

October 15, 2000 by Steve Brandon



A Successful Ministry (part 2)

1 Thessalonians 2:3-6

1. Bold speech (verse 2)

2. Pleasing-to-God speech (verses 3-6)

Let's open our Bibles once again to 1 Thessalonians. I invite you to open to the second chapter of 1 Thessalonians. We have been looking at this great letter of the apostle Paul to this church which he founded only a few months before this letter was written. And we have seen how he has responded, as any pastor would, in great thankfulness to the Lord, for the great work that he had done among the Thessalonians. As we come to chapter 2, we see Paul defending his ministry against the accusations that have come against him.

Let me remind you that such sorts of accusations will always come against the man of God who seeks to declare the truth of God without compromise, without concern for how well he will be liked. The world will accuse the godly man. That is why Jesus said, "in the world, you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

The fleshly in the church will come to be dissatisfied with the godly man. That is why Paul told Timothy that people will not endure sound doctrine and will "want to have their ears tickled, and will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires" (2 Tim. 4:3). And this begins by first eliminating the godly man and replacing him with the ear tickler. This begins by replacing the man who uses the word as a sword, by the one who uses the word as a feather to tickle the ears of others.

But the godly man is to stand firm in his convictions, for "it is the Lord Christ whom you serve" (Col. 3:24). And we find Paul, in chapter 2, standing firm in his convictions. Paul was accused of various things, and he is seeking to set the record straight for the Thessalonians. And it is interesting that he doesn't merely assert his own opinion about his ministry among the Thessalonians, but he calls the Thessalonians themselves to bear witness with him that the things that he is saying are true! He says, "you all know that what I am saying is true."

I also tell you that this passage of scripture isn't necessarily very difficult to understand. It is quite simple and straight-forward. We can be thankful that when God inspired the scripture, he did so in a pure way.

To make this point clear, let me show you what Stanley Ray did this afternoon. He wrote a note to daddy on the typewriter. The note said, "srIz4IAHAF." You say, "What does that mean?" It means, "SR is 4 and a half." Aren't you glad that God was clear?

Paul began in verse 1 to tell the Thessalonians that his labor among them "was not in vain." And we have taken the phraseology of verse 1 and let it set the stage for the first 12 verses. I have entitled this section, "A Successful Ministry." Paul said that his coming to them wasn't "in vain," but rather, the opposite was implied, it "was successful." And in this section, Paul gives 3 characteristics of a "successful" ministry.

1. Bold speech (verse 2)

2. Pleasing-to-God speech (verses 3-6)

3. Genuine love (verses 7-12)

Let me read the scripture for us this evening.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

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 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. 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 would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

1. Bold speech (verse 2)

We saw last week how Paul's ministry was characterized by "Bold Speech." This is found in verse 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."

He said, "Despite the difficulties in Philippi, from which we came: despite the difficulties in Thessalonica, to which we came; we were bold in our proclamation of the gospel." And you remember how last week, we made the observation that boldness is really at the heart of all evangelism. The early church was "bold." Their methodology was simply boldly proclaiming the message about Jesus Christ.

Boldness is simply the speaking out about Jesus Christ, regardless of the circumstances. Even when it might cost you something - your reputation, your friendship, your comfort, your job, your life. Anything. And boldness doesn't take so much giftedness as it does desire to be bold. Boldness comes from being convinced of the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and praying that God would grant the boldness to make this good news known to the world.

This past week, I was reminded of the story Charles Spurgeon once told of a man whom he once saw driving a very large truck with a very small load in it:

Spurgeon wondered to himself "why he had not put the load into his pocket, and left the machine at home," so he said, "It looks odd to see so large a truck for such a small load." Spurgeon then relates how this man stopped, and looking him seriously in the face, and said, "Yes, sir, it is a very odd thing; but, do you know, I have met with an odder thing than that this very day. I've been about, working and sweating all this 'ere blessed day, and till now I haven't met a single gentleman that look as if he'd give me a pint of beer, till I saw you." Spurgeon then commented on this conversation and said, "I considered that turn of the conversation very neatly managed, and we, with a far better subject upon our minds, ought to be equally able to introduce the topic upon which our heart is set. There was an ease in the man's manner which I envied, for I did not find it quite so simple a matter to introduce my own topic to his notice; yet if I had been thinking as much about how I could do him good as he had upon how to obtain a drink, I feel sure I should have succeeded in reaching my point."

[\[1\]](#)

You see, boldness comes not so much from giftedness, as it does from desire to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It has been amazing for me this week, the number of opportunities that I have had to give some sort of testimony about God to my co-workers - and they brought many of the opportunities up on their own. I prayed much about my own personal boldness this week, and God was faithful to provide several opportunities for me. Remember what I said last week - "Evangelism is 90% prayer." God definitely demonstrated to me the truth of that statement this week, as I prayed earnestly to him, and he provided the opportunities to speak forth His name.

So, last week, we looked at the first characteristic of a successful ministry, ...

1. Bold speech (verse 2)

Let us now turn our attention to the second characteristic of a successful ministry. I am calling this ...

2. Pleasing-to-God speech (verses 3-6)

I get this point in my outline from verse 4 - "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." And I really believe that this is at the heart of everything that Paul seeks to communicate in verses 3 through 6 - speech that is "pleasing to God."

In fact, if you look at these four verses, you will find Paul describing his speech among the Thessalonians to be characterized by eight things. Seven of them are negative; one of them is positive. And this single, positive characteristic of Paul's ministry, is what really drives all seven negative characteristics. If the positive is true, all of the negative characteristics will certainly be false. Let me show you what I mean.

When Paul described his ministry, he said, that his exhortation was ...

1. Not from error (verse 3)
2. Not from impurity (verse 3)
3. Not from deceit (verse 3)

When Paul described his motive, he said that he spoke ...

4. Not as pleasing men (verse 4)
5. Not with flattering speech (verse 5)
6. Not with a pretext for greed (verse 5)
7. Not seeking glory from men (verse 6)

And when you seek to have "pleasing-to-God" speech, your evangelism will not have any of these characteristics. For God is not pleased with any of them. But see, if you are seeking to have "pleasing-to-God" speech, ...

1. You will seek to exhort according to the truth, not according to error.
2. Your life will match up with your message. It will come from purity, not from impurity.
3. You will speak plainly and clearly to people. You will not try to trick them or be deceitful.
4. The thoughts of men will pale in insignificance, compared to the "well-done, well-done, good and faithful servant" from the One you really seek to please.
5. You will be honest in your conversation and will not make comments, which falsely flatter others so that they like you and

will like your message.

6. You will know that your sustenance comes from God and that he will supply all your need "according to His riches in glory." There is no need to seek money from people and be greedy.

7. You will know well the admonition of Christ, when he said, "woe to you when all men speak well of you" (Luke 6:26) - and you will seek glory from God alone.

It might well be summed up with Paul's words elsewhere, when he said, "we have as our ambition ... to be pleasing to Him" (2 Cor. 5:9). Paul's desire for the church at Colossae was that they might "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, [i.e. that is ...] to please Him in all respects" (Col. 1:10). And is this not the true desire of the believer in Christ? To please Him in every respect!! To place the concern and care of God as your greatest goal!

As one man has written, concerning the ultimate desire of the Christian: "the favor of God is the greatest of all blessings and his dis-favor is the greatest of all curses." ^[1] And as Paul came into Thessalonica, it was his desire to serve his Master in his evangelism of the Thessalonians. It was his desire to seek "the favor of God," rather than "the favor of man." It was said of John Knox, that "He feared God so much that he never dared to fear any man." And that was the apostle's methodology in his evangelism: It was not to fear men, but it was to fear God. It was not to be crafty with his words. It was not to be manipulative in any way. It was simply to be a bold witness for Jesus Christ. Proverbs says that "the fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted" (Prov. 29:25).

With so much church-growth emphasis and with the seeker movement, I fear that we are susceptible to the fear of men. I fear the drifting of the church away from "evangelism" to "recruitment". I fear that people today often see themselves as a recruiter, trying to recruit people into the church. And if you get them into the church, you feel that you have accomplished your task. People today are trying to persuade people of the nice things of Christianity, trying to see them "sign-up", using whatever works to get them to "sign on the dotted line."

But, beloved, we are not recruiters, recruiting people into God's kingdom. We are evangelists - proclaiming the gospel of God. And that, is how Paul saw himself. And that is how we ought to see ourselves.

Now, having laid the foundation, tonight, I would like to examine each of these negative characteristics - each by themselves. And as we work through them, we shall clearly see that each of these cannot exist when "pleasing-to-God" speech is present. Furthermore, as we examine them, at times I would also like to point out the particular danger pertinent to us. Because if Paul was accused of these things, we certainly stand the chance of being accused as well.

First ...

1. Our exhortation does not come from error. (verse 3) The attack against Paul was that his message was wrong, that it was not according to the Old Testament.

Now the reason why Paul can say this is because his interest is in proclaiming the truth. Our God is a God of truth.

Even yesterday in equippers, we spent some time looking at the Hebrew words, *emet*, *amEn*, which describe our God as being a faithful, trustworthy, steadfast, dependable, true God. Paul, himself, knew that the message came from God, Himself, along that road to Damascus. And the message that Paul was proclaiming was a message of truth. He doesn't see himself, in any way, as needing to distort the message of truth which he received.

The word translated, "error" here is the Greek word from which we get "planet." The picture is that of a drifting message. And so much of the world today has this drifting. How many times have you heard in our relativistic society, "Well, if it works for you, I guess it must be OK." "It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere." But, we have a definite message. Our message is not a drifting, change-with-the-times message. It is a message of repentance and forgiveness, which is true today and will be true until Christ comes back.

2. Our exhortation does not come from impurity. (verse 3) The attack against Paul is that his life was sinful.

The word Paul uses for impurity is a Greek word which simply means "not pure." He used this same word over in chapter 4, verse 7 - "God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification." And you can see here that the opposite of this word is "sanctification." And by this, Paul simply means that his life was one of purity. He speaks in verse 10 about how "uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers."

Paul's motives were pure. Everything I have been saying about his seeking to be pleasing-to-God, certainly speaks to his motives. God doesn't want merely external obedience. God calls external obedience an abomination to Him (in Is. 1). There was genuineness in his exhortation. In other words, there was not hypocrisy in him. It is not as if he said one thing and acted another. But his life matched his words.

As is said of the hypocrite, "I can't hear a thing you are saying, because your actions are speaking much louder than your words are!" So also for us in our evangelism. Our life needs to match our words. I think the dangers for us come right here - in our daily lives. We are in danger of being hypocrites. We are especially in danger of this before our children! Our children want to see realism, not hypocrisy. I really believe that the life of a Christian should be noted by some degree of personal holiness and repentance in the areas of failure.

3. Our exhortation does not come from deceit. (verse 3) The attack against Paul is that his message was a trick in order to gain a following.

This Greek word basically means, "deceit, or craft." It even has the sense, as is translated in the NIV, "to trick." Jesus used this word to describe Nathaniel, as an Israelite, "in whom there is no guile [i.e. deceit, craftiness, ...]." That is, Nathaniel was one who simply, called it like it was. He held nothing back. You remember how he was at first skeptical of Messiah coming from Nazareth. He said, "Can any good thing

come out of Nazareth?" In ancient Greek, even this word was used to describe the bait on a hook (i.e. trying to lure a fish into biting on the hook).

The sense here is that Paul didn't proclaim a "bait and switch" message. He simply and straightforwardly told them the truth. There were no surprises. They clearly understood their need to repent and turn from idols to serve the living and true God (as we looked at in chapter 1). They clearly understood of the suffering and persecution that they would face. And I believe that the danger for us lies in drifting toward a simplified gospel message, which might leave out too much.

I recently read an article written by William MacDonald, who attempted to answer the question of why we hear about so many conversions from ministries. But 6 months later, these "converts" have fallen away. I believe that his observations really get to the heart of what Paul described here as a deceitful message. MacDonald writes, ...

The evangelistic process is cut down to a few basic questions and answers:

"Do you believe you are a sinner?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe Christ died for sinners?"

"Yes."

"Will you receive Him as your Savior?"

"Yes."

"Then you are saved!"

"I am?"

"Yes, the Bible says you are saved." [\[2\]](#)

He then commended the motive of this type of presentation - to simplify the gospel and preserve the simplicity of salvation by faith alone - but pointed out three fatal flaws in the approach:

1. The missing emphasis on repentance - "It is one thing to agree that I am a sinner; it is quite another thing to experience the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit in my life."
2. A missing emphasis on the Lordship of Christ. Jesus always presented the implications of His Lordship to people.
3. Our tendency to keep the terms of discipleship hidden until a decision has been made for Jesus. [\[3\]](#)

Thus, "We have people believing without knowing what they believe." And that is deceitful. I fear that this happens today in much of the "evangelism" that takes place today.

Here is his conclusion:

"What it all means is that we should seriously re-examine our streamlined, capsule evangelism. We should be willing to spend time teaching the gospel, the necessity for repentance -- a complete about-face with regard to sin. We should stress the full implications of the Lordship of Christ and the conditions of discipleship. We should explain what belief really involves. We should be willing to wait for the Holy Spirit to produce genuine conviction of sin. Then we should be ready to lead the person to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."

"If we do this, we'll have less astronomical figures of so-called conversions, but more genuine cases of spiritual rebirth." [\[4\]](#)

And if you think that this isn't present today, you need to think again. Just yesterday on the radio, my wife heard a very well known evangelist talking to a lady on a call-in program. She was broken because of her sin. And this evangelist asked her if she wanted to pray right now over the phone. So, he led her through a prayer, where he would say a phrase and she would repeat it after him. And Yvonne and I were talking about this. She didn't know what he was going to pray. How could she really embrace this from her heart?

If you explain the gospel clearly, I believe that a prayer from the heart is much more effected than a prayer repeated from another. All the penitent one needs to do is cry out, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." But, I am afraid that this type of evangelism is subtly deceitful!

Let's look at the 4th negative...

4. We do not speak as pleasing men (verse 4). The attack against Paul was that he simply wanted a following.

As I have mentioned before, this is the heart of it all. In your evangelism, whom are you trying to please? Are you trying to please God or others?

May I contend that if you have the proper evangelistic message, there will be people in your path who you will not please. In fact, these people will become quite upset with you when you proclaim the gospel message to them. Jesus' message, in His day, was NOT a popular message. If it was, the Pharisees and religious leaders would not have put him to death. Of the 12 disciples of Jesus, it is possible that 11 of the 12 (with the exception of John, who died at a lonely old age on the island of Patmos) were martyred for proclaiming the gospel of Christ.

Quite frankly, brethren, God's message is not a message which the world loves to hear. Paul admitted this at the beginning of Galatians, when he said, "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" (Gal. 1:10). Notice the dichotomy? One or the other: pleasing men or a bond-servant of Christ?

The prophets were persecuted. Jesus was put to death. Christians have been persecuted. The Christian message, of complete reliance upon

God's work, done for us, is NOT a popular message. And the day that we as a church, begin to cater to the desires of the world, rather than seeking the favor of God, is the day that we, as a church will lose our effectiveness in this world.

Sure, perhaps we might get more people that way, but on that day, God will not be pleased with us and the fruit from this sort of ministry will be little. And I think that the particular danger for us today is with respect to the seeker movement and its effect upon us.

I sincerely appreciate the motives of the leaders and people in these sorts of churches, but when your methodology as a church begins by asking the question, "what do the unchurched want?" and builds your methodology from the latest Barna survey, I have concerns that these churches are fundamentally, seeking first, "to please man." Even one of their own put it like this: "We have put a lot of time and thought into what the non-churched people want from a Sunday morning service, and we have concluded that they basically want four things: Anonymity, uncomplicated teaching, a non-threatening environment, and contemporary relevancy." [\[5\]](#)

And I ask you. Who is evangelizing whom?

Again, please hear my heart on this. I appreciate their heart to evangelize the non-churched. Additionally, Christian love demands that when the unsaved walk into our midst, we don't yell, "REPENT YOU SINNER!" to them as they walk in the door. We need to be sensitive. And there is a sense where we need to "become all things to all men" (as Paul said in 1 Cor. 9, with respect to our Christian liberty). And by all means, we need to be friendly to the lost. And I have trouble saying things against a church that makes evangelism their top priority. And yet, I merely tell you that I think that there are dangers in seeking to be a "man-pleasing" church, rather than a "God-pleasing" church.

We can easily drift, if we don't keep ever in the forefront of our mind the fact that we exist to please God first. We need to please God in our worship. We need to please God in our prayer. We need to please God in our teaching. We need to please God in our lives! And I will repeat it again: we need to "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects" (Col. 1:10). May the Lord have mercy upon us and rid us from the fear of men.

Let's move on to our next characteristic

5. We do not have flattering speech. (verse 5) The attack against Paul is that he was exploiting them.

This word is only used once in the New Testament. It is called a hapax legomena. hapax - one, legomena - word). However, it is used quite often in the classical writers and is correctly translated, "flattering speech." Flattering speech is simply that sort of speech with seeks to gain an influence over another person through the use of verbal compliments. It really derives its use from a goal to exploit and manipulate others.

Paul was accused of speaking good things about the Thessalonians only to gain an advantage from them - to manipulate them. But, listen, we as gospel-proclaimers need not be a manipulator. We need to use any method as a means to an end.

The Proverbs repeatedly speak against flattery. Listen to what the Proverbs say, ...

Proverbs 26:28

A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

Proverbs 28:23

He who rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with the tongue.

Proverbs 29:5

A man who flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his steps.

And the reason for this is that at the heart of flattery is a lie, which is used to manipulate and ultimately deceive. I think that the danger here for us is the tendency to seek to use techniques rather than truth in the conversion of sinners.

6. We do not speak with a pretext for greed. (verse 5) The attack against Paul is that he was in it for himself!

This characteristic is easy to understand. Greed is the desire for monetary and material gain. It is really amazing that this accusation was leveled against Paul. We don't know of any money he received from the Thessalonians. Perhaps he did, or this accusation would be entirely without foundation at all.

In verse 9, he combats this accusation by reminding them that they "worked night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you." Even in 2nd Thessalonians, he referred to the same thing: "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, 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 might not be a burden to any of you;" (2 Thess. 3:7,8). Paul told the Ephesian elders that he "coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes" (Acts 20:33).

When the man of God is accused of seeking material and monetary gain, his message contradicts his life. He is one who proclaims the message of the kingdom of heaven. For him to be seen as investing in the earthly comforts will demonstrate him to be a hypocrite. As one man said, "How can he be a fit man to raise others to heaven if your heart is rooted in the earth? How shall he persuade others that godliness is great gain if gain is all his godliness? With what heart can he pull other men out of the world when the world has won the strongest, inward pull on his own heart? One lust unfits him in all his duties."

Peter says that an elder must not be in the ministry "for sordid gain." (5:2). Peter also describes the false teacher as "having a heart trained in greed." (2 Pet. 2:14). And the world can easily see this characteristic when it is in the church. I think that "Christian" TV has done much to

promote this image. Because of the high cost of TV, their budgets, by necessity, must be huge, and they are constantly asking for money. I know that Christianity often gets slandered today because of TV. I talk with people at work, and all I can say is, "I cannot relate to most of the stuff on TV, because much of it is not Biblical."

The accusation of greed upon a pastor can just kill his ministry. I think of one man in particular that I know, who lived in a small community and built the largest house in town. It continually plagued him for his entire ministry in that town.

7. We do not seek glory from men. (verse 6) The attack on Paul is that he wanted to be a great Christian leader.

By this phrase, Paul merely meant that he didn't seek to be placed high in the hearts of others. And this is a particular danger for the ministry. "Oh, good sermon pastor." "Oh, thank you pastor."

It was the plague of Diotrefes, who "loved to be first." (3 John 3:9). It was the plague of the Pharisees and Sadducees, who loved "the place of honor at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called by men, Rabbi" (Matt. 23:6,7). But, it is also the danger of us all - to be thought well of by others. It is a danger to want to gain a following - to send back a great missionary letter!

This is a danger of para-church ministries. A para-church ministry receives support from outside of the ministry. Para-church leaders must promote themselves. As Apostles, we could have been a burden (1 Cor 8-10)

1. Our exhortation does not come from error. (verse 3)
2. Our exhortation does not come from impurity. (verse 3)
3. Our exhortation does not come from deceit. (verse 3)
4. We do not speak as pleasing men (verse 4).
5. We do not have flattering speech. (verse 5)
6. We do not speak with a pretext for greed. (verse 5)
7. We do not seek glory from men. (verse 6)

As I said before, I believe that many of these issues here are merely the result of a ministry that seeks to have God-pleasing speech. I fear today that this perspective of evangelism is in the minority.

But look what Paul said in verse 4 (a phrase, by the way, that we skipped in our exposition of this text).

1 Thessalonians 2:4

But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak.

The picture here is one who has been given something, who needs to deliver what has been given to him. It's like this: suppose I want to give somebody a package. I wrap it up and give it to the postman. The postman then places it down at the post office. And through various conveyor belts, trucks, trains, and planes, the package is eventually given to another postman to deliver. Now, the post office doesn't make a judgment call as to whether or not the receiver of the message will like it or not. Can you image the postman opening the package and changing the contents of the package, because he fears that the recipient won't like it? Well, we are postmen. We have a package to deliver. It is called the gospel of Jesus Christ. And it is our task to deliver the package - just as it was given to us from God.

Look at the text. It says, "We have been entrusted with the gospel." (2:4). A few weeks ago, I mentioned how Paul considered himself to be an ambassador. And I feel like I need to mention it again, because it is Paul's understanding of how he treated his evangelism. He considered himself as a representative of God's kingdom on earth, proclaiming the message of the King. He considered it his duty to pass the message on clearly and accurately.

Paul says, "I have been given a message from God and I need to proclaim that message that God gave me - regardless of the outcome." 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.

And listen, a lot of these characteristics flow from your view of salvation. There are really two ways of looking at things:

1. Some believe that man has a free will to make a choice for God - and that once he believes, God is obligated to work in his heart to change him into a new creation, as a result of his profession of faith.

If this is the case, then you have an opportunity to persuade people into the kingdom, by your effort. If this is the case, you will do everything possible to get this person to "believe." Because, their salvation is dependent upon their belief, and their belief is dependent upon your work to convince them to believe. The result of this is that there will be much pressure on you to see to it that you can do as much persuading as possible. This very thing is what drives many of the cults - pressure to perform.

2. Some believe that man's salvation is determined by the sovereign choice of God - and that it is God who will take the word that is heard and change the heart and mind of a person to make him able to believe the message.

And obviously, if you have been among us for any time, you know that this is what we believe. If this is the case, you will seek to give people as clear an understanding of the Bible and the message of the gospel as possible. If this is the case, you will do everything possible to see them understand. It is also in this case that you will then pray to the God who can cause them to understand.

The world simply needs to hear the truth. We need to proclaim the truth.

One of the greatest things that I have learned over the years is the truth of 1 Peter 2:9 - "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Our job, as saved people, is to proclaim His excellencies.

Like Steve Belonger said a few weeks ago: we need to tell of the wondrous things that God has done. We need to spread the fame of His name. And I know that I try to do this as much as I can. As I have opportunity, I like to lift up and give glory to God's name, even among non-Christian people. As Don has called it in the past, "God-talk."

And so, I conclude by asking you about your evangelism. Is your speech with the unsaved bold and "pleasing-to-God" speech? Or are you seeking to win the approval of others?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 15, 2000 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] John Brown

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