

Sermon Title: The Picture of a Consistent Ministry, Part 1

Sermon Text: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6

Sermon Purpose:

Sermon Proposition:

Introduction: The theme of 2:1-12 is the character of the messenger's mission, the situation in and of itself demands an explanation of their actions, especially in light of the questionable character and methods of many of the Orators, philosophers of their day.

- I. The importance of a consistent ministry message. Vv.1-2**
- II. The importance of a consistent ministry motivation. Vv.3-4**
- III. The importance of a consistent ministry methodology. Vv.5-6**

I. The importance of a consistent ministry message. Vv.1-2

- A. The proper ministry message is never in vain. V.1

The term (kene) can in this context be translated "empty" or "vain," the emphasis would be upon the character of the Apostle's mission. Paul or any faithful servant of Jesus Christ ministry of the message of the "gospel of God" is not without sound motives, and the mission is never a failure.

1 Corinthians 15:14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty.

Ephesians 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

The missionary work of Paul and his companions character was bound up with the results of the mission.

- B. The proper ministry message cannot be suffocated by suffering. V.2

"Dio Chrysostom "railed against those philosophers who would roll into town with a view to their own profit and reputation and not improve you." Therefore character and results cannot be separated. Sound character produces credible (ministry) results." [**Gene L Green, "The Pillars New Testament Commentary, The Letters to the Thessalonians, p. 115]**

The testing of character presented in this verse could be seen in the heralds of the "Good News," they preached even though they had previously suffered for doing so in Philippi and other cities. The fact that they preached in Thessalonians despite previous opposition they faced before was strong evidence of genuine and pure motives. (**Acts 16:11-18; 16:19-24**)

On the orders of the city magistrates, the city police force used their bundles of rods to beat Paul a Roman citizen, and stripped them of their robes. (**Acts 16:22, 35, 37-38**)

Matthew 5:10-12 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11** "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. **12** "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Romans 8:12-18 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors-- not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. **13** For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. **14** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. **15** For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." **16** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, **17** and if children, then heirs-- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together. **18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Acts 9:13-16 Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. **14** "And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." **15** But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. **16** "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

James 1:2-3 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, **3** knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

II. The importance of a consistent ministry motivation. Vv.3-4

- A. The message was not motivated by deceit. V.3a
Their exhortation and teaching did not find its roots in error, which means that the doctrine they preached was not false but true. This was a reference to the quality of the "gospel of God" and as such it was not false teaching, therefore they did not bear the characteristics of false teachers in their message.
- B. The motives were not motivated by depravity. V.3b
Although the word (akatharsias) may refer to ceremonial purity, the meaning here is moral purity. Freedom from the sexual impurity of cultic religion. No impure motives brought the gospel message to town, not greed or glory for man or themselves.
Romans 1:24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,
Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,
Ephesians 5:13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.
- C. The methods were not motivated by deception. V.3c
Nor were they trying to trick people for their personal advantage. They did not deceive the Thessalonians by using the bait of vocabulary and semantic tricks.
2 Corinthians 12:16 But be that *as it may*, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning!
1 Corinthians 2:4 And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
- D. The men had been approved by God. V.4a
The word approved is in the perfect tense of the Greek. After declaring that their message, motives, and methods were not corrupt, Paul presents their credentials as those whom God had called and approved to participate in the evangelical ministry. The verb "approved" dokimazo means "to prove" or "to examine" in order to determine the quality of something or someone.

- E. The men had been entrusted with the Gospel. V.4b
“Josephus the historian notes that under Moses, the tribal chiefs were those “approved by the whole multitude as upright and just persons.” Therefore they could be entrusted with service. [Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, p. 120]

They had received their commission directly from God, to proclaim.

- F. The men had been tested by God. V.4c
Since they were commissioned by God, their only desire was to serve Him. Therefore, the fundamental motivation in their ministry was to please God rather than men.
2 Timothy 2:4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.
Acts 4:18-20 And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. **19** But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. **20** "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."
Galatians 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

While Paul made various declarations about he and his companion’s character, it is apparent that only God knows and reveals what’s in a person’s heart and mind.

Romans 14:18 For he who serves Christ in these things *is* acceptable to God and approved by men.

2 Corinthians 13:7 Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified.

1 Corinthians 16:3 And when I come, whomever you approve by *your* letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem.

2 Corinthians 8:22 And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which *we have* in you.

III. The importance of a consistent ministry methodology. Vv.5-6

- A. The method of flattery is not for the true servant. V.5a
As a further explanation of the integrity of the messengers motives, Paul states, at no time did he and his companions employ flattering speech to gain converts for themselves. Flattery was commonly viewed as a way to get money and gain followers in the period.
Aristotle distinguishes between friends and flatterers, saying “The man who always joins in the pleasure of his companions, if he sets out to be pleasant for no ulterior motive, if he does so for the sake of getting something by it in the shape of money or moneys worth, he is a flatterer.” [Ibid. 122]
“Dio Chrisostom warned that flattery was a characteristic of charlatans and sophists.” [Ibid. 122]
- B. The method of covetousness is not for a true servant. V.5b
What motivated the heralds of the Gospel was not their lust or desires. They never used a false front (prophasei) meaning “pretext” or “false excuse” to cover up their true motivations.
“Greed is the insatiable desire to have more and an excessive desire for fame, power, and recognition.” “It thinks nothing of using another’s person or property to gain its own ends.” [Ibid. 123]
Paul and his companion unlike these men, worked at times among the Thessalonians and nobody could accuse them of greed. (**1 Thessalonians 2:9**)

2 Thessalonians 3:8 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,

1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

Acts 20:34 "Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.

- C. The method of glory seeking from men is not for a true servant. V.6