

Marks of a Faithful Missionary part 1

By David Harrell

Bible Text: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6
Preached on: Sunday, November 15, 2015

I invite you this morning to take your Bibles and turn to 1 Thessalonians 2 where I will be speaking to you about "Marks of a Faith Missionary." In a few minutes, we will look at the first six verses very closely.

In an effort to prepare our hearts for what the Spirit of God will reveal to us this morning, I would like for you to think about a reality that we see all through Scripture that we experience in life and that is this: wherever God is at work, Satan dispatches his forces to stop him. When have you ever experienced some great work of God in your life, some profound blessing, without also experiencing on the heels of that blessing some unexpected temptation, persecution or discouragement? You see, God's blessing is a signal to Satan to begin his attack. Whenever a child is born, a plan is set into motion to destroy it. When a marriage is consummated, a scheme is already designed to ruin it. When a church is established, a strategy is already in place to make sure that that church fails. This is especially true when a person comes to a saving knowledge of Christ; when a person is born again and snatched from the talons of the evil one and delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of God's beloved Son in whom we have redemption and forgiveness of sins.

Think of it this way: Jesus tells us that unbelievers are children of the wicked one. He says that they worship their father, the devil. Satan is described as the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience and for this reason Christian conversion is more than kidnapping. It is a child's Spirit-empowered voluntary rejection of his evil parent. It is the willful rebellion of a slave to go and serve an arch-rival Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, and for this reason newfound faith in Christ is always a colossal humiliation to Satan that will incite his wrath. As the newborn lamb attracts the lion, so too the newborn Christian attracts the wolves. When a person comes to Christ, immediately their loved ones begin to mock and ridicule, sometimes even disown them. Friends begin to roll their eyes and shake their heads in disgust. Inevitably, the enemy bombards the new believer with very compelling lies that call into question the wisdom and the reality of their newfound faith and he accomplishes this, Jesus says, through wolves in sheep's clothing; false teachers that disguise themselves as shepherds; predators that fill pulpits; deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, Paul tells us. Suddenly through very attractive, winsome, charismatic people, the new believer begins to question the character and the conduct of those that have led them to Christ. They begin to question the character and conduct of their friends and pastors and all of this creates doubt and discouragement and confusion. Paul says, "because Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness."

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Now, think about what has happened at Thessalonica. These dear saints "have turned to God," Paul says, "from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven whom he raised from the dead, that is Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." As a result of this, Satan is infuriated and he unleashes his fury upon them. He does this through means of severe opposition, through persecution from the community at large that absolutely loathed the Gospel message, that message that these dear saints loudly proclaimed and very boldly lived. We would all do well to remember that we are also the target of the father of lies. We are his number one priority, this one who is clever and vicious; an enemy that is devoted to the destruction of every child of God. In fact, Paul says that he is the one who by his craftiness can deceive our minds and lead us astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. And what we have here in the 1 Thessalonians 2 is a real sense of how the enemy does this, his strategy, how he comes along with new believers and discourages them and tries to destroy them. And we also find some very helpful insights into what I would call the marks of a faithful missionary as demonstrated in the lives of Paul and Silas and even Timothy and that will be our primary focus today.

Now, I want you to come with me with your imaginations and let's go back to first century Macedonia. Let's go back to this town of Thessalonica on the seaside, a town of about a quarter of a million people, made up mostly of Hellenistic Greek Gentiles but also with a significant Jewish population. Now, I want you to put yourself in Paul's sandals, or maybe you want to come along with Paul in Silas' sandals and you come to this town with the Gospel of Christ. You come to this Hellenistic culture that is notorious for its drunken debauchery; for its sexual orgies; a culture that centers around idol worship and mystery cults, that offers initiates mystical associations with a god. Come to this place where virtually every Gentile person is part of a trade guild and each trade guild has its own patron god or goddess. These gods and goddesses are fickle. They are whimsical, easily offended. You never know when you're going to set one of them off and they are nonpersonal, and suddenly you show up with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a message that is absolutely antithetical to the way they live and the way they think. You tell them that there is only one true God and he exists in the form of three persons. You tell them that he is a holy and a personal God that calls sinners unto himself so that he can radically transform them, forgive their sins, declare them to be righteous so that they can enter into his presence forevermore. You tell them that unlike your goddesses and gods that don't even exist, the one true God desires a permanent intimate relationship with you to bless you in ways that you cannot imagine. You tell them that this God invaded history in the person of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, that Jesus of Nazareth that was crucified, that rose again from the dead. You tell them that through his Son's death and resurrection, God can rescue you from judgment. You tell them that this God loves you and died for you and invites you to receive forgiveness of sins and become

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a member of his family forever. And you tell them that that same Jesus is going to one day return in power and great glory and judge the world and establish his kingdom as King of kings and Lord of lords. You also tell them that when you come to faith in Christ, you receive a new nature, that the living God of the universe inhabits you and radically transforms everything about you; you will begin to love what he loves and hate what he hates. You will love him with all of your heart, your mind, your soul and strength. You will begin to love your neighbor like you love yourself. You will even love your enemies. And you tell them that unlike the mystery cults that you are involved with that will only help you with some money if you're sick and pay for your burial costs, these cults that really don't offer you any unity as a family, you tell them that when you come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you're going to become a part of the family of the one true God. Moreover, you're going to become a part of a mystical organism called the body of Christ. You tell them that through faith in Christ your life is going to have real meaning and purpose and joy and hope of eternal life. And you also tell them that those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ will perish in their sins and they will experience eternal judgment for having offended a holy God.

The amazing thing is, a few believe and are saved but most of them look at you as if you had absolutely lost your mind and they begin to say, "What manner of foolishness is this? You're telling us that God who is spiritual takes on flesh which is material? That therefore good becomes evil?" because of their dualistic thinking as Greeks. "And you're telling us that all of these things are true? That we're all going to perish in our sins because we don't believe this? We've never heard any of our philosophers speak about this. You must be charlatans. You must be silenced at all costs."

Now, my dear missionary friend, what do you do? You're in Paul's sandals. You're experiencing all of this ridicule. How can you possibly survive this kind of an environment? What does it take to persevere? Well, what we have in our text here this morning helps us understand this, but before we get to it, may I remind you that we must have the power of God in order to persevere, in order to be successful in ministry. We can't do it in our flesh, in fact, Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 10, beginning at verse 3, "For though we walk in the flesh," in other words, though we have human limitations, "we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh," and what are the weapons of our warfare that are not of the flesh? The word and prayer. The word and prayer. Those of you that are seldom in the word, those of you that seldom pray, you're going to be defeated for the weapons of our warfare are not with our human limitations, "but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses," that is, those satanic strongholds of spiritual deception. "We are destroying speculations," that is, false ideologies, "and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God." In other words, all of the proud intellectualism, and as we would understand it today, all of the

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insanity of political and religious correctness. We are destroying those things raised up against the knowledge of God, "and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

In these 12 verses of 1 Thessalonians 2, we get a picture of what this looks like and the marks of a faithful missionary. By the grace and power of God, this kind of a person will be decisively committed to 11 virtues. We're going to examine the first five this morning. He must be, 1. Confident in God's supremacy over a world that seems invincible. Secondly, he must be committed to God's truth in a world of lies. Thirdly, he must be certain of his calling in a world of self-appointed frauds. 4. He must be consumed with pleasing God in a world that seeks to please man. 5. He must be captivated by the glory of God in a world that glorifies man. And what's amazing to me is that because of the indwelling Spirit of God, we are all capable of manifesting these realities in our life. We know that because of God's sovereign grace when a person comes to Christ, he is going to persevere and this is what thrilled Paul's soul. You will recall last time we were together we looked at this. Everyone could see those 10 characteristics that really were evidences of their election. They could see that a work of faith, labor of love, steadfastness of hope, their reception of Spirit-empowered preaching, their imitation of Christ, their joy in tribulation, their exemplary lifestyles and bold evangelism, the reversal of their allegiances, turning from idols to serve the true and living God and their eager anticipation of Christ's return.

So, folks, it's my sincere prayer this morning that these marks of a faithful missionary and faithful leadership in a church will be an encouragement to each of you because all of us are missionaries in one way or another. We all have family members that roll their eyes and scoff. We all have friends that ridicule us. So while the nature of sin and idolatry of first century Thessalonica may look different, at its core it's still very, very similar; these people were spiritually dead like people are today. They are at enmity with God. They serve their father the devil, the father of lies. So we all live in a world that hates us because they hate Christ.

I'll give you just a quick example. Maybe you read about this, Doctor Carol Swain, a fine Christian professor at Vanderbilt University, one article I read says this, "The insanity that has been infecting our college campuses most recently the University of Missouri and Yale, has now infected Vanderbilt. Wednesday, National Review reports that an online student petition demanding the suspension of professor of law and political science Carol Swain for being 'hateful toward minorities' has gotten more than 1,000 signatures." The fact that Professor Swain is black appears to be irrelevant as far as these charges go. Swain's crime is that of making what some students deem politically incorrect statements about radical Islam, the LGBT movement and Black Lives Matter in contrast to her

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Christian beliefs. The petitioners feel her statements are intolerant and therefore cannot be tolerated by the University. The article went on to say, "The petitioners are demanding that Swain, as well as the rest of the faculty, be sent to diversity training camp."

You see, folks, this has the marks of Satan all over it. This is how the enemy works. Tolerance must be extended to all people and all belief systems no matter how evil, no matter how irrational. Extend it to everyone except Christians and Christianity. Folks, that's part of the world in which we live and we love these people because Christ loves them and because they are certainly members of the elect that are part of these very folks, but we are aliens in this world and so I want you to see that what happened in Thessalonica in the first century, it may look different in some ways, but it's very contemporary with what we deal with today.

Now, we know from the New Testament record that Jews and Gentiles in Thessalonica were not only scoffing at the message of the Gospel but they were slandering the messengers. They were making them out to be demented fools, religious hucksters, that were trying to exploit the people with their lives for personal gain because, you see, that was pretty typical of many of the roving philosophers of that day. They were disreputable men and women. They would go from town to town to compete for the devotion and the money and even the sexual favors of the people. So what we have here under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul is defending both the message and the messengers in these first 12 verses and in so doing, in the first six verses, we're going to see five marks of a faithful ministry, of a faithful missionary. I hope I didn't confuse you there. It's going to go over 12 verses and we're going to look at six of them and we're going to look at five today and we're going to look at the other six, there are 11 total, we'll look at the rest of them that the next time.

So, the first thing we see is that the Holy Spirit will empower the faithful missionary to be 1. Confident in God's supremacy over a world that seems invincible. Notice verse 1 of chapter 2, he says, "For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain." "You yourselves know" is emphatic in the original language. It means that. "You know for yourself. You be the ones to judge our character. You know the truth, not all these other people. You know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. It was not a failure. It wasn't without profit." Where he's going here is simply this: godly character produces godly results.

Verse 2, "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." Now, what is this mistreatment in Philippi that they knew about? Let me remind you of it. It is given to us in Acts 16, beginning in verse 16. Here's what happened

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in Philippi. "It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling. Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, 'These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.' She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!' And it came out at that very moment. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, 'These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.'" So we read that, "The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks."

So here in verse 2, Paul reminds them that, "You people knew all about this." News about this type of thing would spread fast and so his point is this, why would a person, after experiencing that kind of persecution, come to another city and risk the same thing? No charlatan would be that stupid and yet Paul and Silas were actually emboldened by their mistreatment. Notice verse 2, he said, "we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition." "Opposition" is the Greek term "agon"; we get our word "agonize" from that. It denotes an intense life and death struggle. Now, folks, I think you would all agree that when we experience this kind of mistreatment, we are often tempted to compromise the Gospel message, got to tone it down a little bit so that people will like us. That's the temptation. So typically you hear pastors leaving out concepts like sin. "Let's don't talk about substitutionary atonement. Let's don't talk about repentance and self-denial and holiness and judgment and hell, instead, let's go heavy on love. Let's go heavy on self-esteem and success and prosperity and happiness." As we say in Tennessee, that dog will hunt. That product will sell, but that's not the true Gospel.

Paul preached the true Gospel and the people hated it, most of them did. But why were they emboldened by their mistreatment? It's because they had confidence in God's supremacy over a world that seems invincible. And here's why I would say that. Do you remember what happened in Philippi after they were thrown in prison? "At midnight," the text says when "Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." Let's stop there a second. You're bloody. You're bruised. You're beaten. You're in an inner dungeon which was basically like being put in a septic tank and you're praying and you're singing? All the other prisoners are listening.

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The text says, "and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains," everyone's chains, "were unfastened." Can you imagine how that would embolden you? "Silas, come on, let's go to Thessalonica. Let's give the same message here. Bring on your slander. Hurl your insults. Cast your stones. Lock us away. Take our life. Our God reigns. Our God is supreme over all things. Greater is he that is within you than he that is within the world. We are more than conquerors in Christ, right? I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Oh dear Christian, remember this: when you're confronted with some type of a situation where it seems as though all of the forces of hell and earth have come against you, remember that we serve the one true and living God and he reigns in unassailable authority as the sovereign over all of his creation and we are his precious children. You mess with my kids and you're going to see me in a very different way than you would see me right now. How much more so, our Father in heaven? What a powerful statement to those early believers that were being tempted to doubt Paul's motives and message.

Well, not only will the Spirit empower the faithful missionary to be confident in God's supremacy but, secondly, committed to God's truth in a world of lies. Notice what he says, "For our exhortation does not come from error." Exhortation speaks an appeal that they made for their salvation, to give them a way of escape from judgment. "Our exhortation does not come from error." In other words, the doctrine that we preached was not a false doctrine. It was the truth of God himself. It was revealed to us by divine revelation. Not only that, he says, "or impurity." Our exhortation doesn't come from impurity. In other words, our motive was not greed and glory and sexual favors like the rest of the characters that you see floating in and out of town. You see, it was typical in those days for religious sexual predators to travel from town to town and they would seduce women into having sexual relationships with them claiming that somehow that encounter would consummate a mystical union with the gods and so forth. Peter described this in 2 Peter 2:2, "Many will follow their sensuality and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned and in their greed they will exploit you with false words." We even know that there were some women who were involved in this kind of evil and some of them even made their way into the Christian church as they have today as false teachers. John described this when he penned God's warning to the church at Thyatira in Revelation 2:20. God said through his apostle, "But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols."

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So this was a common problem in that day. This is what Paul and Silas were being accused of. By the way, it's a common problem to this very day from the notorious sexual scandals of the Roman Catholic priesthood that has characterized that counterfeit Christian system from its inception, to the false teachers and televangelists and faith healers that we see today. Sexual immorality is one of the dominant characteristics of these kind of people.

Paul is saying, "You all know that we weren't like that. Our exhortation did not come from error or impurity or," he says, "by way of deceit." The little Greek word "dolos"; it means "fish hook, or snare or a trap." "We didn't come to you using trickery or deception." You see, false teachers will always offer a religious bait that is irresistible to the flesh but they will conceal the hook of deception that will bring misery and judgment to the victim. Think of the millions of people today that have been tricked by the prosperity Gospel, that heretical system that teaches that health, joy, peace, happiness, success and financial blessing is the will of God for believers. That if you will exercise enough faith and you will say the proper things, have positive speech, and make donations to my ministry, then you will enjoy all of these things and God will increase your material wealth. Then they twist and distort Scripture to support their claims and laugh all the way to the bank. Paul wasn't like any of those kinds of people. He was solely committed to God's truth in a world of lies and liars. His message was God's message and his moral character was unstained by the world. It was undefiled by sexual immorality. His ministry was without deceit.

The third mark of a faithful missionary that we see here is that he will be certain of his calling in a world of self-appointed frauds. Notice in verse 4 he says that, "just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel." Now, this is a fascinating statement. I hope I can explain it to you. The phrase "have been approved" is what we call a perfect tense verb that means he was approved as the result of a careful examination that happened sometime in the past resulting in a current state of approval. In other words, some time prior to being entrusted with the Gospel, he was subjected to a time of testing, a time of examination. Now, he doesn't tell us when that was but as we look at Scripture we can piece it together and we know that, for example, immediately after his conversion in Acts 9, we read how he briefly preached in the Gospel. He preached the Gospel in the synagogues there in Damascus. We know that at that time the Lord himself began to tutor Paul and, according to his own testimony in Galatians 1:16 and following, he went away to Arabia and probably at that time he went away in preparation for ministry. The Lord takes him away. Then we know that he returned once more to Damascus and continued preaching for a period of time. So as we piece it all together, we see that his two periods of preaching in Damascus and the in between sojourn into Arabia alone with the Lord Jesus Christ totaled three years and this was

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probably that season of examination that he experienced that he is referring to here in verse 4.

As a footnote, may I draw something to your attention? I find it fascinating to note that despite the fact that he was chosen by God to be an apostle even before he was born, according to Galatians 1:15, he was still subjected to a period of testing. Isn't that interesting? Only then did God set his approval on him for Gospel ministry. Folks, this is so important for every church leader. In fact, Paul himself calls all churches to examine those who are appointed to positions of leadership. There must be a period of testing. Romans 14:18, "Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men." We can look at the qualifications for an elder in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and we see that all of that requires serious examination and testing. Even for deacons, 1 Timothy 3:10, "Let them also be tested first, then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless."

Folks, one of the most destructive things that can happen to a church is to put a man into leadership who has not been tested. And, by the way, a seminary degree doesn't fit that bill. You've got to be very careful with that. I can tell you many horror stories of churches that have self-pointed unqualified pastors and elders; churches, some of them that have been that way for generations, typically what I call family owned and operated churches. Many so-called pastors today are nothing more than entrepreneurs that are peddling the Gospel. They are wolves that fleece the sheep. Said differently, their churches fill up with unbelievers. There are more goats than there are sheep and the goats push the sheep out. The tares choke out the wheat, however you want to put it. Churches fill up with non-believers and nonbelievers have no capacity to discern spiritual truth. The things of the Spirit are foolishness to them, therefore if you come along and put a pastor that rightly divides the word of truth in that kind of a church, the whole thing will absolutely blow up.

Well, Paul was absolutely certain that his calling was from God, unlike the self-appointed frauds of his day and without this conviction, dear friends, missionaries and pastors alike will operate in the flesh, not the Spirit, and they will eventually fizzle out like a falling star. I can tell you personally time and time again in those hours of greatest sorrow when my soul is at a point of exhaustion, it has been the absolute certainty of my divine calling that emboldens me and empowers me to get up off my face, pick up the sword once again and go back into the battle. You've got to have that and you men that are hearing me that are pastors, you've got to have that. Paul had that. Every missionary must have this. "I have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel."

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Fourthly, the faithful missionary will also be consumed with pleasing God in a world that seeks to please men. Again, notice verse 4, after he says 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 a pretext for greed - God is witness." In other words, our ardent desire was to please God, not man. We weren't motivated by the praise and approval of man. Folks, Paul never preached an ear tickling sermon, some cotton candy sermon. He never cajoled the crowds with sweet talk. He never excused their sin.

Whenever a Gospel preacher is immensely popular with the world, you can be sure that his Gospel is not the true Gospel. He's not preaching the narrow gate that Jesus says few will even find, much less enter. Think about it. Because of Jesus' miracles, he had thousands of people following him for a while until he preached on the doctrine of man's total inability in John 6. And if that wasn't bad enough, he went on to preach on God's sovereign election and, boy, that cleared them out. That was the end of it. John 6:66 tells us that. They left him.

You see, like Jesus, Paul never packed auditorium's with his Gospel message. He never filled up stadiums with people clamoring to hear the Gospel. He preached Christ and him crucified. He says, "To those who are perishing, foolishness, but to us who are being saved, the power of God." Now, why would he do this? Why wouldn't he soften it a little bit? Because he knew that it was the message of God himself. That's what had been entrusted to him. Moreover, he preached this because he knew that it was God who examined his heart. Talk about accountability. That's accountability. He knew that the omniscient Lord of the universe dwelled within him and continually examined the inner workings of his heart: every thought; every word; every motive; every action was under divine scrutiny. I can think of no greater motivation to faithfulness than that. You see, the faithful messenger of the Gospel will be driven by a desire to be faithful, not popular. Folks, you can't be both.

Verse 5, "we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed - God is witness." Flattering speech refers to methods used to gain influence and favor over another person which, again, was the reputation of many of the pagan philosophers of that day. It carried the idea, that phrase carried the idea of tailoring the truth to somehow fit popular opinion or as we might put it today, make it politically and religiously correct, the very opposite of the boldness God gives missionaries that he described in verse 2. I think of the hundreds literally, the hundreds and hundreds of people that have come to Calgary Bible Church, gotten all excited, "Oh, isn't this a wonderful church?" until they hear some truths from Scripture and they start looking,

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"Oh, wait a minute. That's not what mama told me. I don't believe that. I don't care what the text says, that's not true." And they're gone.

Do you know what that temptation is for me and every pastor? "Tone it down. Tone it down. Compromise a little bit. You know, gloss over some of those things. Lighten up. Compromise. Let's find common ground. Let's have a conversation. Let's just all get along." By the way, one of the best ways to do that is preach topical sermons. I've talked with scores of pastors who have told me how they would never preach expository verse by verse because if you do, you're going to run into some passages that you don't want to deal with. I've talked with many pastors who avoid certain passages of Scripture, they avoid certain doctrines, many times doctrines that they actually believe but they would never tell the people. Why? Because they'd lose their job. By the way, my response to that is, "Brother, you're preaching for the fans, not the coach. If you fear man more than God, you've never been approved by God and he has not entrusted you with the Gospel and you need to resign. You need to find another line of work before God chastens you severely for impersonating a pastor."

Paul never did that. He was consumed with pleasing God in a world that seeks to please men. He never tailored his message to appease and manipulate the people. By the way, isn't it interesting that we're told that some of the new converts in the church were prominent Greek women? Do you know what that means? They were drop-dead gorgeous and they were wealthy. What a temptation. These would have been desirable objects of flattery but Paul was innocent of that charge and they knew it and so he called on them, "You know what the truth is. I never tailored the truth to fit popular opinion. I never used flattering speech," he said, "nor with a pretext," which could be translated "cloak." Never with a pretext for greed. In other words, "I didn't cloak myself in something that I'm not. I did not hide my true intentions. I did not act with the motive of greed." Why? Because he knew that God had given him this message. He knew that he had been called by God and so he calls on God to testify on his behalf. That's why he says, "God is witness." I hope you can say that. "God, you know the truth."

Paul testified concerning his integrity in motive and ministry when he said this to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 1:12, "For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you." He told the folks in Ephesus in Act 20, "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me."

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Marks of a Faithful Missionary part 1

By David Harrell

Bible Text: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6
Preached on: Sunday, November 15, 2015

So, folks, the faithful missionary will be confident in God's supremacy over a world that seems invincible. He will be committed to God's truth in a world of lies. He will be certain of his calling in a world of self-appointed frauds. He will be consumed with pleasing God in a world that pleases men and, finally, he will be captivated by the glory of God in a world that glorifies man. He says in verse 6, "nor did we seek glory." In other words, praise, honor, respect. "We didn't seek that from men," the implication is we seek that from God. "We did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority." He could have said, "After all, folks, look, God has chosen me. the Lord Jesus Christ came and revealed himself to me in Damascus. He took me away. I have been trained by him. I expect you to carry my bags. I expect you to have a large fruit basket with expensive drinks in the waiting area before I come out to preach." By the way, I tell you these things because this goes on all the time. "I expect to have a limousine pick me up, carry me to a five-star restaurant to eat, and take me to a five-star hotel when I'm finished." You see, folks, this wasn't the Apostle Paul. Why? Because he was captivated by the glory of God. He had seen it on the road to Damascus. He had been taken into paradise. "Are you kidding me? Somehow tailor this message that God has given me so that you will like me? I hope you do. That's my desire but that's not my demand. I live for the glory of God." And it's for this reason that he could say in 2 Corinthians 4:17, "For our light affliction which is but for a moment is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Folks, that is what enthralled the heart of the Apostle Paul, not the praise of men.

Well, in closing, may I challenge you to measure your life, your message, your ministry in light of these characteristics? And if you see there are significant problems, won't you repent of that, confess that to a friend that you trust. Ask for accountability, come up with a strategy to change the way you are conducting your life, the way you are preaching the Gospel and then implement that plan. Finally, may I ask you and I say this with all sincerity: hold me accountable to that. Hold our elders accountable to that. Hold every leader in this church accountable to that so that we can strive together for the Gospel, that together we might walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls us into his own kingdom and glory.

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Let's pray together.

Father, once again, we are challenged by the revealed word that you have given to us. May it bring profound conviction and animate great change in us where necessary that we might indeed become more like Christ and be more effective servants of the Gospel. I pray especially for those pastors and missionaries, other church leaders, that are listening to these great truths. I pray, Lord, that you will be merciful to them, especially those men who have compromised, who fear legitimately so that they will lose their job if they speak the truth. Lord, be merciful to them. Reveal yourself to them. Change them. Convict them. Use them mightily for your sake. Finally, Lord, thank you for the folks at Calvary Bible Church that long for these truths to be preached to them. Thank you for the freedom to be able to do so without fear. Bless us, I pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harold, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.