

*1 Thessalonians 2:5-8***PREFACE**

I spent no small amount of time earlier this week trying to come up with a familiar illustration with which to preface this study. But after a while I realized that this was not necessary—for two reasons:

1. What Paul writes, and how he writes it, is so clear and so easily understood that it requires no contemporary illustration;
2. What Paul writes is so common, so rampant [["spreading unchecked"](#)] in our own society, that upon reading this passage every one of us can supply for ourselves a number of ready examples from life.

So instead of wasting time telling a story, let's get right to it.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:5-8.

In this passage we have the second part of the outline from last week, where Paul first presents what they *didn't* do, then explains what they *did* do.

Verses 5-8

We did *not*

use flattering (i.e., man-pleasing) speech
have a pretext for greed
seek glory from men

But we

were as gentle among you as a nursing mother is with her child
have a true affection for you; you are dear to us
to the extent that we gave you not just the good news of Christ,
but our very lives

Let me point out another theme woven into this text. Look at v4:
we speak, not as pleasing men, but God

From v5:

we never came with flattering speech...

And from v6:

nor did we seek glory from men

Here, tucked inside Paul's explanation of what they *didn't* do, we discover a dark and insidious cause and effect: From one perspective it might seem—if not laudable, at least not so terrible—that we seek to please others. After all (we tell ourselves), that's just being generous and thoughtful; putting their needs before our own. But when our effort is to please men, it is from men we "seek glory." And when that glory is not forthcoming, our spirit turns bitter and resentful. [[story about Jim](#)]

Jesus spoke of this in his sermon on the mount.

Read Matthew 6:16-18.

It was C. S. Lewis who put it succinctly: "Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in; aim at earth and you will get neither."

w5-6

For we never came with flattering speech [lit., in a word (logoi) of flattery], as you know,

The word translated “flattering” is found nowhere else in the NT, but is fairly common in ancient secular literature.

flattering = *kolakeia* = from a derivative of *kolax* (a fawner); flattery : - × flattering.

The term *kolakeia* frequently appears in catalogs of vices, such as Philo, who lists “flattery” alongside trickery, deceitfulness, and false speaking. The word is not as innocent as just telling your wife her hair looks nice today; it includes the ideas of ulterior motives, insincerity, deceit.

nor with a pretext for greed

The NIV’s “nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed” could be interpreted, we really were greedy, and didn’t try to hide it—which of course is not what Paul is saying. The idea is that they never came with “a pretext such as covetousness would use” (Ellicott, Milligan).

Both of these—flattery and a pretext for greed—speak of someone being two-faced, deceitful. Paul did not come to Thessalonica to tickle their ears with sweet talk, distracting them while he picked their pockets.

God is witness

And for his defense he calls to the witness stand God Himself. Note that for testimony to his *conduct*, he appeals to the Thessalonians themselves (“as you know”); for testimony to his *motives*, he appeals to God (Vincent). Only God could testify to the contents of his heart.

nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others,
Jesus spoke of this to the Jewish leaders.

Read John 5:41-44. [not NIV]

“I do not receive glory from men”

This can be read a number of ways:

- men do not give me honor (they gave, instead, abuse and scorn)
- the questionable NIV translation: I do not *accept* the praise of men
- I do not *seek* the honor of men
- I do not *need* the honor of men
- best: I do not receive *my* glory from men, but from God. That is, *Why should I bother with the pitiful glory man can give me? I’ll wait for the real thing from my Father.*

[Back to Thessalonians](#)

Paul is saying much the same thing in v6: they were not seeking the glory of men, because it means nothing compared to the crown awaiting them from the heavenly Father.

even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.

By right of their office as apostles—official ambassadors sent by Christ—they could have demanded, or at least permitted, the Thessalonians to treat them with honor, deference. But this they did not do.

w7-8

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8.

But we proved to be gentle among you...

Literally, “we **became** gentle **in your midst**”—which is indicative of Paul’s *modus operandi*, as he describes it to the Corinthians.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19, 22-23.

Paul, following the model of Christ, was willing to forgo his personal rights and privileges—even, if necessary, his native personality—for the sake of those to whom he was ministering. This was not duplicity, or a self-serving performance, but a sacrificial act that put the good of others before his own.

Contrast what he says in v7 with the darker form of this, mentioned in vv5-6. Using “flattering speech” so as to gain “glory from men” is *self-serving*, whereas becoming something one typically is not, stepping outside one’s normal comfort zone so as to win souls with the gospel, is serving *others*—and, ultimately, serving God.

as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.

I love the imagery of the word translated “tenderly cares.” The NIV and ESV are too thin; *thalpō* is an old word meaning to keep warm, to cherish with tender love, to foster.

tenderly cares, cherishes, caring for, taking care of^{ESV} = *thalpo* = probably akin to *thallo* (**to warm**); **to brood**, i.e. (figurative) to foster :- cherish.

It is the picture of a brooding hen carefully covering her eggs with her own body to keep them warm and safe. Maybe she would like to get up and stretch her legs, go out for some fresh air. But she remains there, giving of herself for the sake of her young.

Having so fond an affection for you...

ESV: being affectionately desirous of you...

Paul expands the imagery of the tender care of a nursing mother by using a rare Greek word [*homeiromai*] to describe how deep and visceral is his affection for the Thessalonians. Found only here in the NT, we can look to the book of Job for a better understanding of the intensity of Paul’s affection. The Septuagint uses this word to translate the Hebrew *haka* [*hai-kaw*]—in Job 3:21, “long for.”

Read Job 3:20-22.

Though speaking of death, rather than brothers and sisters in Christ, this opens a window onto the full depth of Paul’s affection for the Thessalonians. *Haka* probably comes from a word that includes the idea of piercing, so getting from that to “longing” I take to mean that it is an intensified longing that one feels in the gut.

we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives

Paul closes this thought, in the rest of v8, by describing their—the missionaries'—expression of this affection. What did they do with it? They were “well-pleased [they found pleasure in] impart[ing] to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives.”

They did not just preach the gospel then move onto their next stop. Even after they had left Thessalonica, they gave over to these dear people their very “lives.”

lives, souls^{kjv}, **selves**^{esv} = *psyche* (soo-khay') = from <G5594> (psucho); **breath, i.e. (by implication) spirit**, abstract or concrete (the animal sentient principle only; thus distinguished on the one hand from <G4151> (pneuma), which is the rational and immortal soul; and on the other from <G2222> (zoe), which is mere vitality, even of plants: these terms thus exactly correspond respectively to the Hebrew <H5315> (nephesh), <H7307> (ruwach) and <H2416> (chay)) :- heart (+ -ily), life, mind, soul, + us, + you. **More than just their physical lives; in the depths of their being they cared.**

Why? Because they had become so dear to them—they were *loved*.

What a difference this makes!

Believe me when I tell you that over the course of my lifetime I have met and even worked with plenty of pastors on the flip-side of this coin—men who had no affection for, felt no bond with the people to whom they were to be ministering. Delivering a well-researched, eloquent sermon on Sunday morning does not a pastor make. Oh, there were some who, like Paul, loved the flock; but there have been far too many that did not.

So emerging from our wilderness years and coming to the church where we are presently, we recognized immediately that here was a body of believers who were loved by their pastor. It was soon apparent that their pastor *loved* this flock—a *psyche*-love, a soul-love. He was (and *is*) loved in return, and this foundation means that the sheep in this fold love each other. (And, of course, this pastoral love and affection has continued on in those who followed.) In such a setting, it is much easier for the gospel message to find purchase in the hearts of those who hear it—just as it did in Thessalonica.