

Our Crown of Boasting

Scripture Reading: 1 Thes. 2:1-2, 7-8, 11, 19-20; Phil. 4:1; 2 Thes. 1:4; Col. 1:28-29; Acts 20:20, 31

I. Having a heart to love and care for people:

- A. We have tried many ways to gain the increase, but little has worked.
- B. There is no way that works if we do not have a care for and interest in people; however, if we do have a care and interest, the care itself will open up the way.
- C. It is not that we are short of ways; it is that we are short of heart.
- D. We need to have a praying spirit and a heart to love and care for people; if we have this kind of heart and an intensified care for people, the way will be opened.
- E. To be useful is to pick up a burden for souls; a certain older brother who is now with the Lord was a good example to us:
 - 1. He was neither an elder, nor a co-worker, or any kind of leader, but he was used much by the Lord.
 - 2. He had a heart for the young people, the new ones, and the new beginners; almost every new one was invited to dinner by him.
 - 3. If we would all be like this, the church life would be marvelous; our whole church life would be revolutionized.
- F. We need to pick up a genuine heart to love the sinners and a genuine burden to take care of the younger ones; if we have a will to do this, we will surely be able.
- G. Everyone can take care of three or four younger Christians.
- H. Our success depends not on our knowledge, way, or skill but on our heart; we need to pray for this and take this word for ourselves.
- I. Since we love the Lord and His recovery, we need to bring this matter to the Lord and pray for a burden.

1 Thes.2:1 For you yourselves know, brothers, our ¹entrance toward you, that it has not been ^ain vain.

2 But having suffered previously and having been outrageously treated, even as you know, in ^{1a}Philippi, we were ^bbold ²in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much ^cstruggle.

7 But we were ^agentle in your midst, as a ^{1b}nursing mother would ^{2c}cherish her own ^dchildren.

8 ^{1a}Yearning in this way over you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also ^{2b}our own souls, because you became beloved to us.

11 Just as you know ¹how we were to each one of you, as a ^{2a}father to his own ^bchildren, ^{3c}exhorting you and consoling you and testifying,

II. Considering the ones saved and nurtured by us as:

- A. Our HOPE—Paul seemed to be saying, “If we do not have you, we do not have anything; you are our hope, even as your hope is the Lord’s coming back”—1 Thes. 2:19a.
- B. Our JOY—“Without you, at the Lord’s coming back we shall be short of joy and glory. We need you!”—1 Thes. 2:19b, 20b; Phil. 4:1; cf. John 15:11.
- C. Our CROWN—“You are our hope, our joy, our crown, and our glory before the Lord Jesus at His coming”; Paul expressed deep emotion in caring for his children—1 Thes. 2:19c; Phil. 4:1b; cf. Prov. 17:6.
- D. Our GLORY—Since the apostles were the believers’ nursing mother and exhorting father (1 Thes. 2:7, 11), the believers, as their children, were their glory and joy; apart from them, the apostles had no hope, glory, or crown of boasting—v. 20.

1 Thes.2:19 For what is our ^ahope or ^bjoy or crown of ^cboasting before our Lord Jesus at His ^dcoming? Are not even you?

20 For you are our ¹glory and joy.

Phil.4:1 So then, my brothers, beloved and ^alonged for, my ^{1b}joy and ^ccrown, ²in the same way ^dstand firm in the Lord, beloved.

John 15:11 These things I have spoken to you that My ¹joy may be in you and *that* your ^ajoy may be made full.

Prov.17:6 Grandchildren are the crown of old men, And the glory of children is their fathers.

III. Boasting only in the work of gaining, perfecting, and building up people—v. 19:

- A. Boasting in their FAITH—faith is the sum total of our experience, enjoyment, and gain of Christ; Paul regards the believers' faith as a sacrifice offered to God—2 Thes. 1:4.
- B. Boasting in their TESTIMONY—if the saints hold forth the word of life, apply it by living out Christ, Paul will have something of which to boast in the day of Christ—Phil. 2:16a.
- C. Boasting in their ZEAL—this zeal, this burning, must be Christ Himself; when we open to Him and let Him come in, He is the burning One; the real zeal comes from the spirit; we can be burning in spirit by opening to the Lord from the depth of our being, from our spirit, and let the Lord fill us from within—2 Cor. 9:2; Rom. 12:11.
- D. Boasting in their PERSON—the Corinthian believers were the fruit of the apostle's labor, a labor in which he risked his life; in them the apostle could boast of this—2 Cor. 1:14a; 1 Cor. 15:31.
- E. In the day of the Lord—the apostle would be able to boast, glory, and rejoice in the believers in the day of Christ, in the day of Christ's second coming, when He will judge all His believers—2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 2:16b; Rom. 14:10b; 2 Cor. 5:10.

2 Thes.1:4 So that we ourselves ^aboast in you among the churches of God concerning your ¹endurance and faith in all your ^bpersecutions and the afflictions which you bear,

Phil.2:16 ¹Holding forth the ^{2a}word of life, so that I may have a ^{3b}boast in the ^{4c}day of Christ that I did not ^drun in vain nor ^elabor in vain.

2 Cor.9:2 For I know your ^aeagerness, of which I ^bboast on your behalf to the Macedonians, that ¹Achaia has been prepared since ^clast year; and your zeal has stirred up the greater number *of them*.

Rom.12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, *but* be ^{1a}burning in spirit, ^{2b}servicing the Lord.

2 Cor.1:14 Even as also you know us ^ain part, that we are your ^bboast, just as you also are ^cours in the ^{1d}day of our Lord Jesus.

1 Cor.15:31 I protest by the ^{1a}boasting in you, brothers, which I have ²in Christ Jesus our Lord, I ^{1b}die daily.

Rom.14;10b For we will all stand before the ^{1a}judgment seat of God,

2 Cor.5:10 ¹For we must all be ^amanifested before the ^{2b}judgment seat of Christ, that each one may ^{3c}receive the things *done* ⁴through the body according to what he has practiced, whether good or ⁵bad.

IV. Fostering the young and new believers—1 Thes. 2:7, 11:

A. As a nursing mother cherishing her own children—v. 7:

1. Even though Paul was a brother, he considered himself a nursing mother; he had no thought of position, dignity, or authority; a nursing mother's dignity consists in nourishing and cherishing her children, in taking care of them in a tender way.
2. The word cherish is a word of utmost tenderness; Paul regarded himself as a cherishing one, not merely as one who serves; his care for the believers was full of tenderness.
3. The word yearning in 1 Thessalonians 2:8 indicates being affectionately fond of, affectionately desirous of, like a nursing mother affectionately interested in her child whom she nourishes and cherishes; this was what the apostles did with the new believers.

B. As a father exhorting his own children—v. 11; 1 Cor. 4:13a, 14-16; cf. Philem. 10:

1. In cherishing the believers as their own children, the apostles considered themselves a nursing mother; in exhorting the believers, a father.
2. Paul was a father exhorting his children; as such an exhorting father, Paul seemed to be saying, "Children, we are here only for you. Without you, life is meaningless. If it were not for you, we would not want even to live."

C. Travailing in birth until Christ is formed in them—Gal. 4:19:

1. Travail refers to painful toil in childbirth; in this metaphor in Galatians 4:19 Paul likened himself to a mother who gives birth to a child.
2. Paul had labored in this way to regenerate the Galatians when he first preached the gospel to them; because they had deviated from the gospel that he had preached to them, he was toiling again in travail until Christ would be formed in them:
 - a. To have Christ formed in the believers is to have Christ fully grown in them.
 - b. First, Christ was born into us at the time we repented and believed in Him, then He lives in us in our Christian life, and, finally, He will be formed in us at our maturity.

1 Thes.2:7 But we were ^agentle in your midst, as a ^{1b}nursing mother would ^{2c}cherish her own ^dchildren.

8 ^{1a}Yearning in this way over you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also ^{2b}our own souls, because you became beloved to us.

11 Just as you know ¹how we were to each one of you, as a ^{2a}father to his own ^bchildren, ^{3c}exhorting you and consoling you and testifying,

1 Cor.4:13 ¹Defamed we ²exhort. ... **14** It is not to ^ashame you *that* I write these things but to admonish you as my beloved ^bchildren.

15 For though you have ten thousand ¹guides in Christ, yet you do not have many ^{2a}fathers; for ^bin Christ Jesus I have ^cbegotten you through the ^dgospel.

16 I ¹exhort you therefore, Become ^aimitators of me.

Gal.4:19 My ^{1a}children, with whom I ^{2b}travail again in birth until ^{3c}Christ is ^{4f}formed ^din you,

V. Contacting sinners, seekers, and saints out of love and burden, not as a duty or necessity—1 Thes. 1:3:

A. Writing down their names:

1. We need to review all our acquaintances and make a list of them.
2. Our acquaintances include our relatives, neighbors, friends, schoolmates, and colleagues.

B. Praying for their spiritual welfare constantly—Rom. 1:9; Col. 4:12; 1 Thes. 1:2:

1. We need to pray over the name list and seek the Lord's leading concerning who should be the first for us to take care of.
2. If we pray in this way, the Lord will lead us and we will have the burden to contact specific people.
3. We should also keep ourselves open to the Lord for His new leading to visit new people.

C. Visiting them regularly for shepherding—Acts 20:20:

1. We can visit people by making appointments with them; we must do this not only continually but also continuously, day by day.
2. We need to have the practice and a habit of inviting people to have dinner with us.
3. Going out to visit people should be a part of our daily Christian life; we should budget our time for going out to visit people, setting definite goals and bearing remaining fruit—John 15:5, 16.

D. Bringing them to home meetings:

1. We must have proper home meetings in order for our fruit to remain.
2. We must learn to skillfully grasp the time to speak something of the Word—concerning Christ, concerning God, and concerning God's salvation—even if only for a few minutes.
3. We should always keep in mind that if someone is a new believer, our primary purpose in the home meetings is to feed them.

E. Establishing them in the church life—Col. 2:7; 1 Thes. 3:2:

1. We should not forget that the goal of gaining people is to bring them into the proper church life for the increase of Christ to build up the Body of Christ.
2. We should not wait too long before bringing the new believers into the practice of the church life.
3. We should help them to realize that Christians are like sheep of a flock—John 10:11, 16.
4. We should also train our new ones to prophesy; the church will be built up step-by-step as we and our new ones prophesy in the meetings—1 Cor. 14:31, 26, 12, 4.

Col.4:12 ^aEpaphras, who is one of you, a slave of Christ Jesus, greets you, always ^bstruggling on your behalf in his prayers that you may ¹stand ²mature and ^dfully assured in all the ³will of God.

Acts 20:20 How I did not ^awithhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring *them* to you and by *not* teaching you publicly and from ^bhouse to house,

VI. Taking the way of persistence and endeavor, undeterred by obstacles, not disappointed by setbacks, and not expecting quick results:

A. According to the divine operation in us—Col. 1:29:

1. The God-ordained way is a laboring way; to labor is more than to work; without our laboring there can be no practice of the God-ordained way—v. 29; 1 Cor. 15:10, 58.
2. Paul did not labor according to His own ability or strength but according to Christ's operation, which operated in him in power.

B. One person at a time—Col. 1:28:

1. The most effective way to contact people is one by one.
2. The best way to conduct a gospel dialogue is with one person at a time.
3. Whenever someone speaks, you discern what kind of person he is and where he is coming from—cf. John 3:1-21; 4:4-42.

C. By admonishing, teaching, and presenting:

1. Paul taught, admonished, and warned the saints face to face; by this teaching from house to house, Paul ministered Christ to the saints to cause them to grow in life— Acts 20:20, 31.
2. By growing in Christ, eventually we will arrive at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, which is the Body of Christ, the expression of Christ—Eph. 4:13; 1:22-23.

Col.1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man ^{1a}full-grown ²in Christ;

29 For which also I labor, ^{1a}struggling according to His ^boperation which operates in me in ²power.

1 Cor.15:10 But by the ^{1a}grace of God I am what I am; and His ^bgrace unto me did not turn out to be ^cin vain, but, on the contrary, I ^dlabored more abundantly than all of them, yet ²not I but the grace of God which is with me.

58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be ^{1a}steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the ^{2b}work of the Lord, knowing that your ^{3c}labor is not ^din vain in the Lord.

Acts 20:31 Therefore ^awatch, remembering that for ^bthree years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with ^ctears.

Eph.4:13 Until we all ¹arrive at the ^{2a}oneness of the ^bfaith and of the full ^cknowledge of the ^{3d}Son of God, at a ^{4e}full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the ^{5f}fullness of ³Christ,