

Pleasing God, Not Humans

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

1 & 2 Thessalonians

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Introduction

- Social media account: “don’t read comments.” Worst of all, IMO, is **Yelp**
 - If you don’t know, it helps you find businesses, rate and review
 - 1) Highly positive, 2) pure negativity, (personal fave) 3) spitting match
 - Now these reviews have a real impact
- Got me thinking in light of today’s passage: what would we do to get “approved”
 - How hard would we work? What shapeshifting? What sin would we commit?

(big idea) To be approved by God is far better than being approved by people

We’re going to dive into our passage first, but some important context first: Religious Charlatans

G.K. Beale Religious charlatans existed before the media age. Indeed, there have been religious frauds throughout history, including Paul’s day. Some pretended to be Christian, but many represented other religions and philosophies, traveling from town to town and seeking their own benefit. The goal of all was generally to deceive people in order to obtain selfish advantages such as money, sexual favor or self-glory. The problem was so prevalent that the second-century satirist Lucian wrote an entire work about those who “went about the country practising quackery and sorcery, and ‘trimming the fatheads’—for so they style the public in the traditional patter of magicians.”

- It is in this world that Paul and Silas and Timothy are preaching, going from town to town
- Look at this passage and see what is being refuted here

Scripture Reading

1 Thessalonians 1 ¹ For you yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our visit with you was not without result. ² On the contrary, after we had previously suffered and were treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, we were emboldened by our God to speak the gospel of God to you in spite of great opposition.

- *You know what happened in Philippia? Not some secret, it was pretty public.*
- *But despite that, we still came to you in Thessalonica and we preached boldly.*
- *If we didn’t really believe in our message, would we have done that?*

³ For our exhortation didn’t come from error or impurity or an intent to deceive. ⁴ Instead, just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please people, but rather God, who examines our hearts. ⁵ For we never used flattering speech, as you know, or

had greedy motives—God is our witness—⁶ and we didn't seek glory from people, either from you or from others. ⁷ Although we could have been a burden as Christ's apostles, instead we were gentle among you, as a nurse nurtures her own children. ⁸ We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. ⁹ For you remember our labor and hardship, brothers and sisters. Working night and day so that we would not burden any of you, we preached God's gospel to you. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and so is God, of how devoutly, righteously, and blamelessly we conducted ourselves with you believers. ¹¹ As you know, like a father with his own children, ¹² we encouraged, comforted, and implored each one of you to walk worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

The Bad Markers

1. Impotent | 2:1 (No power, useless)
2. Erroneous | 2:3 (Proven to just be wrong)
3. Impure | 2:3 (Some see here sexual impropriety, using leadership for pleasure)
4. Deceptive | 2:3 (Knowing that what you're selling is terrible)
5. Flattery | 2:5 (Boosting the ego of the hearer)
6. Greedy motives | 2:5 (Almost certainly financial)
7. Seek glory | 2:6 (Look good)
8. A burden | 2:7 (Again, financial benefit)
9. Not gentle | 2:7 (Using and abusing people)

This list reminds of the worst type of sales: timeshare presentation

- Going into it, my wife said "don't believe anything, we just want the free stuff"
- A few minutes in, I was like "where do I sign?"

The Good Markers

1. Bold despite hardship | 2:2 (Charlatans would have folded)
2. Pleasing God | 2:4 (As opposed to pleasing people)
3. Gentle | 2:7 (Phonies eventually get harsh)
4. Motherly nurture | 2:7 (textual issue here, is it gentle or babies? Either way, nurture)
5. Shared lives | 2:8 (Hucksters don't "do life together")
6. Working to provide | 2:9 (not just leeching money)
7. Devotion | 2:10 (If Paul made tents *and* planted a church, how long were his days?)
8. Righteousness | 2:10
9. Blamelessness | 2:10 (No room for an accusation)
10. Fatherly instruction | 2:11 (Implored and taught)

*The point: We know there are lots of hucksters and frauds out there. We understand that you're skeptical like Erin Lynn. But you need to know, we are **genuinely different!***

Raises the question: what is that core difference? Pleasing man vs. pleasing God

People-Pleasers

1 Thessalonians 2 ⁴ Instead, just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please people, but rather God, who examines our hearts...⁶ and we didn't seek glory from people, either from you or from others.

- What motivates my actions: who am I trying to please? Who am I trying to make happy?
 - Yelp review: *we'll give you a 20% off coupon if you try us again!*
 - The Reluctant Traveler: pure opulence on display, "anything anytime anywhere"
- This is called a people pleaser. Psychology recognizes this phenomenon.

(big idea) A people-pleaser gives and serves, but with impure and greedy motives

- Which brings us to the deeper motivation, there is one layer deeper

A Deeper Motivation

1 Thessalonians 2 ⁴ Instead, just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please people, but rather God, who examines our hearts...⁶ and we didn't seek glory from people, either from you or from others.

- Motivation of what you're trying to **get**: approval
- The Bible's claim is that there is a way to know that you are approved by God
 - But it's hard for us to believe it, so we seek approval from humans

Approved by God

- Our approval in creation | Genesis 1:31
- God's disapproval of sin | Genesis 6:6
 - Regretted that he had made man. Shame, guilt that we experience
 - But God put in place from eternity past a plan to fix the problem
- Jesus' perfect approval | Hebrews
 - Everything he did: his life, care, teaching, fighting temptation
 - **GOSPEL**: perfect sacrifice for us, victorious death is the ultimate approval
- Our approval in Christ | Romans 5:1
 - Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to examine one last aspect as we seek to apply these ideas to our lives: 1) let's live not as people-pleasers, but as God-pleasers. 2) The more you know you're approved by God in Christ, the more you'll seek to please God, not man.

(big idea style) How can I know that I'm approved by God?

(big idea style) Objective vs. subjective acceptance

- That day-to-day “feeling” of God’s approval that changes our action
- These men knew they were approved by God, so they lived differently
- In my pastoral experience, I have so many conversations where people say something to the effect of, “well I know what the Bible says, I know that I’m accepted by God...in my head. But in my heart and emotions, I don’t feel like it. I feel distant, shame, etc..”

The world’s answer is “self esteem.” And versions of it creep into the church.

Ed Welch There is no reason why we should feel great about ourselves. We truly are deficient. The meager props of the self-esteem teaching will eventually collapse as people realize that their problem is much deeper.

Knowing Our Acceptance

1. Memorization with meditation
 - a. No this is not “take two verses and call me in the morning”
 - b. You got a guy or gal inside your head talking to you all the time
 - i. 1) Your own inner critic, 2) a parent or lover 3) the devil himself
 - c. Put some smooth stones in your slingshot
 - i. Memorize: availability
 - ii. Medication: letting it soak down deeper
2. Community with conversation
 - a. Two-way conversation where you can tell somebody else, “that doesn’t sound like someone who knows they’re loved and approved of by God because of Jesus.”
 - i. CG is not some thing to just fill your time, to disciple each other
 - b. Sometimes we learn things best by sharing them with others