
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 2:6

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“Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ” (I Thessalonians 2:6). This statement surely sets Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus apart from others. Men who take on the work of preaching the Gospel of Christ do not always do so with good intentions (Philippians 1:15-16). Many gloried after the flesh in the first century (II Corinthians 11:18). It is not good for men to desire their own glory (Proverbs 25:27). God is the one who should be glorified (Matthew 5:14-16, John 15:8, Romans 16:27, I Corinthians 6:20, I Corinthians 10:31, and I Peter 4:11).

There is a challenge that existed in the first century that still exists today. That challenge is that people want to glorify those who preach the Gospel. This is true even when the man preaching the Gospel isn't seeking glory. It was especially true when preachers performed miraculous acts to confirm the Gospel. Notice this: *“And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked. And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them”* (Acts 14:8-18).

Do not think this problem only existed in the first century or even today just among people of the world. Within the body of Christ there seems to be some sort of desire to exalt men who preach the Gospel of Christ. Think about the church in Corinth. Notice what was written to them: *“Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized*

in the name of Paul... And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour... And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another” (I Corinthians 1:12-13; 3:1-8; 4:6).

Today, there are many so-called “preachers” that want to have degrees of men, write books, have social media followers, attend special speaking arrangements, and other forms of notoriety. This problem exists not only because those men are glory-seekers, but just like the points above establish; people like to glorify men. We’d do well to never exalt man. Furthermore, we should avoid those men that want to be glorified. Jesus said: *“He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him”* (John 7:18). It speaks volumes of Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus in that they did not seek their own glory (II Corinthians 10:17).

In addition to not being glory-seekers, they also did not want to be a burden to their brethren. It is not that they were not worthy of financial support, for they were (I Corinthians 9:1-14). It is not just that they didn’t want to be burden though. We will see this as we further study this letter and the next one to the saints in Thessalonica. These men are going to instruct these brethren to labor with their own hands (I Thessalonians 4:11). There were those among them that did not want to work at all (II Thessalonians 3:6-13). Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus were attempting to be examples to be followed even in this regard.

Before our study concludes, did you notice at the end of verse six that these three men are considered apostles? How is this so? Do you recall that Barnabas was called an apostle (Acts 14:14)? Yet, there is nothing written about Barnabas, Silvanus, and Timotheus being made Apostles by Jesus. The key to understanding this comes down to the meaning of the word “apostle” throughout the New Testament. The word in I Thessalonians 2:6 means: “a delegate; specifically an ambassador of the Gospel; officially a commissioner of Christ (“apostle”), (with miraculous powers): - apostle, messenger, he that is sent” (Strong’s # 652). It applied to those chosen by Jesus to hold the office of an Apostle of Christ (i.e. Matthew 10:1-4). However, it is also used in general as “messenger(s)” (II Corinthians 8:23 and Philippians 2:25). We know that Timothy was chosen, not by Jesus Himself, but by Paul (Acts 16:1-4). This is a good lesson in how we have to be careful in our studies.