. The apostle in Ephesians chapter 4 says that we are to speak the truth in love. Now, that word truth is not really a noun, it's a verb, but it's untranslatable in English.

We can't really put it in English. If we were to put it in English, we wouldn't translate speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up into him, we would translate it this way, but truthing it in love. What the apostle is emphasising there is not simply the communication with the lips, but communication by the life.

We're exemplifying, we're setting forth the truth that we preach with the lives that we live, and that is open to every one of us, and that is the challenge that comes to us as Christians. We don't need to sit back and say, well I'm not gifted to preach. You're gifted to pass the truth.

For, you see, leadership is not preaching, but passing. It's making a way for others to follow, breaking the trail for others to say, that's the way I want to go. A good many of us are prepared to be signposts, but God does not want signposts.

He wants guides. You know the difference between a signpost and a guide? A signpost says that's the way to go, but it stays right where it is. A guide says, I've been this way, come with me, and he goes with you, and that's what we need in the Christian community.

A good many of us are prepared to be signposts. Some of us are prepared to stand up and preach only. May the Lord help us, if that's the limit of our exercise.

We're not to be signposts merely, but we are to pass the truth for others to follow. Listen to the Apostle's words, and they summarize his ministry, and show us what a good leader he really was. He says this, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not, but we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty.

Notice how he's passing the truth. He's setting it forth. He's exemplifying it.

We've renounced the hidden things of dishonesty. We're not walking in craftiness, nor are we handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, passing the truth. Manifestation of the truth, not merely a vocalization of the truth, but by a manifestation of the truth, by refusing those ways which were dishonoring to God, which could be used by those who are accustomed to manipulating crowds.

We know today on the TV, and in large gatherings across our country, there are people who are able to manipulate people, and their methods sometimes, sadly, are underhand. They do not commend the gospel, and people who are unbelievers say, and sometimes with some accuracy, those people are just in it for money. Now, what they preach might be true.

What they say might be accurate, but they're poor leaders, because they're setting a bad example. Leadership, then, is accomplished more with the feet than with the mouth. It's possible to be a good preacher, in quotes.

Not really, but for the sake of the point I want to make, it's possible to be a good preacher and a poor leader, lest, says the apostle, when I have preached to others I myself should be rejected. That's what he means by being a castaway there in 1 Corinthians 9, I believe. Lest when I have preached the message, people would have got such a bad example that they would not follow the teaching that I gave.

We must be leaders. We have examples of leadership in Scripture, many of them. The Lord Jesus said, if I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

Listen to his words, for I have given you what? An example. An example. Paul says, you yourselves know that these hands have ministered not only to my own needs, and he's talking to leaders, he's talking to the elders from Ephesus whom he's gathered there at the seashore, and he's speaking to them, and he says you know that we have in everything showed you how you ought to work hard.

They had demonstrated the truth. Shepherd the flock of God among you, says the Apostle to those elders of Ephesus. Shepherd the flock of God among you, not as lording it, or others as Peter.

Peter says, shepherd the flock of God among you, not as lording it over your charge, but proving example to the flock. You see, elders, it is true, should be apt to teach. That's one of their qualifications, but let me suggest to you the other qualifications are very demanding.

He has to be right domestically in his home life. He has to be right in his relationships with the world. He must have a good report of them that are without.

He must be right privately in his own secret soul. He must be a man that is self-controlled and not given to anger, a man who knows how to control his appetite. He must have all those personal qualifications that commend the gospel of Christ.

Then he becomes an elder. Now, why do you think God has elders in the assembly? I think some people have the idea that the concept is to have a sort of ruling class up here. These men are to be elders, and they're always to remain the sort of elite, and there's to be a sort of, not a generation gap, but if you like, some sort of spiritual gap between the elders and the flock, and the elders should be up there and the flock can be content to be down here.

Now, that simply is nonsense. Why does God give examples? That's what elders are there for, they're to give an example. Why does God call that there should be these examples in the fellowship? It is in order that others may rise to the same position.

That's the purpose. That others may attain to the same standard of living that the elders set. It isn't that they may be removed from the others so that they may become a legislative body dictating to the rest of the assembly.

That's the very opposite of what it teaches in the word of God. That's the way they do it in the world. But, rather, that their example should draw the others up into following in that same path that they have mapped out for others.

Two qualifications, or one qualification for leaders, is that they must themselves be led. If you don't respond to the leadership of the Lord, you can't lead others to follow the Lord. Very soon after I was married, we had our first child within the first year, and then the second child came along fairly rapidly afterwards, and we waited a couple of years and had another child, and then four more years we had another child, and I remember that in those early days when the family was very young, it seemed very quickly it was born home to me that the authority that I could wield in my family depended on my submission to the Lord.

You see, for a little while with children you can dominate them, because you're bigger than they are. Let me tell you something, down the road a little way you're going to learn something, and that is when they get big they don't respond to that domination anymore. And if you've given them nothing else but your rule and your domination, they will rebel.

That's what's coming down the road, if you just simply legislate with the stick. I'm not saying the stick doesn't have a place, believe me, it should have, man, but I'll tell you something, I don't use the stick on my boy now. He's six foot six.

I see him down there in the basement lifting those great big barbells, you know, and I say, man, I'm going to leave him alone. I don't take my belt off anymore. I did at one time, occasionally.

But you see, the thing that has come back to me is this. It's what I am, what I did, the example I gave. That's what they follow.

Sometimes I'm sorry for some of the things I did. My example could have been better, but that's the thing they remember, because that's what leadership is all about. You're a leader, dad, mom, elders, young converts.

What kind of leader are you? What example do you give? You see, and I'm going to stop now and throw it open, and that may be a dangerous thing to do, but that's what I'm going to do.

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