

The True Servant of Christ - Part 1

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes the integrity of the gospel and the authentic ministry of Paul amidst suffering and opposition in his sermon 'The True Servant of Christ - Part 1'.

Duration: 59:07

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-4

Topics: "Servanthood"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the intense struggle and battle that comes with preaching the gospel. He compares it to being in a boxing ring, where he is constantly being beaten by opposition. The preacher highlights the importance of not seeking to please men, but rather God, who examines the heart. He emphasizes that the approval and calling from God is an ongoing process, as God constantly tests the preacher's moral qualifications. The preacher also references the persecution he faced before preaching to the congregation, emphasizing the opposition he faced while proclaiming the gospel.

Transcript

Well, it's a great privilege again to be with you tonight to study God's Word together. And we're going to begin once again in 1 Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 beginning in verse 1. 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 the 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. Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we cry out to you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

We know, Lord, that the mind of man is a feeble thing and the words of man are the same. That, Lord, the greatest words, the most eloquent philosophies, nothing can change the heart, but your word is true. Lord, we pray that your word would go forth tonight as the word of the living God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And that from this text, this portrait of Paul, that we would see what it means to be a true minister of Christ. That we would live our lives accordingly. Lord, help us.

I am aware, Lord, of our need of you, at least to some degree. And I cry out to you, Lord, that you would help us. That you would change us, that you would transform us through your word by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, I pray for each and every one of my brothers and sisters in Christ who are gathered here. That this word would go forth and be a help to them. In Jesus' name, Amen.

From this text that I just read, and also from what we read almost a week and a half ago in the first chapter of 1 Thessalonians, and from reading the book of Acts, we discover that Paul, when he was preaching in Thessalonica, he was preaching in the midst of great persecution. And there were people who had set themselves against the Apostle Paul, and they had become his accusers. And so here in this second chapter, he is answering the accusations of the pagans and the Jews that had set themselves against him and against the early church.

Now, before we get into our text, we need to ask ourselves a very important question. When is it right for a Christian, or a minister of the gospel, to defend himself? When is it right? Well, we always have to be very, very careful of pride. That we're not defending ourselves just for the sake of ourselves and our own egos or reputations.

But if you look at Scripture clearly, and you look at this passage, I think that we are right in defending ourselves when the integrity of the gospel is at stake. Or, when the accusations of those who are against us are causing the faith of our brothers and sisters in Christ to waver. Especially new converts.

Then we must rise up, and we must make a defense. Not for ourselves, because for us, our vindication actually does not come until Christ's full vindication in the second coming. It's not for ourselves, but it's for the benefit of the gospel.

The benefit of those who have embraced the gospel. Now, let's look at our text. In verse 1, he says, For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain.

Now, look at the preposition for. This is very important. Why? Because it means this is connected to something.

What is it connected to? Well, generally, it's connected to chapter 1. But specifically, if you go back to verse 5, you'll see where he says, For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. Just as you know what kind of men we prove to be among you for your sake. In this passage, Paul is talking about how the gospel came in to Thessalonica.

It came in with power. Not as the word of men, but as the word of God, and it transformed lives. And then after explaining that, he goes on to say, Also, you know what kind of men we were among you.

So he's talking about the power of the gospel and the integrity of the gospel preachers. The one who brought the message in. And that's where he starts now to make his defense.

He says, For you yourselves know, brethren. Now, I want you to look at this. Even in your text, it says you yourselves.

He doesn't say you know, but he says you yourselves know. He's pointing to them with a finger and he's saying, Now listen, you've heard all kinds of things about us since we left. But you, emphatically, you yourselves, you know what kind of men that we were when we lived among you.

Now, I want you to put special attention on the word know because it's very important. It was very important in chapter in chapter one. It's the word Oida.

And it means to know by observation, by perception, by actually looking at something and examining something. So if you go back up to verse four in chapter one, he says, Knowing brethren. Beloved by God, his choice of you.

He's not saying I know you are Christian because of some special revelation from God. He says, I know you are Christian because I've observed you. I've perceived that you are Christians by watching your life.

And then if you look in verse five, he goes on in the middle of verse five. He says, Just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you. And again, the word is Oida.

Do you know you who live in Thessalonica? You saw us, you observed, you know what kind of men we are. Now, this is very important truth for all of us. How do they know what kind of men we are? Or for that matter, what kind of sister in Christ that you are? It's not by what you say with your mouth.

It's by what people see, what they perceive. That validates your confession. He says, For you yourselves know, brethren.

Now, this is very important. I know I'm being nitpicky, but just look at what he's doing. Those accusers are trying to drive a wedge between Paul, Silas and Timothy, between them and the new believers in Thessalonica.

And Paul says, Look, we're brothers. We became brothers in Christ when I was with you. We share this kind of intimacy.

Remember not only what we were among you, but the relationship that we had. Whenever sometimes I may doubt what another brother in Christ is doing, you know what I go to? My longstanding knowledge of that brother in Christ. What kind of character do I know that he possesses? And that acts as a wall against the accusations of the devil.

I know this man, you see. And that's what Paul is getting at here. He says, For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain.

Now, what does he mean? It was not in vain. Well, the word itself, kenos, can mean three different things. And all of them may be here.

First of all, we did not come to you empty handed, as though we were beggars who had arrived to your city in order to get something from you. We did not come empty handed so that you did not receive anything from us. Don't you remember how your lives were changed? Don't you remember the benefit that you received from our lives and from our gospel that we preach? That's one meaning of it.

The second is this. When something is vain, it is ineffectual or fruitless, without fruit. He says, Brothers, you know what kind of ministry that we had among you, that you could see in our lives true fruit.

And true fruit, according to the teachings of our Lord, is proof that someone is a disciple. He said, You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you that you would go and bear fruit and that your fruit would remain.

Even if we go back as far as the Old Testament, we understand what? The man who meditates upon God's Word, he is like a tree firmly planted by rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season. His leaf does not fall, does not wither. And in everything he does, he prospers.

There's a sense of fruitfulness in a real gospel ministry. Even though we will all go through times of purging, there's real fruit. But the false prophet is not that way.

He's just not. Remember what Jude says about him. He's like an autumn tree, doubly dead, without fruit and uprooted.

Listen to me. Christians are to be fruitful, should be fruitful, can be fruitful, will be fruitful. If they are dug in and united with Christ, if they are dug into the Word of God, if they are living that John 15 type of life of abiding in Christ, we will be fruitful.

And Paul is saying, listen, remember the fruit that I have among you. Now the third meaning here, and I think it's the controlling meaning, is the word vain can also mean fallacious or false. And I think that's the point that he's getting to.

Our coming was not false. There was not something hid behind everything that we were doing. Not at all.

What you saw is what we really were and what we really are. Now, I want you to notice something. He says our coming to you was not in vain.

It's hard to translate it, but coming here is actually in the perfect tense. And what it's indicating is something very, very important. He's saying when we first came to you and we first started ministering among you, it wasn't in vain, not at all.

It was fruitful. It was true. It brought benefit.

And that same state continues on. He said we just didn't come among you and you guys started having a happy life. And then when we left, everything went bad.

All this stuff I talked about in chapter one went out the window. He says absolutely not. He said it was an effective ministry when we began and it continues to be an effective ministry.

That's another sign. That's another sign. A continuation of the thing that has begun.

Now, he goes on in verse two and he says something very important. Right here I need to stop. Paul has just set forth that his ministry was not in vain.

Now he's going to start his defense. And I want you to notice something all throughout Paul here. He does something very important.

He states the accusation and then he comes back and refutes it. Then he states the accusation and then he comes back and refutes it. He makes it clear what's being said about him.

He attacks it head on. Why? Because he's a righteous man. You know, you incriminate someone who's guilty.

They're going to try to avoid the issue altogether, aren't they? Not Paul. He says lay it out. Lay out exactly what you want to say about me and I'll refute every one of them by the grace of God.

Now, they were saying his coming was in vain. That he was just a peddler. One of those just traveling teachers with something to gain from everyone with which he came into contact.

They said his coming to you was in vain. Paul starts out verse 2. No, but. Now that's important.

Why? When you look at the Greek, there's two adversitives, two conjunctions that are adversitives. One is Allah and the other is they. When you use Allah, it means you are making a stark, strong contrast between what was said before and what is being said now.

And Paul is making a dramatic contrast between what? Between what they were saying and now reality, what he's going to put forth. He's not vowing the need of these men. He's saying this is your position, but I'm going to show you that is exactly the opposite.

And he starts out by proving the genuineness of his ministry. In what way? By talking about how much he suffered. Today, a lot of ministers try to prove the genuineness of their ministry by how much they prosper.

Paul, by how much he suffered. And you're going to see this is extremely important, not only for Paul, but the argument for the resurrection and for Christianity itself. He says, but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi.

And what this means is that before he came to Thessalonica, he was in Philippi and he suffered terribly. He says, first of all, that I suffered. This word indicates it's the idea of the sense of pain, of physical pain.

Pain that would come from someone beating you with a rod. Pain that would come from shackles around your feet. Pain that would come from someone buffeting you with their fists and kicking you as you lay on the ground.

It's a sense of real physical pain. He said, this is what I experienced in Philippi. And then he uses the word mistreated.

This is the idea of humiliation, degradation, of abuse. The idea of violence is there, but it's more that they treated him shamefully. Like he was the off scouring of some bucket or pan.

Now, in order to show you that Paul's not exaggerating, just keep your place and go to Acts for just a minute. Go to Acts chapter 16, verse 22. The crowd rose up together against them and the chief magistrates, and look what they did, tore their robes off of them.

You know how humiliating that would be and also how it would hurt? Tore their robes off of them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. A punishment that can kill you. He goes on, when they had struck them with many blows, not just once, not just twice.

You know, we're so accustomed to see a guy in some movie get hit in the face ten times and he just keeps coming and there's no marks. I have been hit in the face. Have you ever been hit in the face? It only takes one good blow and you're usually down.

But they were hit with many blows and they threw them into prison, threw them, commanding the jailer to guard them securely. And he, having received such a command, threw them again into the inner prison. No windows, nothing.

Inner prison. And fastened their feet in the stocks. So Paul wasn't exaggerating, was he? He says, now, listen, before I came to you, I was preaching this message that is defined and clear that I call the gospel of God.

I was preaching this message and I was terribly persecuted. And then I come to you and look in the last part of verse two, and I preach this same gospel amid or in the midst of much opposition. The word here for opposition is agon.

And it was used to actually as to describe the coliseum or the stadium where Olympic type games would be held. But then it went on to refer to the contests themselves and then also the idea of the struggle, the intense battling and fighting, wrestling that went on within those games. He said, I preach the gospel to you like a person standing in the middle of a boxing ring while people are beating me.

Well, it's so different. This is so convicting for a preacher. Many of us today, we go to a place, we stay in a hotel, we come out, we go and preach.

Maybe some people get mad at us, write bad things on the Internet. But it's nothing like this. Now, why is this so important? Oh, this is extremely important.

Think about it. Think about the power this gives to Paul's argument. They're saying that I'm just a robber, I'm a thief, that I've made up this message and I preach it for gain.

Well, if I preach it for gain, then how is it that I was almost beat to death in Philippi? And then when I preached the same message to you, I had to suffer the same things. And so Paul is saying basically this. Don't you see? If I had been a charlatan, like they said, would I not have changed my message? If I was wanting to get some gain out of you, having been beaten up in Philippi, I would have thought, well, that message doesn't work.

So when I go to Thessalonica, I'm preaching something else. You know, a lot of preachers kind of do that today. Maybe not with regard to opposition, but I was preaching that message and it didn't grow a big church.

I'm going to change it a little bit. And by doing that, I'll get a big church. You see how dangerous things can be? But Paul says no.

Now, I want you to understand something. You realize when we talk about apologetics, you talk about the defense of the resurrection, one of the greatest proofs that's put forth is the lives that the apostles led after they began to proclaim the message. I mean, every one of them lived lives of terrible suffering.

Of the twelve, eleven died as martyrs. And so the whole idea is if these men had got together and crafted a message in order to make some money or to gain some fame or prestige, surely they would have changed the message when they were about to be slaughtered. But they didn't.

And why didn't they? Because it was the gospel of God. And they really were messengers of God. Now look, he says here in verse two.

He says, we had boldness in our God. But before we get there, let me say this. Just go back just a step and it says, But after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know.

What does that mean? As you observed. Well, they weren't in Philippi. My dear friend, listen to me.

I don't know if you've ever played football or you've ever boxed or karate or whatever. But you get hit the next morning. I don't care how young, how strong you are.

You're walking with a limp. You're feeling horrible. One punch, your entire face swells up.

I want you to picture this because sometimes we don't get the picture. Here's Paul and Silas and Timothy. They're walking in or however they got to Thessalonica.

Their backs are lacerated. Their feet are swollen from being in the stocks. They're emaciated.

I mean, they are suffering like you could not believe. And when they walked through the market, everyone was kind of going, What's wrong with those guys? I mean, they're all beat up. You see that? You see what this man suffered.

I don't want you to go home and say, Well, I don't suffer like that. I need to feel bad. No, but I want you to embrace your suffering in a little bit different manner.

You're not being beat up every day. Neither am I. So we can face these things. We can with more courage than what I think we imagine.

And how is that? He said, look, even though all this suffering is going on, we had boldness. We had boldness. What it literally means is it actually comes from a verb that is put together by two words.

That means literally, if you put them together, all speech. Another way of looking at it is all outspokenness. In the midst of this terrible suffering, they are frank.

They are public. They are open. There's no seeker sensitive stuff going on here.

There's no insider movement going on here. They're walking through the marketplace and they are proclaiming the gospel of God. How did they do that? It says we had the boldness in our God.

Now, what does that mean in our God? I believe it refers to two things. They had boldness in their knowledge of both the power and faithfulness of God. They did.

And that's what's wrong with us. So often we don't know our God is that not what Daniel says that in the last days when things get really bad, it's those people who know their God that will display strength. He said, I knew God.

I know God. I know who he is. But there's more.

It's not just in his God in that sense of a knowledge, intellectual thing, but we can never forget the union that exists between the believer and God through the editorial work of Jesus Christ. He's talking, I believe, about super natural strengthening in the Holy Spirit. Not just what he knows, but he said the power that works mightily in me, that same power works in you.

Same God, same power. We can do this. He says, so we had boldness in our God.

Remember, David, when they were going to stone him, his own men, what did he do? He strengthened himself in the Lord, his God. Paul's doing the same. Now he goes on and he says, we had boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.

To speak. There we go again. To speak.

We're going to talk about this a little while later, that Paul's life and ministry hinged around proclamation. He wasn't, like I said, running around whispering to people. He was speaking for the word of God to speak to you, the gospel of God.

Now, I want you to see something. If you go to verse five, chapter one, he says for our gospel. And then the text that I just read, verse two, chapter two, the gospel of God, Paul calls it his gospel.

And then he calls it the gospel of God. When Paul refers to it as his gospel, he's not saying it's his invention that he made it up. He's just saying that he so identifies with it.

Do you see that he identifies with it? He's made it his own. It's become the central point of his life. He's been gospel eyes.

It's his. And yet there's the recognition that it is the gospel of God. It is God's message, God's invention.

God spoke it forth. He said with the power to preach this message to you. Now, let's go on.

Verse four, for our exhortation. Now, before this in verse two, what is he using to prove that he's truly a minister of the gospel? His suffering. Now, what is he going to use? He's going to point to his exhortation.

He's going to point to his preaching. And he says this for our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit. How is it that he could preach the gospel? Verse two, amid much persecution and suffering.

I'll tell you, because he knew it wasn't a lie and he knew his motives were true. That's how he could do it. He says for our exhortation, the word exhortation.

Comes from the verb. It's a derivative of the word paraclete. Paraclete.

To call alongside, to call one alongside. Now, once you think about this, because the word has double meaning and it's very important here. What's the double meaning? It can refer to comforts.

Giving comfort, comforter. It can refer to comfort and encouragement. Or it can refer to exhortation and urging and beseeching.

To refer to both of those things. And this is important. What Paul is saying is this.

Look, when we exhorted you and urged you. And called you to repentance and all these things with strong voice. Was it because we were trying to manipulate you? Or force you into something? Not at all.

Then he comes back and he says, also, I want you to know. That when we pulled you to ourselves. And we spoke kindly to you.

And we encouraged you. And we comforted you. We were not trying to win your hearts.

In order to use you for our purposes. Our exhortation was not that way. It did not come from error.

Now, error. This particular word can be used actively or passively. If it's active, it's Paul saying, I didn't use error to deceive you.

But that would be redundant because he's going to talk about that later. Most of the time in the New Testament when it's used, it's passive. Paul's saying, I wasn't tricked.

I wasn't deceived. And when you put this with the idea of suffering, he's basically saying. Do you really think I would suffer all these things if I just saw a ghost? Did you really think I would give my whole life away? Literally roll it up in a ball and according to all my contemporaries, throw it in a trash can.

If I just kind of thought this was true. He says, no, this does not come from error. And this is the same thing Peter was arguing into the grave.

He said, we weren't telling you stories, clever tales. When we've made known to you that come the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. John is saying the same thing in his epistle when he's having trouble with false prophets.

He says, look, we saw him. We touched him. We contemplated him.

This is not just a teaching. It's a person and we know him and we are not in error. This is for our exhortation does not come from error or impurity.

Now, this word impurity is literally uncleanliness, uncleanness. And a lot of times it refers to sexual immorality. But we don't really see in the New Testament where the apostles are accused of this type of thing.

But it could be in the speech of the accusers. And I want you to know that in Paul's time, sexual immorality ran rampant, rampant in the world. If you think it's bad now, well, nothing new under the sun.

Another thing that I want you to understand is there has always been this vile, unholy relationship between religion and sexual immorality. You go to the pagan religions. What did they have? They had temple prostitutes.

Even in the time of the apostasy of Israel. What do you have? You have temple prostitutes. You have immorality.

What do we see so often in so many churches and religious organizations? We see immorality. What is one of the great marks of a false prophet in the New Testament? And if I had time, we would just go through there and I would show you. They are sexually immoral men.

And that is why this is so important for a true servant of the gospel, not to stick out his chest and be bold against this sin, to fear it and to do everything in his power to build a wall to protect himself from it. But the word can also mean all sorts of immoralities like lying and stealing and greed. And Paul said, no, our exhortation, everything we've done here, it is not motivated by that.

And then he goes on for another term and he says that our exhortation did not come by way of deceit. The Greek word literally means bait, the kind of bait that you would put on a hook now or set in a trap in order to catch an animal. Now, here's the argument.

And I want you to think about this. If Paul's ministry and message had been bait in order to capture people, to use them for his advantage, in order to gain fame or exaltation or riches, then he would have changed his message. I mean, after all, when I go fishing, if I throw on a lure after a few minutes, nothing bites that lure.

I'm changing the lure, I'm changing the bait to find something that will catch something. That's what false prophets do. They change their message.

Paul said we weren't that way. We did not do that. Now, verse four.

Remember, in verse three, we have the we have the accusation in verse four. He comes back again and he says, but there's that strong contrast again. Now I'm going to tell you the reality.

He says, 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 heart. Now, just as is important, real important. And what is he saying? He's saying that there is no contrast.

But there is perfect conformity, perfect conformity. Between the way we preached and the exalted nature of our calling. And a lot of men need to hear that today, especially those who want to get up and do a comedy routine, be very slight and slack about the gospel.

Turn the whole congregation laughing. Now, there's nothing wrong at times with the use of humor. But Paul is saying the way we preached was in perfect conformity with the high calling that we received.

We were serious men. He says, but just as we have been approved by God. The word approved.

Means here that it's perfect tense. It's the type of word Doki Mazo. It's a type of word that means to test a metal or a coin before you approve it.

It's in order to approve it. But before you approve it, you test it. He says we have been tested and having been tested, we have been approved of God.

This is the kind of men we are. They were not new believers. They were not people carried around by the zeal of their newfound faith.

They were not inexperienced. They were not fanatics driven by some wind. They were men who had been tested and tested and tested.

And then having been tested, they were entrusted with the gospel. Now, passive tense here. They did not take this ministry for themselves.

They did not come out and go, I'm taking this ministry. No, it was conferred upon them by God. It had to do with God's sovereignty.

So they were tested. Before they were approved and being approved, they were entrusted with what? The greatest treasure that's ever been given. Now, you want to talk about responsibility? You want to talk about stewardship? You want to talk about fear to stand before the judgment throne of Christ? All of us, but especially gospel ministers, have been entrusted with the greatest of all treasures.

The greatest of all treasures. Do you see that? We cannot falter. This is a treasure.

This is a gift. There's no greater thing given to a man. It's the reason why Spurgeon said, I will not humble myself to become a king.

Because he already had the most exalted place, and that is a messenger of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, I want to point out something that I think is very, very important. I want you to hold your place, and I want you to go to 1 Timothy.

Because I want to make sure we're not man-centered on this. 1 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 11. He says, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

Now, look at his language. With which I have been entrusted. Do you see that? Same word.

With which I have been entrusted. And then he says, I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he considered me faithful, putting me into service. Now, this is troublesome.

It's almost as if you think, if you just read it lightly, you're thinking Paul said, yeah. He looked at me, and he saw he had a prize. Someone he could trust in.

And therefore, because of that, what did he do? He put me into service. He made me a bearer of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And that's not what he's saying, because I want you to fix your attention on a certain phrase.

I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord. Paul is thanking him for something. What is it? Who has strengthened me.

So it wasn't that God was looking around, needing someone to help him, and he found Paul. And Paul was trustworthy and strong, and God goes, oh, relief. I found someone who can help me.

That's not it at all. What it is, is in God's sovereignty, he chose Paul. And then God did not choose, he did not trust in Paul, but God trusted in his work in Paul.

And so he chose him, strengthened him, tested him, and approved him. And it was all God's doing from beginning to end. I want to give you a statement from Augustine, who says this, God does not choose a person who is worthy, but by the act of choosing him, he makes him worthy.

Now, doesn't that give you hope? Whatever, for whatever you have been chosen, he will make you worthy. He will make you worthy. Now, he says, but just as we have been, verse 4, approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak.

So we speak. Laleo, verbal communication, preaching, exhortation. We speak.

Paul's ministry hinged around proclamation. You need to see that. It was the center of everything he did.

You did not talk about missionary activity to the Apostle Paul unless you put front and center proclamation, preaching, exhortation. And it's taken a back seat today in many churches and in many mission works around the world. But proclamation, preaching, speaking.

It's an absolute necessity. I believe it's St. Francis of Assisi, at least this is attributed to him. I may be wrong.

I hope I'm not. That preach the gospel always, use words when necessary. There's a grain of truth in that, but it largely distorts.

The apostolic commission, the apostolic commission was preach, preach, preach, open your mouth and preach. That was telling me of missionaries that had the reputation after they left the field that all the people around them, the Muslims around them, gave testimony that they were wonderful, nice people. So they went back to the States and what? They left the testimony that they were wonderful and nice people.

And why were they? Because they never opened up their mouth. Do all kinds of good deeds. Bless people, build hospitals.

Wonderful. They will love you. It's when you open up your mouth and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ that all hell breaks loose.

And that hell broke loose around Paul almost every day of his life. He did not intentionally look for a fight. But I want you to know something.

He opened his mouth and he preached. Now, in verse four, he says, so we speak present tense, indicating a habitual practice on the part of Paul. You couldn't shut him up.

He spoke. Not as pleasing men. We don't even need to talk about that.

Because he says throughout in different epistles, if I'm a pleasing man. Why am I being beaten? He did not seek to please men. He seek to please God.

And the most loving thing a minister of the gospel can do is not please men or not have the purpose of pleasing men. Because the best thing I can do for you is seek to please God when I proclaim his truth. Because that is what you need.

He says, so we speak, not pleasing men, but God. There's that adversative again. Very strong.

Not men. No way. God, we are pleasing.

And then he says this about God, who examines our hearts. Now. This is this is going to be helpful to you, especially if you're going into the ministry.

It's the same word. Doki Maso. This time it's in present tense.

Now, let me let me just refresh your memory in verse four. He says, we have been approved by God. It's a done deal.

We have been approved. And because we have been approved, we have been entrusted the gospel. And then he turns right around and says, this God that approved us, that tested us and then approved us is constantly testing us.

Constantly testing not only us from the outside, but the deepest part of our hearts and our thoughts. He's testing us in what way? To make sure that we continue. With the moral qualifications to be a messenger of the gospel.

It's not a one and done deal. It's not that God approved me. He called me 20 years ago or 30 years ago.

It's not that God poured out his spirit on me 15 or 20 years ago. I hear people use that language all the time. But there's this idea of having been approved and continually he is examining our hearts.

To make sure. To guarantee. That we continue in the qualifications necessary to be.

A man of God or useful in any way, and I want you to look and we're almost finished, but I want you to look in Psalm 17. Some theologians have said that. Testing isn't even referred to it as an attribute of God.

That he is the God who tests the heart. Seventeen verse three. He says, David says, you have tried my heart.

You have visited me by night. You have tested me and you find nothing. Brother.

Sister. I just want to point out this, you're laying there in bed at night. Mind just thinking about all kinds of things.

Know this. He's examining those thoughts in that very hour. Now, that shouldn't be something of dread.

That should be something that would caution you. That he is always examining your heart. In the secret moment, he's examined.

See if you're maintaining those qualifications. He tests your heart. David said he tested me and you found nothing, he says.

And then in verse the end of verse three, I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress. Connection between the heart. The mind.

The mouth actions. That is the minister of the gospel. I am constantly being tested.

Maybe not by men, maybe not even trials by fire, which, yes, they are there. But my innermost heart. My thoughts, my thought life, everything is being tested, tested.

Now he goes on. And let me point out this, he says, why would let me just ask you, why would you why would he please God and not men? Two reasons that I can see here. One is men can only see what's outside.

God sees everything. The other thing is the admonition of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Fear not men who can kill the body, but fear God who can kill the body and the soul in hell.

Yes, you need to play. You need to be a pleaser of somebody. But it should be the one before whom you will stand on the day of judgment.

Now, let's go on, he says, and we'll go through this quickly, says, for we never came with flattering speech. Literally, we never came with a word of flattery. It's the idea of pouring out extravagant praise upon a person with the intent to gain that person.

To use that person. He said, Paul said, we never did that. And then he says, as you know, I just want to point out something here.

You know, Proverbs 28, one, the wicked flee when no one pursues. But the righteous are as bold as a lion. He's being bold here.

He's almost taking up the words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He said, which one of you convicts me of sin? He's saying, I never use flattery, you know it. In all my time with you, I never flattered you.

I never used that type of technique. I never thought so poorly of you. That I would do something like that.

Flattery is dangerous, deadly, it's vile. And he goes on and he says, for we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed. That means it can mean pretext can mean a mask or a cloak, something that stands in front of something else to hide what's behind.

He said, no, we never put on a cloak of of exhortation and beautiful words and flattery with the pretext of greed. Now, something I want to say here about this greed, it doesn't have to be just greed for money. But greed for all sorts of things like ease of life, fame, power, exaltation, praise.

He said, no, we didn't do it and you know it. Isn't it powerful when in your own conscience as a man of God, you can say, you know it. You know, I never did this.

Samuel, who said I never took anything from any of you, you know it. And then he says something that for a Jew is almost unthinkable. He calls God to witness.

God knows it. Now, that is powerful. Paul rarely does this in his writings.

He does do it a few times, but rarely and only under extreme instances. And he says, if it's not enough to say, you know it, then let me tell you this. As a Jew who fears God, God knows it.

All right. Now, sometimes I think people use that even Christians far too flippantly. You need to be very, very careful that you're not wearing a cloak hiding anything.

And then try to say something like that. Now, he goes on and he says this. Nor did we seek glory from men.

We didn't seek praise for men. Present tense, the word seek meaning a continual action, a habitual practice. It was our habitual practice not to seek glory from men for ourselves.

Neither from you or from others. He goes, we didn't do it with you. We didn't do it on the streets, in the marketplace, when we were preaching publicly.

And we did not do it in your homes when we were alone with you by yourself. We just didn't do it. He says, even though as apostles of Christ.

Now, when you want to talk about authority. Apostle of Christ is as high as you get. Christ is the cornerstone.

Church was built upon this foundation of the apostles teaching. He's saying, as an apostle of Christ, he says, we might have asserted our authority. We might have been weighty to you.

Now, what does that mean? There's two possibilities. I believe that both of them are involved. One is when Paul has talked about weighty and a burden.

A lot of times it's had to do with finances. He's saying, I didn't do that. I didn't do that with you at all.

As a matter of fact, if you'll just look over to second Thessalonians chapter three, verse eight. 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 would not be a burden to any of you.

Now, this is not setting forth the principle that Christian ministers should never be helped or supported. Not at all, because in other places Paul will talk about that. But what Paul is teaching us is something that we all should practice.

And that is this. Sometimes we must forego our own rights for the sake of the integrity of our witness and for the sake of the integrity of the gospel. And sometimes this is necessary.

Very necessary. Paul says, he says, as apostles of Christ, we might have asserted our authority. I said that this could be referring to finances or it could be what we just have in our text in the New American Standard.

That he says, as an apostles, we could have asserted our authority over you. And we never did. Now, Calvin says it this way, and I think he brings out the point perfectly.

He says we could have used our authority to exact from you unqualified obedience. I've known men that have used the ministry to do that. To exact from people unqualified obedience to themselves.

That's terrifying. Paul didn't do it. Now, let me just give you just a list of five things about authority.

And then we'll pick this up next time. First of all, authority does not spring from our position, but from the degree that we conform our lives to the word of God and we proclaim the word of God. I can't say because I'm a minister of the gospel, I have some authority over you.

I have authority to correctly interpret the word of God and instruct you with it. And call you to repentance. And I have to be aware that on the day of judgment, if I'm wrong, I'm in trouble.

Another thing that I want to say about authority is authority is limited to the clear teaching of the word of God. So many people have started to say, you know, talk a lot about pastoral authority. And it gets to the point where they're making their way into the homes of people.

And they're demanding obedience and allegiances that are just simply not right. Our authority, again, is limited by the scriptures, us proclaiming the word of God, living the word of God and going to you with the word of God. Not some vision we had, not some impression of our heart, not just our attitude or what we think is right.

No, it's the clear teaching of the word. If someone comes to you with some revelation or something like that with regard to your life, just please tell them God knows your mailbox. If he wants to send you a special message, he will do it.

But if someone comes to you humbly with the word of God, properly interpreting the word of God, you need to listen. And even in that, though, there's a sense of the Christian conscience. And there is some things in which Christians are guided by their conscience that goes far beyond what maybe I may do in my life.

I can't impose upon you because it's a matter of conscience. And that's why love is so important. Another thing, authority does not give greater privileges, but greater responsibility.

Just want to say that you want authority. You don't know what you're wanting. Young men, when you think about getting married, you need to understand this authority in the home.

It's authority for service. It's authority to pour out your life, not to do what you want, not to carry out your own agenda. Not to manipulate your wife in the name of Jesus.

It is authority to serve. Fourthly, the goal is not to bring people under our authority, but to bring them under Christ's authority and also to bring them to a point where they are mature in the word of God, renewing their mind in the word so that they no longer need such paternal fatherly attention as though they were they were so immature. But in order for that to happen in your life, you must grow in the word.

And finally, the allegiance of others is not to be demanded. It's earned. It's earned.

It goes for all kinds of authority, even in the home. Notice it doesn't say in the Bible, Husbands, command your wives to submit to you. It's God talking directly to wives.

Husbands, you're to earn that. You're to earn that. When you start having as a pastor, as anyone in authority, and you start having to demand and manipulate people, demand that they follow you because of some position, you're in trouble.

Now, there is a sense I want you to know there is biblical authority in a church and elders have biblical authority. But it's an authority that they earn because of their clear teaching of Scripture, because of their manner of living. Now, one last thing, even though this is about ministers of the gospel, there is a sense in which we are all ministers of the gospel.

Another thing, if you'll take this text home, I don't recommend turning on the television set to look at all these preachers. But much of what is said by the Apostle Paul exposes not all, but at least some of the television preachers and the prosperity people and that type of thing. You need to see Paul is dealing with this in a sense, indirectly.

Listen, the words of someone's mouth. There's much to be learned. But the words of someone's mouth, like their heart, are deep waters, hard to discern.

But observing action and character. That's why in First Timothy chapter three and Titus chapter one, that elder, his qualifications are primarily qualifications of character. If you're not here today, if you're here today and you don't know the Lord, or you're troubled in your soul, or there's something going on, you need some counsel.

You can come to me, you can come to Brother Anthony, you can come to Mark, and we'll try to help you. Other brothers who have their Bibles and know how to use them, other sisters. Don't leave here tonight with a troubled soul.

Let's pray.

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