

#3 1Thessalonians

Tom Tillman

Verse 2:1: 'For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. ² But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. ³ For our exhortation *did* not *come* from error or uncleanness, nor *was it* in deceit.'

In these first 12 verses of this 2nd chapter of 1st Thessalonians, Paul is rehearsing for them his ministry in Thessalonica which was only the second city in Europe to which the Gospel was taken; the first, being, Philippi where he and Silas had been so shamefully treated. We'll remember, from Acts 16, that Paul and Silas had been unjustly arrested, beaten and thrown into a prison cell with their feet put into stocks. The Jews had lied, charging Jason, their host, with harboring traitors to Caesar. While singing hymns, at night, God caused an earthquake which opened all the doors and loosed all their bonds. The result was that the jailor and all his household became believers.

The next day, the authorities wanted to release Paul and Silas but Paul wouldn't hear of it. He said, 'They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? Let them come themselves and fetch us out' Acts 16:37

Paul would not leave as if by secret; he demanded that their innocence be admitted. This is partially that to which he is referring in verse 3: 'For our exhortation *did* not *come* from error or uncleanness, nor *was it* in deceit.' Paul may have only spent a few weeks in Thessalonica; Acts 17:2 only mentions 3 Sabbaths but it could have been considerably longer since The Church there was mostly Gentile, meaning that Paul would have been leading Gentiles to faith in Christ, apart from Sabbaths.

Like Paul, every minister, pastor, evangelist, elder, every man of God, every woman of God, their lives should be characterized by faithfulness to God and faithfulness to His Word. If they are living with hidden sin they should never forget His Word: 'But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out.' Num 32:23 and: 'Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸ For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.' Gal 6:6

Verse 4: 'But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.'

Another area of ministry, of which Paul was an example, was in speaking truth without wavering or evasiveness but with courage and steadfastness of heart. Too many pastors and teachers, today, speak only what is soft and easy, what will make their hearers feel good about themselves and their lives of failure before God, failing to speak the truth regarding sin, death, hell and eternity. They won't touch any subject that is, at all, controversial; they are cowardly and do not honor God or His Word.

Paul, Silas, Timothy and others: these were men who were entrusted with the Gospel: the Gospel which had never been written down or taught before. These men were entrusted with this most valuable Treasure from God: His Word and His New Gospel of Grace and Salvation. They were not allowed to change it or soften it or make it more 'palatable;' they were not allowed to twist it into something more 'seeker sensitive;' they were not allowed to mold it into something that was attractive to the World. However, today's *oh so brave* men and women are more than courageously willing to stand up in the face of God and do all of these things, distorting His treasured Word and Gospel of grace and salvation into something completely foreign to what God transmitted to His Church through Paul and the other writers of Scripture.

There are many seemingly successful ministers in churches today who will proudly stand before God in the final Judgment, expecting great and glorious eternal rewards and fine thrones, right next to God's own, only to be stricken terrified and speechless when the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, says to them, 'Depart from Me, you lazy, wicked and faithless mongrels, I never knew you!' 'Bound them hand and foot; throw them to the outer darkness where there is weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth forever!'

But to the humble and unassuming teacher or pastor who simply, faithfully taught God's Word, day after day, week after week, through the months and years, barely making a living by the Word and yet faithfully keeping

his hand on the plow, to that one, the Lord Jesus Christ will welcome him home with open arms, heaping upon him eternal rewards that he never even hoped or imagined; he had simply sought to do God's will in gratitude for all that God had done for him.

One is a man like Loren Fischer, the other, a man like, possibly, Kenneth Copeland or others of his ilk.

A true calling of God upon a man, or woman, is not the man or woman's choice; it's God's choice and the one, truly chosen, by God, cannot help but speak, preach or teach God's Word. God doesn't just call everyone to be a 'minister' of the Word and then hope that some will respond even though most won't. God calls and equips whom He will while all others are hirelings, not shepherds but, rather, pretenders to ministry.

To those called by God, to preach, teach or write God's Word is a privilege, never a chore.

Verse 5: 'For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness— God is witness.'

Covetous flatterers: if that doesn't describe over half the TV preachers, I sure don't know what does!

Paul never decided what to speak or write based on what others wanted to hear; he always spoke what God wanted said and wrote what God wanted written.

Paul's intention was always to preach the Gospel; he didn't preach politics or self-help, feel-good pabulum; he sought to lead others into the saving knowledge of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and to encourage and exhort his hearers and readers to walk worthy of the Lord and of His calling on their lives. He wrote: 'And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴ And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God... not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified' 1 Cor 2:1

Verse 6: 'Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.'

Paul was an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ; only he and 12 others were genuine Apostles of Christ. He did not seek any glory from any man. Paul knew what genuine glory was; he had seen the Risen Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, with his own eyes when he was taken up into Heaven to be taught our Doctrine for the Church. He understood that any glory from men that he might seek was absolutely worthless in comparison to the glory that he would eventually receive from Jesus, when he stood before Him. In fact, glory that we seek and receive from men is unbelievably costly; its price will have been the true glory which comes from God.

Paul could have demanded recognition, honor and a healthy salary but he never did.

Today, we see phony prancing ponies in \$4000 suits, wearing \$3000 watches and rings, claiming to be modern day apostles, showering glory upon one another. These men and women are beyond foolish; they are the ones who will cry out, 'But Lord, Lord... didn't we do many, mighty miracles in your name, didn't we build huge megachurches for our own, I mean, for Your glory? Don't you know who we are? We're famous!' And Jesus will just shake His head as they are thrown into the Lake of Fire.

Paul, and those with him, sought only the glory of God and the welfare of the believers in every Church to which they ministered.

Verse 7: 'But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children. ⁸ So, affectionately longing 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 dear to us.'

This is the picture of a true Pastor: a shepherd who loves the sheep, who lays down his life to care for the sheep. That is when you know you are seeing and hearing a true shepherd. His loves his flock, he never seeks his own glory, he will guard his sheep; he will warn them of the danger of today's World; he will study God's Word to understand the truth of where we are in God's prophetic timetable; he will never say, 'Well, there are several different interpretations, many people believe many different things. He will say, 'This is what God's Word says and anything else is false teaching!', and he will back it up with God's Word. He will speak and teach the truth and he will never back down from the truth.