

11-12-23

Sermon- Will You Accept the Charges?

Scripture- 1 Thessalonians 2: 1-13, CTW Ps. 107:1-7

Hymns 559, 552, 560

Theme: God calls people to toil in the mission fields so that His name can be known, and His word heard. All are called at some level and asked to fill God's evangelistic plan...have you heard the call and will you accept the charges?

I. Introduction: How Do We Prepare For the Work of God?

A. Opposition can come in many forms...It can be an outright attack, violent and physical...and it can also come more subtly...through conversations that gather support from someone who disagrees with you or your purposes. Neither are fun! And both are hard to deal with...especially for the Christ follower who is trying to guard their witness, accomplish their mission, and "be at peace with all people as much as they are able." (Romans 12:18)

But what happens when as a leader you can't be at peace with everyone? What happens when you are firmly convinced that for the "good news" of Jesus to be presented effectively and for the health of the body of Christ you must deal with opposition?

Paul gives an answer in our text.

“The appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you...On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people, but God, who tests our hearts.” **(1 Thess. 2:3-4)**

How can you know if someone is approved by God and entrusted with the gospel? How can you be sure the leader who says follow me as I follow Jesus is worth following?

There is a test for all of us...and especially for those who would dare to lead.

II. GOD TESTS OUR HEARTS Next Week Is Mission Sunday!

A. In the passage for today, the Apostle Paul says God has a test to reveal the true spiritual condition of our hearts...regardless of how they might appear by outside evaluations...

The test of our hearts, especially concerning leadership, involves internal probing as well...covering questions like: “Does your heart’s message spring from error, impure motives, are you trying to trick people....and maybe the most revealing...“Are you trying to please God...or people?”

How can we know the motives of someone's heart? God will test it...He'll put our hearts under the microscope of a spiritual catheterization and reveal what flows from it...or sin that blocks it...He'll reveal over time whether your message promotes His agenda or yours...whether your mission is to please others or please Him.

B. The first blockage His test reveals to effective leadership is...do we favor certain people and why.

1. Why do we tell people what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear...? Verse 6 tells us "We're looking for praise from people." Flattery is different than encouragement. Encouragement recognizes and lifts up the value of someone else...it's positive and never uses comparisons with someone else or the negatives of another to make someone feel better...it's something we are encouraged to do. "All the more daily as we see the Lord's return approaching." (Heb. 3:13, 10:25)

Flattery like this has another goal that's much more selfish...you tell something to someone that you believe will make them like you...Your motive is to "butter them up" so you can get them on your side...or they'll give you what you want.

When you lead people, the temptation always exists to let their opinions be your guide instead of God's Word. Opinions are where error and impure motives can be cultivated like germs in a Petri

dish. God's Word, scripture on the other hand...is God breathed...profitable...His commandments are sure...It's rock solid in its truth.

Flattery will make you treat people with money and power differently than you would treat others.

You make non-kingdom judgments about who you'll love and who you won't. You're nice to certain people but let a straggler, someone whose life is in rags, come in and "the blockage of your heart is clearly revealed."

In **JAMES 2:1-4**, James puts it this way in a very powerful Church story about strangers who enter a church, some rich and some not so much...We become Discriminators...Judges with evil thoughts...evil motives...all a specific revealer of our heart's condition.

C. And the 2nd blockage God will reveal through His testing is...are you hiding behind a mask?

Why do you wear a mask? To cover up your true identity...just ask Peter Parker as Spiderman, Bruce Wayne as Batman, or a bank robber. You don't want people to see who you really are. Paul tells the Thessalonians "We never put on a mask to cover up

greed. (selfish motives) God is our witness." (He always is!) (v. 5).

The Word Hypocrite literally means "one who wears a mask...it comes from theatrical presentations from ancient Greece where actors would wear huge laughing masks during comedic performances and huge crying marks during tragedies.

You still see them as symbols in many theaters to this day...The actor that wore the mask during the performance was called "hypocrotis" (Hypocrite).

Why is it so tempting for all of us to wear a mask? Well some of it has to do with those with spiritual heart blockages and evil motives. We've experienced the harshness and judgment and we think the mask protects us from their venom. If I take my mask off people will see my struggles, my failures, my sin...And if my motive is to please people instead of God I wear this mask so they'll like me.

Paul knew as a minister and leader...The fishpond is a difficult place to swim, because people stand on the outside looking in. My belief...and I think Paul's...is "we're all fish swimming together in the bowl...and God is the only one who looks in.

“There is nothing in all creation hidden from His sight, everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.” **(Heb. 4:13)**

If you want to judge me or my family, that’s your prerogative. I’ll try to let you see my heart wide open, but even more clearly my Savior who died for my unrighteousness...and I’ll clearly tell you I need His grace just as badly today as a 66-year-old minister as I did when I was a 17 year old goof ball.

What do we as leaders do when we encounter opposition from people, like Paul did in Thessalonica?

III. PROTECT AND GUIDE THE CHURCH LIKE THE FAMILY OF GOD

When I watch mothers with children of all ages, I see what Paul talks about in verse 7: “a mother tenderly caring for her children.”

A. Godly Leaders don’t protect their territory or their investment. They protect and care for God’s family like a mother does her child.

Paul says “we weren’t looking for people’s praises, yours or anyone else’s...even though as an Apostle of Christ I could have asserted that authority...I didn’t. We were like young children among you.”

And in verse 11 he says, "We dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live a life worthy of God."

Mother, children...fathers...sounds like a leader who wants to protect and guide the church like a family huh?

"We loved you so much we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well." (v. 8)

Paul, Silas and Timothy made this happen in 3 weeks...They shared their lives, they worked in other jobs to earn money so they didn't have to take a paycheck...They showed integrity, honesty and love...All of this said, "We're family!"

I'm going to end this message with the protecting aspect of Dad's for their families. It's one of the things that fathers take most seriously...as they should. It's why we are tempted to clean our gun collection as boys show up to date our daughters. It's why we're the ones that get up in the middle of the night when our wives wake us up and ask, "Did you hear that?!"

What it comes down to is this, **Time is short...words are important...love is powerfully evident.**

And in the midst of this, Paul is still trying to protect his family...Guard the flock...protect God's family. "Savage wolves

will come in among you and will not spare the flock...Even from your own number people will arise and distort the truth in order to gain a following." (Acts 20:30)

For this whole month, we will be discussing the concept of what it takes to be "on mission" for God. Before we accept any kind of mission, with the advice that we first take stock of ourselves,

C. Paul says that we must agree to accept the charges...fully! Suppose you had thirty 4- & 5-year-olds on a playground...You and 2 or 3 other adults were supervising them...and all of a sudden a pit bull ran into their midst. He's growling and trying to attack...

Would you run away? Would you ignore the dog? Or would you do whatever it takes to protect them from being attacked and hurt...even at your own expense?

This is the picture the Apostle Paul shares...This is what Paul says leaders must have a heart for...protect your family...guide them to safety...accept the charges...fully.

Being missional is hard work...sometimes dangerous work. That's why it must be something a person desires to do...and is gifted by God to do....and will be willing to sacrifice himself to do.

Jesus calls us to do what's right, even when it's hard. Accept the charges. Amen? Let's pray.