

In our study of Thess, we are currently looking @ 2:1-16, which describes the apostolic team's gospel ministry in Thessalonica.

Note: Apostles. ~~ Technical. ~~ Generic sense of messengers, envoys.

Outline 2:1-16 this way.

- In vv 1-2, Paul notes gospel ministry successful, in spite of strong opposition.

- In vv 3-12, Paul mounts a defense of their gospel ministry.
 - ▷ False accusations being made.

 - ▷ In vv 3-4, defends credibility of team.
 - >Content, truth; motives, pure; & methods, honest, they set forth the truth plainly.

 - ▷ In vv 5-12, defends conduct.
 - >Specifically in vv 5-6, notes what their behavior was not like.

 - >& in particular in vv 7-12, he explains what their behavior was like.

- Then in vv 13-16, once again gives thanks for the Thess believers.

Today, start looking @ defense of their conduct, vv 5-6.

In vv 5-6, notes what their behavior was not like. 1/13

Denied 4 charges.

➤1st, denied flattery, v 5a.

➤For we never came with words of flattery, as you know.

➤2nd, denied greed, v 5b (NIV).

➤Nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness.

➤3rd, denied seeking human praise, v 6a (NIV), We were not looking for praise from people

➤& 4th, denied abusing their authority, v 6b, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.

Paul first denied the charge of flattery.

^{5a} For we never came with words of flattery, as you know.

➤I.e., never used insincere speech.

➤The term for flattery refers to saying nice things about a person in order to do the following.

▷To take advantage of them, to con them out of money, to gain influence over them, or, we could add, to hide some other selfish motive.

▷Paul, Silas, & Timothy were not trying to take advantage of people, to con them out of money, or to gain influence over them or to hide some other selfish motive. 2/13

Paul & the team refused to employ flattery.

➤ They knew that using flattery while sharing the gospel compromises the integrity of the message & calls into question the motives for sharing it.

▷ Good for us to remember.

Notice @ end of vs 5, phrase as you know.

➤ For we never came with words of flattery, as you know.

▷ I.e., you Thessalonians know we weren't trying to take advantage of you, con you out of money, gain influence over you, or had any other selfish motives.

▷ Thessalonians themselves could testify to this.

➤ IOW, Paul told them don't fall for false accusations when you know the truth.

▷ Good advice.

Across the board Scripture shows flattery to be wrong.

➤ E.g., flattery is deceitful.

▷ [Ps. 55:20-21](#), My companion stretched out his hand against his friends; he violated his covenant. His speech was smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.

▷ & [Rom 16:18](#), re: false teachers, For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naïve.

➤ The results of flattery are damaging, Pr 26:28b (NIV).

▷ A flattering mouth [i.e., insincere talk/or false praise] works ruin.

➤ Honesty is preferable to flattery.

▷ Pr 28:23 (NIV), Whoever rebukes a person will in the end gain favor rather than one who has a flattering tongue.

➤ I.e., in the end, people appreciate honest criticism far more than flattery.

➤ Ps. 12:3 (NIV), Prayed, May the Lord silence all flattering lips and every boastful tongue.

Now, important to understand flattery is not to be confused with wds of affirmation.

➤ On a # of occasions, Paul said positive things about others.

▷ E.g., Philem 4-7, I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

▷ And we've seen it in this letter.

➤ E.g., 1:2-3 (NIV), We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4/13

➤ In Eph. 4:29 (NIV), Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

➤ Affirmation, tact, & kindness in speech are not wrong.

▷ But it is wrong to use speech in a way that is designed to achieve selfish results.

Paul and his colleagues rejected the use of flattery.

➤ Flattery is phony.

▷ And it is a cover-up for a person's real intentions.

➤ Ques for us.

▷ Are we honest and straightforward in our words?

▷ Or do we tell people what they want to hear in order to get what we want or to get ahead?

The second denial rejects the charge that the apostolic team's work was motivated by disguised greed.

Vs 5b (NIV), Nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness.

➤ Paul and his companions were not greedy, nor did they use a disguise to hide greediness.

➤ The image came from Greek plays, where actors would often play several parts and hold masks over their face for each part they played. 5/13

➤ Apostolic team was not merely pretending or playing a role when they told the Thess of God's salvation.

➤ Not playing a role to steal \$.

Made clear to Cor church, 2 Cor 2:17 (NIV) again.

➤ Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.

▷ Paul contrasts himself and his associates with mere religious charlatans, who were motivated by greed rather than concern for others.

▷ Team's concern was for the spiritual welfare of people, & that was their motive.

Notice, to emphasize the truth of his wds, Paul adds that God is their witness.

➤ NIV, Nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed -- God is our witness.

➤ Invoking God as witness is frequent in Scripture to emphasize the truth of a statement.

▷ E.g., Phil 1:8, For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

➤ Here it means both the Thessalonians and God himself can now serve as witnesses to their exemplary character.

➤ Biblical principle, 2 or 3 witnesses to establish the facts of something.

▷ E.g., 1 Tim 5:19 (CSB), Don't accept an accusation against an elder unless it is supported by two or three witnesses. 6/13

▷ Church discipline, Take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

▷ 2 or 3 witnesses to prove guilty.

Paul denies that the missionaries had ever used their preaching as a secret means to get rich.

➤ There were no deceptive tactics or hypocrisy in their ministry or message.

➤ Greed was what drove most itinerant speakers and false teachers.

➤ This is very true in our day as well.

➤ Cult leaders & false teachers turn religion into a money-making machine and line their own pockets by stealing from their followers.

➤ Most likely to negate this type of accusation, at times Paul supported himself as a tentmaker rather than accepting gifts.

▷ 1 Thess 2:9, For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

▷ Acts 18:1-3

Greed is condemned by Scripture as contrary to the purposes of God.

➤ Therefore, greed should have no place in the lives of God's people.

▷ Eph 5:3 (NIV), But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. 7/13

In Col, Paul points out that greed is a form of idolatry.

➤ Col 3:5 (CSB), Therefore, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.

➤ Idolatry not limited to the worship of false images.

▷ It's placing anything or anyone before God as the object of allegiance & devotion.

▷ A greedy person's insatiable desire ~ to acquire more and more, whatever the object, and regardless of need, causes them to do the following.

➢ To put money and earthly things before God as the object of their allegiance and devotion.

➤ Money and earthly things become the false gods that a covetous person worships and serves in the place of the true God.

➤ Matt 6:24, No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

▷ It is possible to devote oneself wholly to the service of God.

➢ And it is possible to devote oneself wholly to the service of acquiring money and earthly things.

→ But it is not possible to devote oneself wholly to the service of both.

▷ Of course, many people do try to do both.

▷ But ultimately 1 will eventually win out & exercise control over the person's life. 8/13

Now, Paul's denial of being greedy does not prohibit Christian workers from receiving financial support.

➤ Paul himself sometimes accepted support.

▷ E.g., from Philippi, Phil. 4:16, Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.

➤ In 1 Cor 9:14, In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

➤ & in 1 Tim 5:18, For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."

▷ The idea is that a person who works for something should be able to benefit from it.

➤ However, the pastor or missionary must not be driven by gain, must not focus on money, & must not seek unreasonable compensation.

▷ In 1 Pet. 5:2 (NIV), Peter exhorts elders, Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them . . . not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve.

➤ Furthermore, the pastor or missionary must be faithful even when there's threat of losing support.

The third denial rejects the charge of the desire for human praise.

Vs 6a (NIV), We were not looking for praise from people.

➤ Praise refers to the honor, recognition, and approval that people bestow.

▷ They were not trying to gain human praise in any shape or form. 9/13

Traveling philosophers and speakers were common in the Roman Empire.

- They traveled from place to place, entertaining and seeking a personal following for fame and fortune.

- The apostolic team had nothing in common with such people.

- Paul strongly rejected such thinking.
 - ▷ We can see his strong rejection in his dealing with divisions in the Corinthian church, 1 Cor. 3:1-9.

- Paul's missionary team serves as standard by which we can measure a preaching/teaching ministry.
 - ▷ A true, God-ordained ministry will reject entertaining and seeking a personal following for fame and fortune.

Now, Paul is not saying to us, "never compliment a preacher/teacher, or, "never admire a preacher/teacher."

- All believers need encouragement.
 - ▷ & a healthy admiration for someone is not wrong.

- What Paul is saying is that a preacher/teacher must never seek honor, recognition, and approval from people.

- Nor, for that matter, should any believer seek the honor, recognition, and approval that people bestow. 10/13

➤ Neither should believers develop an unhealthy admiration for a preacher/teacher

▷ JM.

▷ Lystra.

➤ Acts 14:15a (CSB), People! Why are you doing these things? We are people also, just like you, and we are proclaiming good news to you.

Paul & his team never sought honor, recognition, and approval from people.

➤ Likewise, they never made themselves the center of attention.

▷ 2 Cor 4:5 (NIV), For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

➤ Believers should never make themselves the center of attention.

The 4th denial rejects the claim of abuse of authority.

Though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.

➤ Made demands = idiomatic phrase.

▷ It's literally, throw one's weight around.

▷ Idea here is this.

➤ Although we could have thrown our weight around as Christ's apostles, we didn't. 11/13

➤ Paul and his colleagues refused to assert their status as spokesmen for God in a harsh, overbearing manner.

▷ Such was the typical pattern of contemporary teachers and aristocrats.

▷ Paul & team could have been like this.

➢ But they knew to do so would have been a misuse of their powerful position.

1 Pet. 5:2 & 3 (NIV), Peter exhorts elders not to abuse their spiritual authority.

➤ Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care . . . not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

➤ IOW, elders, don't abuse your authority.

▷ Can read Peter's full exhortation to elders in 1 Pet. 5:1-4.

➤ Need to understand, what Peter says to elders is not just for elders.

▷ The passage is for all of us, for at least 3 reasons.

➢ 1st, all of us, elders and non-elders, need to know how elders are supposed to lead the church.

➢ 2nd, the passage gives those who are not elders a yard stick by which to measure the men who lead the church.

➢ & 3rd, it gives those who are not elders lessons in the use of their own gifts and in their own ministries. 12/13

Ok, let's summarize.

How believers are not to behave.

➤ Avoid flattery, greediness, & seeking human praise.

▷ Plus, stay away from abusing any authority we possess.

Flattery, greediness, praise seeking, abusing authority.

➤ These are things the world does, and believers must reject them.

➤ John warns us in [1 Jn. 2:15-17](#).

▷ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. [13/13](#)