

## The Pursuit of Ministry

1 Thessalonians 2: 4-9

We have spent much time laying the groundwork for our study in this precious book. Paul was well aware of the faithfulness and influence the church in Thessalonica had on those around them. He was encouraged with the presence of their [faith, hope, and love](#). It appears that Thessalonica had grasped the New Testament model for the church. They weren't a perfect church, but they were being used of the Lord.

As a means of encouragement, Paul shifts his focus from the trials that he endured at Philippi, to a personal testimony of his call and desire for ministry. He reminds the church of their obligations in ministry along with a confident assurance of their authority in the Word.

I fear many have lost sight of their obligations in ministry and often lose sight of the authority by which they minister. For many today, ministry has become drudgery, considered more of a vocation than an occupation with the Lord. The modern church tends to major on the minor and minor on the major! I heard the evangelist Sheldon Jones make a statement on his radio broadcast some time ago that stuck with me. He said, "Modern preachers are preaching more and more about less and less until they have explained everything about nothing!"

In our text verses, Paul speaks of the duties associated with a fruitful and biblical approach to ministry. I want to consider these [duties](#) as we think on: [The Pursuit of Ministry](#).

**I. A Work of Liberty** (4) – [But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts](#). Many may have been influenced or even bound by the dictates of society, and the religious legalists of that day, but Paul had discovered a refreshing and productive liberty in the Lord. In Christ, Paul knew:

**A. He was Favored** (4a) – Paul revealed that he had been [allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel](#). The word allowed is a powerful word that reveals much about Paul's ministry. It means "*to test, examine, prove, and deem worthy*." It is evident that God had examined Paul; He had tested him in many ways, preparing him for the work to come. Paul had not chosen the ministry. God called and placed him in the ministry. He was there at the leisure of the Lord. Paul was confident in his calling because he was supported and strengthened of God.

- I think we could safely say that Paul was humbled by such a calling, but he knew that God had been gracious and he wanted to serve the Lord with all his being, seeking to be successful in ministry for Christ.

**B. He was Faithful (4b)** – Paul had been entrusted with the gospel and that is the message he shared. He was not entangled with the bondage of legalistic Jews or the heresy of the doctrines of the world. He was faithful to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ – His death, burial, and resurrection.

- There is clearly a growing trend of deviating from the gospel, even among the churches. As I said earlier, many major on the minor, personal preferences and traditions, and minor on the major, the gospel. We have not been called to present the bondage of legalism or the easy-believism of the liberals. We have been called to preach and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ! That is the only message that will bring about profitable change in the hearts of people. It has endured the test of time. We need to proclaim Jesus!

**C. He was Focused (4c)** – *not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts*. It is evident when one studies the ministry of Paul that his desire was not to gain the approval or acceptance of men. He sought to share the gospel and edify the Lord. It is interesting to note that the word *trieth* in the text is translated from the same Greek word rendered *allowed* in the beginning of the verse. God had examined Paul prior to his ministry and He continued to examine his life as he proceeded in ministry.

- Paul wasn't concerned with what men thought as long as God was pleased with him. We certainly need to be mindful of our witness and our testimony, but our actions cannot be dictated by the desire to please men. God knows our motives and He knows our hearts! Being a people that please the Lord will not gain us popularity among the world. In fact, we will likely be labeled "old fashioned, narrow minded, and even fanatical." That is all right by me. I am not interested in the approval or acceptance of the world, but the power of God in our midst.

**II. A Work of Loyalty (5-6)** – These verses deal with the next duty Paul spoke of – a work of loyalty. Consider:

**A. It Requires Sincerity (5a)** – *For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness*: Paul's labor was not one that sought to boast, brag, or flatter. He did not seek to use deception as a means of advantage. He spoke clearly and honestly, regardless of the outcome. Paul was sincere in ministry, being open and honest.

- Many today will not accept truth. Our modern society has promoted political correctness and tolerance, even when it is absurd, so that many rarely are sincere in their motives. A lot of people

today are willing to tell others what they want to hear rather than speaking truth. We need to openly and unashamedly proclaim Jesus, regardless of the circumstances or approval.

**B. It Requires Integrity (5b)** – *nor a cloke of covetousness*. Paul did not possess a “*greedy desire to have more*.” Clearly, he was not engaged in ministry for personal gain or profit. Often, we find Paul going out of his way to prevent being perceived as burdensome to the church. Being mindful of his calling, he sought to show forth integrity in every aspect of ministry.

- If we are serving the Lord for personal prestige or profit, we have missed it altogether. Modern ministry has been scarred by those who sought only their prosperity at the expense of others. Ministry isn’t about what we can receive or how we can benefit from others, but how we can give of ourselves for the cause of Christ! I am troubled by the “me” mentality that has permeated the church. Jealousy and pride have caused great damage in our modern era.

**C. It Requires Humility (6)** – *Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ*. Keep in mind that we are dealing with the apostle Paul. In his day there were none who rivaled his notoriety or authority among preachers. However, Paul was humble. He was aware God had used him greatly, but he wasn’t consumed with pride. He didn’t demand large sums of money for speaking engagements. He didn’t demand the church provide a lucrative salary. He didn’t want to be a burden, but rather a help.

- There is a great lesson to be learned here. Apart from the Lord we are nothing; we can do nothing. God doesn’t have to use us for the kingdom work to continue. It is a privilege to be used of Him. May we never see ourselves as anything but sinners redeemed by His merciful hand! Regardless of how much the Lord uses us, we must remember that we are just born again sinners that God chooses to minister through.

**III. A Work of Love (7-9)** – These final verses speak of Paul’s desire and duty to love the church. He reveals several aspects of this work of love.

**A. It is Patient (7)** – *But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children*: As I read these words, I imagined a small child being tenderly cared for by a mother or baby sitter. We all know that children lack maturity. Their thought processes are different. They behave differently. They lack the understanding and commitment that an adult possesses. Spiritually Paul had achieved a level that few ever obtain. Intellectually he was likely superior to many he taught. But

these things didn't hinder Paul. He continued to work faithfully and patiently with those who had not yet matured.

- We certainly need to develop that attitude in our day. We can't expect new believers to possess the wisdom or understanding we possess. We would not be where we are had someone not taken the time to teach us.

**B. It is Passionate** (8a) – *So being affectionately desirous of you.* Paul's care for the church was not superficial or financially motivated. He genuinely loved and cared for them. He had their interests at heart. We need to be driven by that same love and compassion. We are part of the family of God. We are going to spend eternity together. We need a love for one another!

**C. It is Pleasant** (8b) – *So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.* He loved them so much that he was willing to give and give of himself for their benefit. This was done without complaint or anger. Paul was pleased to give of himself for them. *2 Cor.12:15 – And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.*

**D. It is Persistent** (9a) – *For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.* Paul never wavered. He had determined that he would give of himself for their good and he never wanted to be burdensome to them. He labored tirelessly and continually for the church, even when it seemed as if it was profiting little.

- The life and ministry of Paul stand as a challenge and encouragement to press on for the Lord. There is no place to give up, even when times are tough and it seems our efforts are unnoticed and unappreciated.

**E. It is Precise** (9b) – *we preached unto you the gospel of God.* Clearly Paul never lost sight of the goal. He never lost his passion for the Lord and his love for the church. He was committed to preaching the gospel to all who would hear.

- We are back to majoring on the minor or minoring on the major. We need to be reminded of the cause. We are here for a purpose. We are here as salt and light, to share the gospel with the world. The church engages in other beneficial aspects of ministry, but they must always be secondary to the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ!

**Conclusion:** How do we view our labor for the Lord? Are we actively pursuing the ministry of Christ our Lord? Is He the focus of our efforts and desire of our hearts? Are we concerned about the needs of others or complacent with life as it is? Have we been guilty of majoring on the minor and minoring on the major? We must understand our duties and responsibilities.