

MOTIVES FOR COMMITMENT / Sunday School- June 13, 2010

Unifying Topic: PLEASING TO GOD

Lesson Text

- I. Motive For Ministry (1 Thessalonians 2:1-4)
- II. Defending His Motives (1 Thessalonians 2:5-7)
- III. A Ministry Of Love (1 Thessalonians 2:8-12)

The Main Thought: But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. (1 Thessalonians 2:4, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Many people shape their lives around significant goals to which they are committed. What should be the single, overall goal that shapes our lives? Paul implies that all we do should grow out of an earnest commitment to please God.

Lesson Aim: To teach the motive and purpose of Paul's ministry to the Thessalonians.

Life aim: To teach how Christ wants us to be genuinely motivated by a strong, unshakable commitment to serve Him sincerely and to practice a powerful ministry for others that is based on love and compassion..

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- 2:1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:
2:2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.
2:3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:
2:4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.
2:5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:
2:6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.
2:7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:
2:8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.
2:9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.
2:10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:
2:11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,
2:12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

HISTORY:

The book of 1Thessalonians is chronologically the first book of the New Testament to be written. Remember that Paul had spent just three Sabbaths in Thessalonica preaching the gospel and planting the church. Now, less than a year later, he is writing to them. The book has three basic divisions: Paul is first reviewing their past, then he will encourage and exhort their present walk, and finally remind them of their blessed future - the rapture of the church and the return of Christ.

Paul had heard from people everywhere that the fruit was abundant:

- Their work of faith showed because they turned to God from idols.
- Their labor of love demonstrated because they served the living and true God.
- Their steadfastness of hope was that they were waiting for His Son from heaven.

Paul emphasizes Christ Second Coming throughout this book. Because the Thessalonian church was being persecuted, Paul encouraged them to look forward to the deliverance Christ would bring. The chapter ends with the assurance that Jesus, 1Thess. 1:10 ...delivers us from the wrath to come. As we look at chapter two, Paul is calling to their remembrance what happened in the past.

LESSON:

1 Thessalonians 2:1- 4 Motive For Ministry

Paul and His Motives:

¹**First**, Paul's visit to them was "not in vain"—Here Paul declares that, despite the suffering they had experienced "in Philippi" (Acts 16:19-24, 35-39), their ministry to the Thessalonians was indeed fruitful.

¹ <http://wwwFOUNDERS.org/ss/0909.htm>

Secondly, Paul's message did not have its source in evil—Now Paul asserts that his "exhortation," or preaching—the content of which was the "gospel of God"—did not originate from evil motives or intentions.

Thirdly, Paul's goal was to please God, not men—Seeing himself as one who was both "approved" and "entrusted" by God to function as a conduit of "the gospel," Paul determined to please his Lord and Master at all costs.

2:1-2 Mistreated In Philippi

The Thessalonians knew that Paul had been imprisoned in Philippi just prior to coming to Thessalonica (Acts 16:11:17:-1). There had been slanderous accusations against his work and motives.

In Acts 16:13-15, Paul and those he traveled with landed in Philippi. Not finding a synagogue to teach at, they went to the river where they supposed that the few Jews in town would gather for prayer. Finding only an assembly of women, they began sharing with them. Lydia got saved, and asked the group to stay at her house. One day, while they were walking along, they passed a slave-girl who was possessed with a demon. This gave her supernatural powers of fortunetelling, and her owners made a lot of money off of her ability. The slave-girl began following Paul and the group, crying out: Acts 16:17-18 ... "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. Her owners were not too thrilled about this. They grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities. The chief magistrates of the city had them stripped and beaten with rods, then thrown in jail with their feet fastened in stocks (v19-24).

You'd think that would be a good opportunity for complaining. But instead, we read, Acts 16:25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; Suddenly, an earthquake rocked the prison, opening the doors and unfastening the chains. But instead of escaping, Paul stayed and led the jailer to Christ (v30-31).

The next day, they left the city, and traveled on to Thessalonica. You can imagine what shape they were in when they met the Thessalonians. Backs still scabbed and scarred from their beating, it would have been very easy to lay low, to simply look for a job making tents, looking for the occasional opportunity to quietly share Christ with one or two people. But they didn't shy away from preaching publicly - they proclaimed the gospel boldly. We read in Acts 17:2-3, "And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead," and {saying,} "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." Again, they experienced opposition. The Jews became jealous and rounded up wicked men from the market place to form a mob. They went to Jason's house where Paul was staying, and, not finding Paul, grabbed Jason and some other believers before the city authorities. There was indeed much opposition in Thessalonica.

2:1 Part of the purpose of the letter was to show that the allegations were far from the truth. This did not discourage Paul. This was important not just for Paul personally, but for their growth and development of the Thessalonians themselves. If they had begun to believe that Paul's gospel was just another philosophical dream, and that Paul was just "in it for the money", they could not have continued to grow in Christ. **A strong minister pleases God** by having a full and fruitful ministry, not a vain (*gegonen*) ministry. The word "vain" means empty, ineffective, and fruitless. Paul reminds the believers that his ministry among them was not a empty and fruitless ministry. People had been ministered to and some had even accepted Christ and experienced a genuine conversion. They were now living for Christ—living for Him through the most difficult of times, even persecution. Therefore, the charge that his ministry was empty and fruitless was false. God had His hand upon him and God was blessing his ministry.

2:2 **The strong minister pleases God** by preaching boldly even when there is opposition. He did not give up the ministry because he had been persecuted. He moved on to another city, Thessalonica. But note what he faced in Thessalonica: persecution—was the same mistreatment and attacks in Philippi. Did this discourage and cause him to give up the ministry? No! He continued to boldly preach the gospel despite the opposition and conflict. The point is this: bold preaching is proof of knowing that God has called him and he knows why God has called him: to preach the gospel! Therefore, he boldly preaches regardless of circumstances. His bold preaching of the gospel is one of the strongest answers to his critics. The pulpit is not the place to deal with critics; it is the place for preaching the gospel of God—the place where the unsearchable riches of Christ are to be proclaimed. This is exactly what Paul did despite the critics of the gospel who opposed him. The word "bold" (*eparresiasametha*) means to speak boldly and freely; to speak out and to speak publicly without fear. Too many fail to witness for Christ because they fear ridicule, embarrassment, mockery, and persecution. They are secret believers of Christ instead of bold witnesses for Christ.

2:3-4 Not With A Pretext For Greed

The strong minister pleases God when he does not deceive people. The word "deceit" (*planes*) meaning error. Paul's motives weren't to get rich. Paul demonstrates his sincerity of his motives by showing that he and Silas suffered for <http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

sharing the gospel in Philippi. He didn't seek money, fame, or popularity by sharing the Good News. He didn't deceive with a watered-down gospel. He didn't try to be a people pleasing feel-good preacher. The point is this: Paul had no right to change the message. He had nothing to do with formulating the gospel of Christ. Therefore, he preached the gospel exactly as God had given it. He preached the pure gospel, and he did it without deviating one iota from it. His exhortation was not of error. There is no deception about him at all. Paul did not deceive people by the life he lived. He did not preach one thing and live another. He was not unclean, immoral, and dirty. He lived a clean pure and righteous life, preaching a pure gospel, and was not deceptive before the people or God.

The word "*cleanliness*" (*akatharsias*) has to do with moral uncleanness and impurity. Paul was being charged with immorality. However, such an accusation was not to be unexpected because of the immoral society of the day, a society so immoral that it had permeated some of the very religions of the day. Paul clearly says that he was not guilty. He had not used the ministry or his position in the ministry to attract women. He had not lived in uncleanness.

Two lessons that we must always keep in mind as the followers and servants of God.

1. Some believers-ministers and laymen alike have rumors spread about them. Rumors, of course, damage and hurt and often destroy the testimony and ministry of people. But most tragic of all, rumors always affect the name of Christ and turn some people away from the gospel and from any chance of ever being reached for Christ. The persons who begin and spread rumors that destroy people shall face the wrath of God regardless of their profession to know God.
2. Some believers-ministers and laymen alike fall and commit immorality. This, of course, stirs wild imaginations in those who are most hurt by the fall of the believer, wild imaginations of immoral behavior heaped upon immoral behavior. The hurt people shares his or her hurt with dear friends, and from this, rumors begin. Before long, rumor is built upon rumor. If the fallen person is a genuine believer, a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, one or two things will happen:
 1. The fallen believer will repent and confess his sin to God and God will forgive him. God will also begin to use him again, sometimes more effectively than ever before. Why? Because God is a God of restoration. If He were not, few if any of us would ever be serving Him.
 2. God will take the fallen believer home to be with Him. Some genuine believers do slip into sin and enslavement—a point beyond which they are willing to return to Christ. Only God knows when a believer is unwilling to repent and when he has reached the point where he will never repent. At that point, the believer is never again to be a witness for Christ. In fact his life and testimony are only doing damage and cutting the heart of Christ beyond imagination. Therefore, God has no choice but to take him home to be with Him.

Twice in **2:4** Paul uses the word ¹"allowed" (KJV) "approved" (NIV) (*Gr dokimazō*) by God, which means that God has "*checked them out*" by His own standards and had put His stamp of approval on them. Paul derived a great deal of personal confidence from the fact that God had ²"put in trust" (KJV) "entrusted" (NIV) (*Gr pisteuō*) him with the gospel. His goal in life was not to please men but God (Gal.1:10). **A strong minister pleases God** by preaching and ministering to please God, not men. Most men do not want to hear:

- about sin and judgment; the utter necessity of men to depend upon the death of Christ in order to be saved;
- and about the demand that a person commit all he is and has to Christ in order to meet the needs of a desperate world.

The preaching of the truth is not always popular, not with a carnal and unbelieving people. Therefore, when a minister is thrown in the midst of a people who are worldly, he can be tempted to tone down his message to please the people. The temptation can be especially strong if his livelihood is at risk. The point is this: there are two strong reasons why he sought to please God!

1. First, God was the Person who had trusted him with the gospel, not men.
2. Second, God alone would try and judge him. He was to stand and give account for his ministry some day, and he was to stand before God, not before men. Men might be able to cause some difficulty for him on earth, but God would cause difficulty for him through all eternity if he abused or opposed the gospel of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 2:5-7 Defending His Motives

Paul and His Conduct:

2:5: *In the first place, Paul did not employ deceptive measures:*

A strong minister pleases God when he does not preach and minister for what he can get out of it, **flattery**. The word "*flattery*" (*kolakeias*) always means the kind of flattery that is given in order to get something out of people. Flattery is a false cover-up for a person's real intentions, and Christian leaders should not practice it. Paul did not flatter people in order to secure their friendship, following, or support. He of course commended people; and, his letters in the

New Testament show that he commended them quite often. But he did it truthfully, always covering the weak areas that people needed to strengthen, as well as their strong and commendable areas. He and Silas completely focused their efforts on presenting God's message of salvation to the Thessalonians. This was important! The Thessalonian believers had their lives changed by God not Paul. It was Christ's message they believed not Paul's. None of their activities had been a **cloak of covetousness**. The word "*cloak*" (*Gr prophasis*) means an excuse, cover-up, or front for an impure motive of greed. Using covetousness would accuse and show that Paul was being in the ministry out of greed; that he had chosen the ministry to earn a livelihood and to make money. Emphatically, Paul denies this and says that his life style proves it. He declares that the church knows the fact and that God is witness to the truth.

2:6a: *In the second place, Paul did not seek the praise of men:*

Paul is also saying that they were not after man's "**glory**" (*Gr doxa*), which we get the word "*doxology*" (referring to conduct designed to elicit or extract praise). Paul couldn't have claimed that glory, in fact he had been a Pharisee before his own conversion. So they were saying, he could have claimed similar glory as an apostle (*Gr apostolos*), (a representative of Christ with a commission). **A strong minister pleases God** when he does not preach or minister for glory not for the prestige and authority of a position. Note two things:

1. Paul says, he did not seek the glory, prestige, honor, or recognition of people. He was not out to be recognized as a great preacher or good minister. He was not seeking to be recognized as a leader or as a man of position and authority.

2:6b: *In the third place, Paul did not abuse his apostolic privileges:*

2. Paul says that he had the right to assert his authority as an apostle of Christ. Being a minister of God is a great honor, and men should respect and appreciate the call. But the minister of God must not exalt his authority, for he has been called by God Himself, called to serve the sovereign Majesty of the universe. He must not be demanding and ordering people around. God has not called the minister to hold a position of honor and authority, but to minister and preach the gospel.

The thought of being **burdensome** might be translated, "*we might have made great demands, but didn't, as Apostles of Christ.*" They had a right to but didn't because they were motivated to get the gospel. Paul could have thrown his weight around as an "*apostle*" and demanded respect and glory. But he didn't. The respect of the brethren was more important.

2:7: *In the fourth place, Paul displayed motherly concern for the welfare of the Thessalonians:*

The strong minister pleases God by preaching gently and lovingly. Paul was gentle toward them as a mother who nurses her children. The word "*nurse*" (*Gr prophas*) comes from the root meaning to "*feed*", "*nourish*", "*support*", and "*provide with food.*" The word can also refer to "*cherisheth*" which means to "*take warm and tender care of.*"

*"A nursing child can become ill through reaction to something the mother has eaten.
The Christian who is feeding others must be careful not to feed on the wrong things himself."*²

The portrait Paul intends to paint in this verse is that of a mother tenderly caring for all the needs of her own children. The idea is that the minister must minister to his people with tenderness, warmth, affection, care, intensity, and love. He must treat them as precious as his most beloved people, holding them ever so closely to his heart. Gentleness is not often a respected quality. Power and assertiveness gain more respect in our society, even though none of us likes to be bullied.

*"A gospel messenger who stands detached from his audience has not yet been touched by the very gospel he proclaims."*³

Gentleness is love in action—being considerate, meeting the needs of others; allowing time for the other person to talk, and you being willing to learn.

1 Thessalonians 2:8-12 A Ministry Of Love

Paul and His Personal Examples:

2:8: *Finally, Paul exemplified authentic Christian love:*

Paul's affection for his people was so strong that he preached the gospel to them in the midst of adversity and great opposition. He was willing to pour out his soul for them; to sacrifice his very life to make sure that they came to know Christ and the eternal salvation that was in Him. Note that Paul says he was willing to sacrifice his life for one simple reason: they were "*dear*" (*agapetoi*) to him. The word dear means "*beloved*". They were his beloved people.

2:9: *They were to remember how Paul worked hard and responsibly with his hands*

² 48Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Ready*, p. 40.

³ Martin, p. 81. Cf. Mal. 2:6-8.

Paul ask his readers to simply recall the fact that he and his companions worked hard with their own hands to support themselves while they were in Thessalonica in order that they might not be a burden to the people. It was customary in Palestine for rabbis to have a secular trade with which they supported themselves. Therefore, he found employment outside the ministry. We learn from Acts 18:3 that Paul's trade was tentmaking. The two words "*labor*" and "*travail*" denote work which is very tiring and very difficult. Paul didn't have a five day nor a forty hour week job. He didn't work until four or five o'clock nor until dark and then have the rest of the day for himself.

*Paul was a tentmaker by trade. As he traveled from city to city, he'd work his job making tents to support himself. Then when the day's work was over, he'd do his ministry. Sometimes he would receive financial support from some of the churches, but sometimes he didn't. While in Thessalonica, Paul actually received two financial gifts from the church in Philippi (Phi. 4:16), but apparently it was still not enough as Paul had to still work at making tents.*⁴

Paul was a servant of Christ to meet the desperate needs of the world and to reach men with the glorious news that Christ could save them from death and give them eternal life. How could he rest and relax when people in every city and community were dying every day? It is clear from Paul's letters that he slept and rested only as he needed. Why? Because he didn't want to be chargeable to any man. What did he mean? That every ministry and message that he was willing to give, they could be saved from death and receive eternal life. However, once Paul had departed from a city in which he had established a church, he did accept financial support as Philippians 4:16 reveals (see Wanamaker, 103).

2:10: *They were to remember how Paul served God with integrity:*

The strong minister pleases God by preaching and ministering with a clean life, an impeccable life. This verse parallels with verse 3. He saying you (*Thessalonians*) and God are witnesses by means of three special terms:

- that he lived a holy life before God; a life separated from the world and set apart totally to God.
- that he lived a just and righteous life before men: a life that lived and treated men just as God said and just as God wanted them to be treated.
- that he lived an unblameable life before both God and man. He and his helpers behaved in such a way that "neither God nor the Thessalonians could reproach their conduct" (Wanamaker, 105).

2:11-12: *They were to remember how Paul provided stimulating encouragement.*

A strong minister pleases God by preaching as a father, tenderly giving direction. Ministry isn't just about being a "*mom*", but being a "*dad*" too.

- The minister exhorts just like a father: directs, guides, and teaches.
- The minister comforts just like a father: encourages, consoles, supports, sustains, holds up, lifts up, relieves and eases pain.
- The minister charges just like a father: testifies, witnesses, protects, and warns. Sometimes as a parent, there is a need for discipline.

When you're in ministry, there's a time to be tender, but there's a time to be firm too. Also note how he emphasized his ministry to the Thessalonians as individual believers—"every one of you."

A strong minister pleases God by preaching and ministering with one objective—to lead his people to walk worthy of the Lord. God has given us the most glorious promise imaginable: the wonderful privilege of living forever in His kingdom and glory. Therefore we must walk worthy of the promise. We must live excellent lives—walk day by day just as we should walk—honoring and building up the name of God. He gave them such personal spiritual leadership and encouragement insisting on "*a certain standard of behavior*".

SUMMARY:

⁵Sometimes, when we are in ministry, we may find a need to defend our calling and activity for the Lord. It is not that we are trying to please men. It is that we are trying to please God in serving Him; but what happens is that there are a lot of folks out there who will question your activities in your service for the Lord, and so there may be a need to contend against the opposition and malcontents (the rebellious) in asserting your call in your specific ministry. Paul's character was criticized spitefully. He was painted by those who attacked his ministry, as a power hungry and arrogant man. If you've ever experienced slander that even remotely looks like any of this, then you know how heavy this kind of junk drags on and on. It wounds your service to the Lord.

Paul would minister the gospel; people would get saved; the church would be stabilized in the faith; there would be discipleship, and then Paul would leave the area. Before long, Paul would find out that he was being slandered in

⁴ <http://www.calvaryfullerton.org/Bstudy/52%201Th/2000/521Th01-03.htm>

⁵ <http://www.bridgewaybiblechurch.com/index.php/sermons/1-thessalonians-study/136-1-thessalonians-2-1-6>

those same places. Because of the slander, Paul would defend his apostleship in his letters he sent back to the churches. What the devil means for evil in slandering Paul, God means for good in recording Scriptural lessons for eternity. Paul suffered a lot for pleasing God. All this happened because they sought to please God rather than men.

⁶The amazing thing is that for 10 verses (2–11) there is not one word about the effect of Paul's ministry on the Thessalonians when he came. Instead the whole 10 verses describe Paul's life and ministry. Ten things:

- 2a We suffered and were mistreated in Philippi.
- 2c We had boldness to speak the gospel to you.
- 3 Our exhortation doesn't come from error or deceit.
- 4a As we have been approved by God so we speak.
- 4b We speak to please God not men.
- 5f We did not flatter or covet or seek glory from men.
- 7f We became gentle as a nurse and shared ourselves.
- 9 We worked night and day not to burden you.
- 10 We were devout, upright, and blameless to you.
- 11f We exhorted and encouraged as a father.

Paul was free from the bondage of men. So, instead of going over to Thessalonica in fear, weakness, and lack of power, his team goes with boldness and the confidence that comes from knowing that they are being God pleasers. Freedom is, knowing that God is the one who approves us. Always keep this in mind while in this world. God is the one who entrusts you with the Good News.

As we commit ourselves to ministry, make sure the motives are pure, clean, not deceptive, and lastly, that we are committed to God! Paul uses the example of the nursing mother. Paul's attitude, wherever he went, was that it wasn't enough simply to preach the gospel, he also had to give of himself. This was true for Timothy and Silas as they ministered as well.

While most people enjoy being encouraged, many do not like to be exhorted. But ministers of the gospel are commanded by God to exhort people. Exhorting means to be urging strongly, to be giving warnings or advice. There is of course a right way and a wrong way to exhort. The key to godly exhortation is the charge that Paul gave young pastor Timothy: preach the word; be ready in season {and} out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

I don't expect that if I yell, "I'm warning you people, you'd better get rid of that cable television!" that it's going to do a bit of good. But if I lovingly instruct you, explaining the dangers of brining immoral pollution into your home, and then I'm patient with you as I allow God to let these things soak deep into your hearts, then I'm exhorting in a godly way.

Encouragement keeps us going; it gives us strength to do what's right. Coaches know how encouragement helps the players perform more skillfully. Teachers know how encouragement helps the students try more diligently. Employers know how encouragement helps the employees work more cheerfully. The Word encourages people to do right in their marriages (Titus 2:4). How much more do the people of God need to be encouraged by others! Parents know that when exhortation doesn't do it, when encouragement doesn't do it, then you're reduced to imploring - begging. Sometimes as a pastor, that's all you have left - to beg you to repent from sin; to implore you to break off that relationship and to do what is right. And you haven't listened to exhortation, you haven't responded to encouragement, so here the pastor is now begging you. That's how much or how far love will go. Paul was willing to beg to see them walk in a manner worthy of God.

APPLICATION:

Can people be sure that you will always be honest and straightforward in your words and actions? Paul was concerned with people's eternal destiny and their spiritual growth. In spite of the opposition, even when he was afflicted with physical beatings, public protest and ridicule, he endured and he cared. Do you love people like that? Are you more concerned with other's repentance than your reputation? Are you focused more on others' salvation than your safety? Paul was - and so was Jesus. Why? Because they knew that they were entrusted with the gospel - just as we have.

Jesus said, Mark 16:15 ... "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

Paul wrote, Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes... 1Cor. 9:23 ...I do all things for the sake of the gospel. We have been entrusted with the gospel.

That means that God has placed trust in us to proclaim it, to share it. Can God trust me? Can God trust you? Are we pleasing God?

⁶ http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/42/841_We_Had_Boldness_in_Our_God/
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>