

Next section, 2:1-16. ↪ Gospel ministry

Outline

- vv 1-2, success of gospel ministry, in spite of great opposition

- vv 3-12, defense of ministry
 - ▷ Credibility of team, 3-4

 - ▷ Conduct, 5-12

- Then in vv 13-16, returns to giving thanks for the Thess believers

Today, 1-4, success & defense, specifically credibility

Vv 1-2, success of the gospel ministry, in spite of great opposition

(CSB) For you yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our visit with you was not without result. On the contrary, after we had previously suffered and were treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, we were emboldened by our God to speak the gospel of God to you in spite of great opposition

Philippi, Acts 16:19-24

- Common sense might suggest that the apostles would either change their tactics or at least proceed with more caution
 - ▷ Instead, Paul says 1/11

Persecution serves to advance the gospel

- Phil. 1:12 (NIV), Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel

- 2 Tim 2:8-9, Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound

- & Acts 8:1-8

- Persecution serves to advance the gospel
 - ▷ That is the exact opposite of the intended effect on the part of our persecutors

 - ▷ The gospel cannot be chained

- Be encouraged my . . . , no matter how hostile the culture around us gets, they will not stop the spread of the gospel
 - ▷ And that's the most important thing

 - ▷ Satan and the world

 - ▷ The gospel will continue to spread until the day God brings the curtain down on human history and Jesus sets up His eternal kingdom

(vs 2) Notice the source of this boldness in spite of great opposition

- We were emboldened by our God ☞ Some, We had boldness in our God 2/11

➤ This boldness does not find its source in us, or in some self-help book, or in some inspirational speaker

▷ This boldness is enablement by God ☞ Acts 4:1-8a

➤ @ the end of discussion on sp. warfare, Paul asked for prayer that he might proclaim the gospel w/ boldness

➤ & in Acts the 1st believers also called upon God that they might speak the gospel w/ boldness in a climate of opposition

▷ Acts 4:23-31

➤ Good news.

➤ We don't have to depend on ourselves to muster the courage to share the gospel

→ & I think this would apply to sharing gospel in general, not just during opposition

➤ We just simply need to ask our heavenly Father

→ & he will give us the courage to declare the gospel frankly & openly in public, even in the midst of opposition

(v 2) The gospel of God

➤ God's gospel

▷ Namely, he is the source of the gospel

➤ I.e., the good news about Jesus has its origins in the living and true God 3/11

► Also, ~ when Paul writes of God's gospel he turns his readers' thoughts away from any human plan of salvation

▷ God's plan ☞ Exclusivity of Christianity

▷ There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved (NLT)

▷ Acts 4:27-28 (NIV), Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen

▷ Way, truth, life.

▷ Note, mustn't think Jesus unwilling

Begin defense, 3-12

As noted, defense, ~ credibility, 3-4; conduct, 5-12

► In his report, Timothy probably made Paul aware of these accusations, so Paul responded

Now we should not miss something very important here

▷ In this defense of the gospel ministry, Paul leaves us with an excellent model of how proper gospel ministry is to be conducted

Today, 3-4, defense of credibility

Vs 3, For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive 4/11

This vs implies that the credibility of the missionary team was being called into question in 3 areas

- 1st, the content of the apostolic team's message ⇨ **Accused of error**
- 2nd, the integrity of their motives ⇨ **Accused of impure motives**
- And 3rd, the honesty of their methods ⇨ **Accused of deception**

Ok, 1st area regarding credibility

- Content of their message ⇨ **Accused of error**

- ▷ For our appeal does not spring from error

- **Does not spring from error** means it does not contain false information

- ▷ Paul was not a false prophet

- ▷ & his message didn't contain false teaching ⇨ **Could be completely trusted**

- There were many false teachers in the early church

- ▷ Jn testifies to this

- ▷ 1 Jn. 4:1 (NIV), Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world

- ▷ But Paul and his team were not among them ⇨ **Many false teachers today 5/11**

(vs 3) The 2nd area regarding credibility

➤ The integrity of their motives ⚡ Accused of impure motives

▷ for our appeal does not spring from impure motives

➤ Impure motives here most likely refers to self-centered, profit-seeking motives

➤ They were not guilty of having impure motives like so many itinerant philosophers in the 1st century

➤ Clear to Cor church

▷ 2 Cor. 2:17 (NIV), 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 & his associates w/ mere religious charlatans, who were motivated by greed rather than concern for others

➤ Lots of gospel peddlers today

(vs 3) And the 3rd area regarding credibility

➤ The honesty of their methods

▷ Accused of deception

➤ For our appeal does not spring from . . . any attempt to deceive

➤ No deception 6/11

➤ Paul laid this out clearly in 2 Cor 4:2 (NIV)

▷ Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God

➤ A lot of deception out there today?

(vs 3) Paul proved the team's credibility in these 3 areas

➤ Content of their message was truth, their motives pure, & their methods honest

➤ Content, motives, & methods

▷ Speaking truth, having pure motives, & honest methods serve as the marks of God's true spokespersons in every age

▷ Plus, these are high standards by which we're to evaluate all who teach & preach God's wd

Before moving on, look at phrase our appeal

➤ Their preaching included an appeal for a decision

➤ The gospel is not simply an announcement of the good news but also a call to respond to the divine initiative contained in it

➤ The team's preaching was an appeal to people to respond to Jesus who is the content of the gospel they proclaimed

▷ This appeal is no neutral presentation of the facts about Jesus 7/11

➤ Rather, it is an exhortation to accept what is presented

▷ And i.e., to turn from idols to God and to accept Jesus as deliverer

➤ Peter

▷ Acts 2:36-41

➤ This gives us a model for gospel presentation

▷ Sharing gospel should be accompanied by an appeal for a decision

In v. 4, Paul makes an assertion that reinforces their credibility.

Paul asserts the team was approved by God to be entrusted w/ the gospel and so they behaved accordingly.

➤ And i.e., to please God & not people.

➤ But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

Paul declares that he & his associates had been tested by God & approved by him for the work of the gospel ministry.

➤ Paul and his team had been thoroughly vetted by God himself.

▷ And the gospel they preached had the divine seal of approval.

The reference to the heart @ end of v 4 indicates the following. 8/11

➤ God is concerned not merely w/ the outward impression made by people

▷ He is concerned above all w/ the inward motives which dictate their conduct

➤ The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart

➤ It was by virtue of this divine approval that the missionary team had been entrusted with the gospel

The team took this stewardship seriously and acted accordingly

➤ @ end of v 4, So [or, consequently,] we speak, not to please man, but to please God

Entertainers live only to please people and get them to buy tickets

➤ Too many popular preachers unfortunately fall into the same category

➤ I understand that there are churches that have done sociological studies of the area their church is in

▷ They did it so they could tailor their sermons and church programs to the desires and likes of the area

➤ That is the "itching ears" syndrome of 2 Tim 4:3-4 (NIV)

▷ For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths 9/11

▷ Shallow teachers who tell people what they want to hear rather than what God wants them to hear

▶ Paul & his associates would have none of that

▷ They ministered to please God, not their audience

▶ This is a lesson for all of us who preach God's word

▷ Integrity in preaching and teaching is proclaiming the message that God puts on our heart, not the 1 that will increase our popularity, not the 1 that will fill pews

▶ Furthermore, this is a standard by which all believers are to evaluate those who claim to speak for God

▷ Telling me what God wants me to hear, or what I want to hear?

@ end of v 4, sobering thought

▶ But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts

▶ The vb form for tests is in the continuous aspect, which suggests that God's scrutiny is not, as it were, a once-for-all entrance examination for his servants

▶ Rather it's a continual operative process of what might nowadays be called quality control

▶ IOW, when God approves someone for preaching/teaching, it doesn't end there

▶ He's constantly evaluating us 10/11

▷ Sp. leaders are responsible, & God will call us to account one day

› Heb 13:17a, Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account

In closing, take step back to pleasing God & not people

Pleasing God & not people is not just a perspective for those called to preach/teach God's word

› In 4:1a (NIV), Paul will remind us that every Christian's objective is to please God continually

▷ As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living

› Our only motive in doing anything as a Christian should be a heartfelt desire to please God 11/11