

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8 Answers The Method, Motive and Message of Ministers

Introduction: There is an old saying that familiarity breeds contempt. Because of this, the military discourages officers from fraternizing with enlisted men. However, Churchill made the astute observation that without at least some degree of familiarity, we won't be breeding anything!

Some ministers have wrongly chosen to remain aloof from their congregations. This was not the approach taken by Paul. In chapter 1 Paul wrote, "you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake" (1:5). This was a reference to the fact the missionaries were men of honesty and integrity who clearly were clearly not in it for the money. They even paid their own way through secular employment. (This was in contrast to religious charlatans, numerous in every age, who are really only after your money.) Five times in chapter 2 he stated his certainty that the Thessalonians' knew all about him: "you know" (2:1, 5, 11), "you remember" (2:9) and "you are witnesses" (2:10). Key to any minister's effectiveness is earning the congregation's trust. Today we will study that which should be every minister's method, motive and message.

******What proof was there of Paul's purity of motives (2:1-8)?** The evidence of purity of motive was evident in that **1)** the three missionaries continued to proclaim the Gospel despite unpleasant opposition both in the immediate past and in there in Thessalonica (2:2), **2)** they did not use flattery or try to win popularity (2:4-5a) and **3)** they shared their own lives with the people, as a mother would her children (2:5b-8).

1. Why do you suppose Paul felt the need to remind them of his motives (2:1-8)? (*Read between the lines*). Perhaps those persecuting the church were seeking to pressure them back to Judaism by impugning the motives of the apostles. Doubt and suspicion were cast.

What did Paul mean when he said that their coming to Thessalonica was not in vain (2:1)? Vain is from *kenos* and means empty, foolish or futile. The NIV says "our visit to you was not a failure." The fact of the matter is their visit to Thessalonica bore fruit; it got results; people were converted and a church was planted.

2. How had Paul and company been shamefully treated at Philippi (2:2)? *See Acts 16:11-40.* While in Philippi they cast the demon out of a servant girl who brought much income to her owners by demonic fortune telling. Her enraged owners falsely accused the missionaries of violating Roman law, a riotous mob attacked them, they were beaten and finally thrown into prison.

Where was Philippi in relation to Thessalonica (2:2)? Both cities are in modern Greece. The distance is about 120 km (75 miles). Thessalonica was Paul's first evangelistic stop after he got out of jail in Philippi.

According to 2:2, despite having been mistreated in Philippi, what did the missionaries do when they got to Thessalonica? They declared the Gospel in boldness despite conflict. How tempting, how easy, it would have been to be cowed or to remain silent for the sake of peace.

Example: I sold books door to door one summer, working 80 hours per week. All day long people rejected me, closed the door in my face and were rude. I was cursed out and once a drunk tried to hit me, chasing me from his yard. Every day my accomplice and I took our lunch and drove up to the cemetery overlooking the town. It was cool, quiet and peaceful. How tempting it was not to go back down into the town to try to sell books after lunch. So too Paul had to have been tempted to simply be quiet about Jesus.

Based on 2:3-4, what was it that motivated the missionaries? Their motive was to please God, the tester of their hearts. They had been approved by God and entrusted by God with the Gospel.

From what bad source did their appeal to believe not spring (2:3)? It did not spring from error or impurity or deceit.

3. What can we learn from 2:3 about the message, motive and method of the missionaries?

The Gospel message was not error, their motivation was not impure and their method involved no attempt to deceive. These guys were above board in every way. Reading this in reverse, a false teacher's message is error, his motive is impure and his method is deceitful.

Biblical Inerrancy: Paul was certain of his message. It was without error. He was neither deluded nor deluding. He was neither deceived nor a deceiver. Paul's letters contribute heavily to the content of the New Testament. Just as Paul's message was without error, so also are the Scriptures without error. This is called inerrancy of Scripture. Unbelievers claim that the Bible contains error or mere opinion or that those who wrote it had impure motives (to retain power or to put down women or homosexuals).

What impure motives (2:3) might drive some Gospel preachers? Even some who teach the true Gospel may be driven by greed, fame, power, control or feelings of importance (ego).

ESV Philippians 1:15-17 Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry . . . not sincerely.

What do you call it when a minister uses deceptive methodology (2:3)? It is called manipulation, having a hidden agenda, trickery or flattery.

Paul spoke the Gospel not to please man, but God (2:4). How should his example affect our own evangelism? Paul experienced serious rejection when he spoke about Jesus. If he were out to please man he would be quiet. If he were out to please himself he would be quiet. Since his motive was to please God, Paul boldly made the Gospel known. So too we should speak to others about Jesus, even if we are shy or timid, because it would please God for us to do so.

Think about it: Why don't we talk about the Gospel more than we do?

4. Why did Paul point out it was God who tested their hearts (2:4)? This was an appeal to purity of motives. God tested and knew their hearts (their motives).

Word Study: “Tests” is a present participle suggesting Paul continually scrutinized Paul’s life and conduct (Ernest Best, p. 96). God had approved Paul in the past and God continued to test him for worthiness.

Application: When God tests your heart (2:4), what score does He give you? Would you pass the test? Would His test reveal that you please man or God?

Paul called God Himself to the witness stand in 2:5; to what was God a witness? God was Paul’s witness to the fact that the missionaries had not come to them using flattering words nor had their mission been a pretext for greed.

5. What is flattery (2:5)? Flattery is from *kolakeia*, which BAGD defines simply as flattery (p. 440). In English, flattery is defined as excessive and insincere praise, especially that given to further one’s own interests.

6. What might a dishonest missionary do that is a pretext for greed (2:5)? A dishonest missionary is motivated by money. In order to trick people out of their money, he puts on a false appearance of sincerity and concern. Their false piety is a pretext for greed.

Reality Check: All that glitters is not gold. Not everything that looks precious or true turns out to be so. Appearances can be deceiving. A person may claim to be a Christian, claim to represent God, wear clerical garb or have a religious title (pastor, preacher, minister), but in reality he may be attempting to deceive you . He may be all about greed, with an erroneous message and impure motives.

According to 2:6, what else did the apostles not seek? They did not seek glory (praise) from the Thessalonians or anyone else.

7. What does it mean to seek glory from people (2:6)? See *Matthew 23:5-7*. The NIV has “praise”. The Greek, *doxa* (as in doxology) originally meant opinion. In the New Testament it always refers to a good opinion, thus, praise, honor, approval.

ESV Matthew 23:5-7 They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.

8. What demands could they have made as apostles of Christ (2:6)? See *1 Corinthians 9:3-14*. Jesus made it clear that those who preach the Gospel should get their living from the Gospel. They could have pressured the new converts for financial support.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:4 Do we not have the right to eat and drink?

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:13 Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:14 . . . the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

Motive: Paul was quite willing to work a secular job to finance his mission work. He did not ask for money from those to whom he was ministering. However, when money was sent to him from a church in which he had previously ministered, he gladly accepted it and quit his secular job to devote full time to ministry (see **Phlp 4:16**). In choosing to be bi-vocational, Paul was the exception. Forgoing support and working a secular job was his voluntary decision. In 1 Corinthians 9 he made it clear that those who preach the Gospel have the right to make their living from the Gospel. Since money and ministry and motives are so often a volatile mix, it might be wise to adopt Paul's approach in some situations. Although it is perfectly scriptural for an evangelist to be fully supported, perhaps he should not accept donations from those to whom he is currently ministering. Instead, his support should come from the outside, from those in his past who love him, trust him and appreciate what God is doing through him.

ESV Philippians 4:16 Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.

9. Rather than making demands (2:7), the apostles were gentle among them. According to 2:7-8, how gentle were they? They were as gentle as a nursing mother taking care of her own children. With babies it is totally give, give, give on the part of the mother. The apostles were as far from taking money from the Thessalonians as mothers are from taking from their babies.

Thus love, not authority, was the mainspring of Paul's apostolic actions (Ernest Best, p. 100). Like a mother, the apostles gave the church their lives. They were not aloof. They shared "our own selves". One survey of 5000 congregants revealed they desired a pastor of warmth, compassion and reality who did not hide behind a ministerial mantle (Dr. Joel Gregory, class notes).

So What?

10. What in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 helps prove the apostles were telling the truth about Jesus and didn't just make the whole thing up?

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the ESV.

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