

# 1 Thessalonians

## I. Introduction

- A. **1 Thessalonians 2:1-8** . . . For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, [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. [3] For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; [4] but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. [5] For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness— [6] nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. [7] But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. [8] Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.
- B. Last Sunday we looked at **vs 1-4**, which includes Paul's affirmation that he, Silvanus, and Timothy were committed
1. to teach and disciple with courageous boldness – in spite of persecution and opposition – just as we ought to be courageously bold in shining the light of our lives and speaking the truth of God's word into the darkness around us.
  2. And they were committed to teach and disciple according to the true gospel, without alteration or misrepresentation or personal agendas. And I encouraged you last week to seek out preachers, Bible Study leaders, and Christian books that follow their example.
  3. And finally, they were committed to teach and disciple according to what pleases God rather than what is pleasing to those listening.
    - a. Why? Because they were in this ministry for God's sake, not their own. And since they were doing this for God's sake, they were looking for sincere converts, godly Christians, and a spiritually healthy church, not a larger following.
    - b. The reality is, God's gospel is offensive to those who want to continue in their sin. It is only appealing to those who recognize their sinfulness, feel convicted about their selfishly sinful ways, see their need to be saved from the power, practice, and penalty

of sin, are willing to repent and put their trust in Jesus Christ, and proceed from there to pursue God and a life of godliness.

4. Paul confirms this in **2 Corinthians 2:15-17**, “For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; [16] to the one an aroma from death to death (*stench of death*), to the other an aroma from life to life (*fragrance of life*). And who is adequate for these things? [17] For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.”
- C. Today we are going to look at **vs 5-8**, where Paul continues to explain what we might call his “ministry model” – a model we would be wise to follow in dealing with the believers and unbelievers around us, and a model we would be wise to seek when deciding which church or Bible Study to attend and which Christian books to read.
- D. Pray

## II. 1 Thessalonians 2:5-8

- A. [5] For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness—
  1. **We never came with flattering speech, as you know,**
    - a. To flatter is to use insincere praise, kind words, or affectionate actions in order to appeal to someone’s self-love or pride or desire to feel good about themselves, in an effort to get what we want from them.
    - b. The three words, **as you know**, indicate that they knew Paul did not use flattering speech to get what he wanted from them and for them.
  2. There are two truths here that I want to point out.
    - a. **First Truth:** Though what Paul wanted for them was good, he refused to use flattering speech to manipulate them into responding the way he wanted them to respond.
      - (1) There is an old proverb that doesn’t appear in the Bible, yet it is true and worth noting. “A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.”
      - (2) When we manipulate older teens and adults into responding the way we want or doing what we want, even if it is what is best for them, we have only changed them temporarily, and only on the outside. They are still the same on the inside and will, in time, return to being who they really are.

- (3) The point is, flattering speech may motivate someone to give you what you want or respond the way you want, but it will not serve God’s interests or bring about the good of the one you have manipulated, because “A man convinced against his will – whether by flattery or threats – is of the same opinion still.”
  - b. **Second Truth:** Paul asserts that the Thessalonian believers had the ability to discern when someone was flattering them for personal gain. And this is true of us.
    - (1) But if this is true, why are we so easily swayed by flattery?
    - (2) As I said already, flattery appeals to our self-love, our pride, and our desire to feel good about ourselves, which is why it so easily sways us to do what the flatterer wants us to do.
    - (3) However, as Paul said, we have the ability to discern when someone is using flattery to manipulate us. Therefore, let us raise our wisdom of discernment above the good feelings of being flattered so that we resist the manipulative efforts of anyone – including preachers, Bible teachers, Christian writers, or Christian counselors – to sway us into doing what they want rather than what God wants.
- 3. **Nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness.**
  - a. The word “pretext” is defined as presenting something in a way that covers or conceals your true motives, feelings, or reasons.
  - b. Though the word “pretense” has a somewhat different meaning, Jesus’ use of the word pretense in **Matthew 23:14** help us understand what Paul is talking about here: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows’ houses, and for a **pretense** you make long prayers (*as if you are sincere when in fact your prayer is intended to make the widow think one thing while you intend another*); therefore you will receive greater condemnation.”
  - c. The word translated as “greed” by the NASB can also be translated as covetousness. And covetousness is a strong desire for more than you have and need.
    - (1) It is true that this word is often used in reference to money or financial gain of some sort. However, that is not its only application, and given the focus and efforts of many preachers, teachers, writers, or Christian musicians today, we could also understand it as coveting a larger following or greater fame or the renown of having a global ministry.

- (2) However, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy had no pretext, no hidden motive, no greedy agenda. They weren't there for themselves. They were there for God's sake, and the sake of those who had not heard the gospel, and for the growth in godliness of those who responded to the gospel. They weren't seeking or building something for themselves in the name of God, they were serving God. Therefore, there was no need for pretext, and greed was of no benefit to them.
  - (3) In fact, if greed for financial gain is the issue, we have only to read **1 Thessalonians 2:9** and **2 Thessalonians 3:8-9** to see that Paul wasn't in it for the money.
    - (a) **1 Thessalonians 2:9**, "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."
    - (b) **2 Thessalonians 3:8-9**, "nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; [9] not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example."
  - d. It isn't always easy to see the true intent of those in positions of church leadership or public ministry, but with time, personal maturity, good observation, and thoughtfulness it can be done, for as Jesus said in **Matthew 7:15-16**, "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. [16] You will know them by their fruits."
  - 4. And so I urge you, beware of hidden intentions, in yourself first of all, but also in those in the church who have authority over you, or are teaching you, counseling you, leading you in worship, or writing books for you to read. Not everyone who serves is serving God. And of those who are serving God, not everyone is serving God alone.
- B. [6] Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.
- 1. **Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others.**
    - a. To seek glory is to seek praise, honor, admiration, distinction, or renown.

- b. We seek glory from men because we are self-centered and self-serving. We seek glory from men to satisfy our pride. We seek glory from men because it makes us feel good about ourselves – even when our behavior is such that we ought to feel guilty or bad. And we seek glory from men because we are pleased more by people thinking well of us than God thinking well of us.
  - c. To seek glory from God is to seek glory in the right way, with the right mindset, and from the right person. It is to seek the kind of glory that does not harm our character, feed our pride, damage our reputation, or make those we are serving feel used. The reality is, we cannot gain glory from God without being humble, godly, doing what is pleasing to God, and suffering for righteousness sake – and these are qualities and actions that remove us further from the world and make more like Christ.
2. There are several other portions of scripture that affirm that Paul was seeking glory from God and not men.
- a. In speaking to the elders from the church in Ephesus, Paul said in **Acts 20:18-21**, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, [19] serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; [20] how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, [21] solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”
  - b. And to the church in Corinth, Paul said in **2 Corinthians 4:1-6**, “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, [2] but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. [3] And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, [4] in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. [5] For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. [6] For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

3. There are those who view the role of church leader, elder, pastor, teacher, Christian author, songwriter, or singer as a position that makes the person in that position a person of importance – and because they want to be seen as important, or to be honored and respected as one who is important, or praised for doing important work, they seek such positions.
  - a. This is ungodly! And pursuing these positions to feel important dishonors God, distorts the gospel, and does harm to the emotional, mental, and spiritual health of those being served.
  - b. Without question, such a ministry can look good from the outside or to those who are not in the inner circles of leadership. But the closer you get to those seeking glory from men, the worse they look and the less spiritual the ministry looks in relation to true godliness.

**C. [7] But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.**

1. When we want older teens and adults to behave a certain way and they resist or rebel, the common tendency is to increase the pressure by raising our voice, using stronger language, or making threats. Though this may get the person to do what we want, it only benefits God and the person's spiritual well-being if it results in a change of heart, a change in thinking, and a change of beliefs and values that produces an inwardly motivated and ongoing change of behavior.
2. I know Jesus used strong language with those religious leaders who knew the scriptures yet refused to live up to what they knew. And we know how He talked to Peter a couple of times. Yet when dealing with most folks most of the time, Jesus was gentle, like a nursing mother tenderly caring for her own children. And this approach became part of what we might call Paul's ministry model.
3. There are two scriptures that have spoken loud and clear to me on this matter. The first is in Isaiah and the second in Matthew.
  - a. **Isaiah 42:3**, "A bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; [Yet] He will faithfully bring forth justice."
    - (1) Gentleness, patience, tenderness, and kindness in dealing with sinners, or when dealing with those who are hurting and responding in ungodly ways, or when dealing with

immature or wayward Christians does not remove honesty about their thinking and behavior.

(2) Our goal in dealing with others is to be as honest as they will allow us to be while being as gentle, patient, tender, and kind as we ought to be as Christians.

b. **Matthew 11:28-30**, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

(1) Telling the wayward or untaught or immature how they ought to live is good. Showing them and walking with them through the learning process is best.

(2) Notice Paul’s next statement in vs 8. He not only taught them, he got personally involved in their lives.

D. [8] Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.

### III. Quick Review

A. Paul’s, Silvanus’, and Timothy’s teaching and ministry did not include:

1. Error, impurity, deceit
2. Pleasing the listener over pleasing God
3. Flattering speech
4. A pretext for greed
5. Seeking glory (praise, honor, admiration, fame) from those being served.

B. Their teaching and ministry did include:

1. Boldness in the face of persecution and opposition
2. Pleasing God even if it meant displeasing the listener
3. Gentleness – like a nursing mother tenderly cares for her children
4. A fond affection for those who responded leading to personal involvement in their lives.