

October 1, 2000 by Steve Brandon



Speaking to Please

1 Thessalonians 2:3-4

1. The Manner of the Ministry

2. The Motive of the Ministry

It is a pleasure to be with you this morning. I look forward to opening the Word of God with you. Whenever a preacher stands to preach, his message is only important if his message is God's message.

And my goal this morning is to share with you what the Word of God says. Particularly, this morning, we will look at what the Scripture says about the pastoral ministry (to which Adrian has just been appointed).

And so I invite you to open in your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2. It is appropriate for us to open our Bibles to 1 Thessalonians for several reasons. First, in our church, we have been teaching through this epistle and last time that we were together, we finished chapter 1. We are next moving on to chapter 2, which I will begin this morning, and we will pick up on Sunday evenings. Second, 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2 is all about the ministry. It is all about the work of the pastor. And our thoughts this morning will be directed toward the ministry. As we have seen confirmation on Adrian's ministry this morning, we can see what Paul's ministry was like, and make appropriate application to the pastor in the 21st century.

In order to give us some context, I would like for us to read the passage together. First we shall read it in English, then we shall read it in Spanish. I will read it in English, and I would like Adrian to come and read it in Spanish.

1 Thessalonians 2 (English)

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, 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. For our exhortation does not [come] from error or impurity or by way of deceit; 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. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed--God is witness-- 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. But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing [mother] tenderly cares for her own children. Having thus a fond 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. 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. You are witnesses, and [so is] God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we [were] exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father [would] his own children, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

1 Thessalonians 2 (Spanish)

Porque vosotros mismos sabéis, hermanos, en cuanto a nuestra visita a vosotros, que no fue en vano. Al contrario, a pesar de que Habíamos padecido antes y Habíamos sido maltratados en Filipos, como sabéis, tuvimos Valentía en nuestro Dios para anunciaros el evangelio de Dios en medio de grande conflicto. Pues nuestra Exhortación no Procedía de error ni de motivos impuros, ni fue con engaño. Más bien, Según fuimos aprobados por Dios para ser encomendados con el evangelio, Así hablamos; no como quienes buscan agradar a los hombres, sino a Dios quien examina nuestros corazones. Porque, como sabéis, nunca usamos palabras lisonjeras ni tampoco palabras como pretexto para la avaricia; Dios es testigo. Tampoco buscamos gloria de parte de los hombres, ni de vosotros, ni de otros; aunque Podríamos haberos sido carga como Apóstoles de Cristo. Más bien, entre vosotros fuimos tiernos, como la nodriza que Cría y cuida a sus propios hijos. Tanto es nuestro cariño para vosotros que nos Parecía bien entregaros no Sólo el evangelio de Dios sino también nuestras propias vidas, porque habéis llegado a sernos muy amados. Porque os Acordáis, hermanos, de nuestro arduo trabajo y fatiga; que trabajando de Día y de noche para no ser gravosos a ninguno de vosotros, os predicamos el evangelio de Dios. Vosotros sois testigos, y Dios también, de Cuán santa, justa e irrepreensiblemente actuamos entre vosotros los creyentes. En esto, sabéis que fuimos para cada uno de vosotros como el padre para sus propios hijos: Os Exhortábamos, os Animábamos y os Insistíamos en que anduvieseis como es digno de Dios, que os llama a su propio reino y gloria.

For my exhortation to you this morning, I would like to focus upon 2 verses in this chapter: verses 3 and 4. In our church, we will pick up the other verses in this chapter in the weeks to come. But this morning, we look at verses 3 and 4. In these two verses, Paul gives us insight into two characteristics of the pastoral ministry. In verse 3, Paul will describe 1. The Manner of the Ministry. In verse 4, Paul will describe 2. The Motive of the Ministry.

Let's look first at how Paul described the Manner of His Ministry.

1. The Manner of the Ministry

1 Thessalonians 2:3

For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;

Before we jump into these verses, let me give you a little context. As I said before, chapter 2 is all about the ministry. But it comes about in a very interesting manner. Paul didn't merely say, "Hey, let me tell you about my ministry." No, Paul's ministry to the Thessalonians was being attacked.

As you recall, Luke records for us in Acts 17 how Paul was only in Thessalonica for a very short time -- Luke tells us of the three Sabbaths that he spent there in the synagogue - perhaps he was there a little longer, we don't really know. But, he wasn't there very long! And as a result, when Paul left, his enemies arose and attacked his ministry. They said, "Paul didn't tell you the truth." They said, "Paul's motives weren't pure; Paul was simply trying to deceive you." They said, "Paul was simply greedy -- all he wanted was your money." They said, "Paul was trying to build you up with flattering speech." They said, "Paul didn't really care for you, he only cared for himself" and, "Paul hasn't come back, because he never really loved you."

And these are the accusations that have been leveled against God's ministers throughout all time! It teaches you that there is, indeed, nothing new under the sun. I have personally seen these accusations fly against the choicest of God's servants. Many times, these accusations are entirely without a single shred of evidence. The goal is merely to discredit the man of God.

But what is interesting as well, is that these accusations are also signs of false teachers. If true, they are legitimate reasons for alarm! All you need to do is read 2 Peter and you will find that false teachers teach "destructive heresies" (2 Pet. 2:1). False teachers "follow their sensuality" (2 Pet. 2:2). False teachers "exploit with false words" (2 Pet. 2:3). They "are greedy" (2 Pet. 2:3). They "don't care for the flock". They "are in the ministry for personal gain."

But, my beloved, that all is not true of the man of God. And though these accusations fly against the servant of God, he must be found blameless in all accusations. It places a high call upon all of us who would step into a pulpit and declare God's word. So as not to discredit God and the ministry, we need to be men of integrity. And so, Adrian, I charge you, to walk always in a blameless manner before your flock that they will be convinced of the purity of your ministry.

Let's look at verse 3 a little more closely. We see in verse 3 that Paul defends his ministry from 3 attacks. First, the accusation of error (no procedía de error). Second, the accusation of impurity. And third, the accusation of deceit

a. The accusation of error. (no procedía de error)

Paul simply says, "our exhortation does not come from error" (1 Thess. 2:3). He simply points this out. He asserts a fact. "Our exhortation does not come from error."

For us today, the best way to prevent this accusation from coming against us is to stick close to the words of the Bible. Hold this book high, and hold it precious. Always make sure that whatever you teach can be firmly backed by chapter and verse. So, when somebody comes (and they will) and says that they accuse you of error on a particular point, be able to show them where in the Bible you can prove your point.

Paul told Timothy that the man of God was to "preach the word." The easiest was to do this is to make sure that your teaching comes directly from the Bible itself. And I charge you, Adrian, to preach the word. Let your thoughts be saturated with the Bible.

The second attack against Paul was ...

b. The accusation of impurity

Paul simply states again that this accusation isn't true. He said, "our exhortation does not come ... from impurity." Many translations translate this, "impure motives" (like the Spanish Bible - (ni de motivos impuros). Now, this was most definitely the case - that Paul's gospel didn't come with impure motives. However, the text, in the original Greek, literally says, "impurity." (ni de impuros). In other words, Paul's pure message was not contradicted by an impure life. Paul is saying that he walked blamelessly before them.

You know what this is like. The man who has the message of the gospel must be a man which meets the message. You cannot say one thing and live the other. This is true of the average Christian, but so much more is it true of the pastor leading his church or the evangelist proclaiming God's message.

In Jesus' day, this was a problem: Matthew 23:2-4 tell us, "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them. And tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger."

In our day, it is a problem. In recent years we have seen ministers fall into various kinds of impurity - adultery, greed, wickedness. And this has brought shame on the Church of Jesus Christ! But, this ought not to be. And we need to be warned of this. One of the things that I appreciate from our church is that there is a constant awareness of this, and prayers often ascend for the holiness of our elders -- that the Church of Jesus Christ might not be shamed!

We have seen the first accusation: the accusation of error. Paul preached the truth. We have seen the accusation of impurity. Paul's life was a pure and holy life which backed his message.

Let's look now at the third attack against Paul.

c. The accusation of deceit - (ni fue con engaño). In other words, Paul didn't set forth a false message to receive a different end.

The Spanish Bullfighter is a great picture of this. He stands there and shakes his red towel and the bull charges, thinking to get him, only to realize that there was nothing behind it! The red towel was deceitful!

Here is how it happens in our churches today. "You need to believe in Jesus, because if you do, you are going to have a problem free life and things will go well with you." Or perhaps, "Believe in Jesus and He will make you healthy, wealthy, and you will have great prosperity." That is a deceitful message. Think about it. If somebody comes to "believe in Jesus" because of the great things that God will bless him with, what will happen when he faces opposition and hostility because of his faith?

The message that Paul proclaimed went something like this: "It was necessary that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead" (Acts 17:3). "This Jesus is this Messiah, who suffered and rose from the dead" (Acts 17:3). "Turn from your idolatry and believe in this Jesus, who alone can forgive your sin and make you right with God" (1 Thess. 1:9). "And know that if you do turn from your idolatry, you will have tribulation, just like us" (1 Thess. 1:8; 3:4).

See, when tribulation and distress came upon these Thessalonian believers, they didn't shrink away from their faith. No, they knew full well what the cost associated with following Christ was. They knew that they would face the wrath of the Thessalonians who wanted nothing to do with this Jesus (as in 1 Thess. 3:4).

Jesus said, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you." (John 15:18). When we proclaim the gospel to lost and dying people, we must not hold back any shred of truth about what it means to believe in Jesus.

Last week, in our service, we focused upon the persecuted church. And we reflected upon the lives of several of these who have died (or are being persecuted for their faith). James Jeda was one of these people.

When James Jeda was 10 years old, he was playing outside his small village when the soldiers came. Being the first member of his family to notice the assailants, he yelled to his mother, 'Run! Run as fast as you can!' Unfortunately, his warning came too late. There was no escape.

Swords were drawn and James' mother became another victim of Sudan's National Islamic Front. His father and four brothers and sisters suffered the same fate.

For some reason James was kept alive. Later that evening the soldiers ordered their young captive to gather wood for a fire. James thought the soldiers were preparing to cook their food. He was mistaken.

After the fire had been burning for some time, the Islamic soldiers asked James if he knew any members of the opposition army. He did not. Then they ordered him to convert to the Muslim faith. James Jeda refused, simply stating, "That is not possible. I am a Christian."

Infuriated by his response, the soldiers picked up his small body and threw him on the burning flames. Although James Jeda managed to escape, the scars remain -- a reminder of his faith. [\[1\]](#)

James Jeda knew that to be a Christian, one must do as Jesus said, ...

Mark 8:34

If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

Mark 8:35

For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it.

We need to be absolutely honest about our proclamation of the gospel. I remember one time sharing the gospel with a great intellectual man at my work. When I told him about the resurrection from the dead, he simply wouldn't believe it! The Manner of Paul's ministry was such that he preached the truth. His life was a pure and holy life. His message was 100% truthful.

We have seen The Manner of the Ministry. Let's finally focus our attention on ...

2. The Motive of the Ministry

Look at 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2, verse 4.

1 Thessalonians 2:4

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.

In 1936, Dale Carnegie wrote a monumental book, entitled, "How To Win Friends and Influence People." It has sold over 15 million copies and its influence is still being felt today. Seminars are still held all across the United States on the principles that he laid out in this book. Now, much of what he said in these books offer sound, practical advice about how to help people like you and how to gently guide people to your way of thinking. However, for the minister of the gospel, for the pastor, for the evangelist, there is a great danger in beginning to think of yourself primarily as someone who is seeking to "win friends and influence people."

You see, one of the dangers in the ministry is to forget what our primary purpose is. In all of our efforts to persuade people of the truth of the gospel and to see them begin to attend our churches, we can easily forget that we aren't trying to please men, so that they like us, and want

to join us. No, first and foremost, we are trying to please God in all we do. Galatians 1:10 says, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ."

Much of Paul's motive comes from what he was given. If you look at 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2, verse 4, you will see that Paul was entrusted with something. He was entrusted with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was given to him from none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, when Paul was on the road to Damascus to persecute the Christians. It was Paul's to proclaim.

Paul says, "I have been given a message from God and I need to proclaim that message that God gave me." Paul saw himself as a postman, who was given a package to deliver. Paul would let the truth of the message penetrate the heart and convict the sinner of his need for a Savior. Paul wasn't to tamper with the message. Paul wasn't to make the message more likable or more palatable. Paul wasn't to deceive people in any way. Paul was to deliver the message.

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul called himself an Ambassador. An ambassador is one who represents his nation in a foreign land. Paul considered Himself as an Ambassador from the King of kings, and Lord of lords, to proclaim His message among dying men. The object of Paul's ministry (as is the case of any minister of the gospel), is to proclaim the message of the King. We call that message, the gospel. This is the message of an infinitely Holy and Sovereign God, Who, in His mercy and love and grace, chose to send His own Son to earth to save Rebellious Sinners from the wrath of God. Christ Jesus lived a perfect life and became the perfect sacrifice for sins. Christ was raised from the dead in demonstration of His victory over the grave.

I haven't much mentioned the title to my message this morning: "Speaking to please." You notice that I should have ended this title, but I purposely left it open for each of you to evaluate in your own life. Here is a great opportunity for you all to evaluate your evangelism. When you speak, who are you pleasing? Are you a salesman trying to make a sale? Or are you a witness trying to bear accurate testimony?

This sermon was delivered to a combined service at Valley Baptist Church on October 1, 2000 by Steve Brandon.
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