
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 2:5

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“For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness” (I Thessalonians 2:5). In our study last week we considered how the Lord entrusted Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus with the Gospel. One of the reasons those men could be trusted with the saving message of the word of God is that they handled it correctly. When there is an important message that needs to be delivered, you want a faithful messenger to carry that message. Solomon wrote: *“A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health... As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters... He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage”* (Proverbs 13:17, Proverbs 25:13, and Proverbs 26:6).

The people in Thessalonica knew that Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus did not use flattering words among them. The Greek word translated “flattering” is defined just as it is translated (Strong’s # 2850). Flattery is, “excessive and insincere praise, given especially to further one’s own interests” (New Oxford American Dictionary). Remember this definition in this study. When we talk about the “cloke of covetousness” that speaks directly to a person furthering their own interests.

Our Lord is not a fan of flattery. Notice: *“Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things: Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us? For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times... He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips... A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin”* (Psalms 12:1-6, Proverbs 20:19, and Proverbs 26:28).

Preaching the word of God is just that; preaching the word of God. Paul instructed Timothy saying: *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”* (II Timothy 4:2). A man who takes on the role of teaching

the word of God must be committed to preaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20; 20:26-27). Reproving, rebuking, and exhorting will not often result in the hearers “liking” the messenger of the truth (I Kings 18:17-18, I Kings 21:20, I Kings 22:1-38, II Chronicles 24:20-21, II Chronicles 36:14-16, Proverbs 15:12, Isaiah 29:21, Jeremiah 20:7-8, Amos 5:10, Amos 7:10-16, Matthew 23:34, John 3:19-21, John 7:7, John 8:31-59, Acts 5:25-42, Acts 7:51-58, and Galatians 4:16). True teaching is not flattering at all.

The Greek word [πρόφασις] that is translated “cloke” is defined as: “an outward showing, that is, pretext: - cloke, colour, pretence, show” (Strong’s # 4392). It is translated “pretence” (Matthew 23:14, Mark 12:40, and Philippians 1:18) and “shew” (Luke 20:47) in other passages of Scripture. So, Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus are saying they were not fakers when they were teaching in Thessalonica.

They were not deceiving the people of Thessalonica with a covetous motive. One of the traits of a false teacher is covetousness. Notice: *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not”* (II Peter 2:1-3).

What comes to mind for me in this study is, the many “Gospel Meetings” I have sat through in the past with so-called “preachers” buttering up audiences before they “preached” their message. Men like that need to be marked and avoided (Romans 16:17-18). This is exactly what Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus did not do when they came preaching the Gospel. Notice what was written to the Corinthians: *“For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ... But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God”* (II Corinthians 2:17 and II Corinthians 4:2).

By these men writing “God is witness” they are essentially making a legal reference. Both the Old and New Covenants make the point of having two or more witnesses for confirmation of truth (Deuteronomy 17:6, Deuteronomy 19:15, Matthew 18:15-17, II Corinthians 13:1, I Timothy 5:19, and Hebrews 10:28). What greater witness could one call upon besides God? Paul made a similar point to the saints in Rome (Romans 1:9 and Romans 9:1) and Galatia (Galatians 1:20). So, how did God bear witness of such things? Well, He did so by confirming men with signs, wonders, etc. (Hebrews 2:1-4). Later in this chapter, these men will call upon Thessalonians and God as witnesses towards their conduct in Thessalonica (I Thessalonians 2:10).