

# Faithful Gospel Ministry

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 03 November 2024

Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     1 Thessalonians chapter 2, 1 through 4. For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.

For our appeal does not spring up from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive. But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

Let's at least read verses 5 and 6. For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed.

God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.

Well, not to beat a dead horse, but just a couple of days. Millions of Americans will head to the polls to cast their vote for who they think should be the next president of the United States.

[ 1 : 2 6 ]     And unfortunately, as you know, we live in a so-called battleground state where candidates continue to spend millions and millions and millions of dollars on the relentless barrage of political ads and emails and text messages.

And if you are like me, you cannot wait for it to be over. I would almost vote for any candidate who promises to never text me again or send me another email.

But have you noticed that in most commercials and mailers, and this is always the case, and it makes sense why it's the case, that in most of these advertisements, little is actually said about policies.

Little is conveyed about plans for what a particular candidate envisions for their potential ascension to the throne, if we can call it that, in the United States.

That's not really typically the focus, is it? The vast majorities of the ads instead are focused on attacking the character of the opposing candidate.

[ 2 : 4 1 ]     And the reason for it is easy enough to see, isn't it? If we call a person's integrity into question, it works toward discrediting their message and their fitness for the role that they desire.

Now, that's just true, which is why typically in situations like this, a campaign is not always so much for something as it is against someone, and that's the shape that the advertisements take.

It's the same reason why character witnesses are so vitally important in lawsuits and in prosecution. If a lawyer can persuade a jury to question the integrity of a defendant, it will work in their favor even if their arguments against the defendant are weak.

Right? So, on one hand, you could have a political candidate who has amazingly strong arguments for what should be done, but with questionable character comes the diminishment of those good arguments.

And on the other hand, you can have someone with a really weak argument, but because they're able to defame the character of another person, their arguments look a little bit more enticing, though they are not actually enticing or accurate or right.

[ 4 : 13 ] We understand how it works. That's the way of life, isn't it? Well, the Apostle Paul was no stranger to these kinds of tactics from his enemies. In almost every letter that we have of his preserved for us in the New Testament, at some point, he defends his apostolic ministry, and it appears that that is what he's doing now in the second chapter of 1 Thessalonians.

Now, why would he be doing this, and what's actually the motive behind this defense? Now, if you're not careful to really see what he says and to understand the context in which he says these things, you might would be led to believe, well, Paul is just so self-obsessed.

Here he is, he's writing to these other people, and all he wants to talk about is himself, and he wants to defend himself. It's almost as if either he's just got such a big ego that, and perhaps there's a piece of that that's true.

After all, it was Paul that wrote to the Corinthians and said that, God has given me the messenger of Satan lest I get too big of a head, right? Perhaps that was a temptation for him, but that's not why he does this.

His motivation in defending his apostolic ministry in all of these letters was not to make himself look better just to make himself look better. It was actually to build up the credibility of the gospel.

[ 5 : 35 ] He understood what politicians understand. He understood what lawyers understand, that even though the gospel message is wonderful, and it's accurate, and it's true, and it's right, that if his opponent could successfully diminish his character and defame his integrity, it would actually work toward the discrediting of the message of the gospel, and Paul did not want that.

So over and over and over, he defends his apostolic ministry. He defends the way that he carried out that ministry, not to build himself up, but to build Jesus up, to make sure that people understood that the gospel was true.

Because, of course, one of the quickest ways to turn people away from the gospel is to expose the seedy character of those who proclaim it. And if we've learned anything in the last few years in the so-called exvangelical world, this deconstructionist movement, it's that.

That the arguments that are coming from the deconstructionist movement are not typically good arguments against the gospel or the credibility of the scriptures or the validity of truth in Christianity.

The arguments are always against the character of those who have abused them, even using the scripture and right theology for that abuse.

[ 7 : 05 ] Well, as we launch here into the second chapter of 1 Thessalonians, we find a noticeable change in the content. Now, Paul's not changing the subject.

He's continuing in the subject of the church's founding, but he shifts the perspective, whereas in chapter 1, the perspective was focused in on the Thessalonian church's spirit-empowered conversion, their spirit-enabled perseverance.

Everything was zeroed in on them. This is what God was doing in them. He's not leaving the subject altogether, but he is shifting the perspective away from the Thessalonians and the effect of the gospel on them to his ministry to them and what his ministry to them was like.

And it would seem that the enemies of the gospel in Thessalonica, which we know were many, that they had charged Paul and Silas and Timothy with some impropriety as it related to their motives for ministry.

And though the Christians in Thessalonica, those who belonged to the church, were not persuaded, by those accusations, Paul still felt it was necessary for their sake and for the sake of the gospel to reflect on the true nature of his entrance to them or his coming to them.

[ 8 : 26 ] And we praise the Lord that he did this because we are greatly benefited by what he writes in this chapter, not just in these four verses, but as he continues on in chapter 2 and chapter 3, we see really a wonderful portrait of what a pastor is supposed to look like, what a minister of the gospel is supposed to portray.

And in the first few verses of this section, we have this snapshot of faithful gospel ministry. Faithful gospel ministry. This is the model that the Thessalonian Christians imitated.

Paul mentions that in verse 1. They became imitators of Paul and Timothy and Silas and ultimately of the Lord. And it is precisely the pattern that we must follow as well.

If we and all of us, I don't just mean those who would be in vocational ministry, I mean all of us are giving a ministry of the gospel. If you are a Christian, you have a gospel ministry.

It may be different in scope than mine or someone else's, but you have it. You have a gospel ministry to your children if you're a parent. You have a gospel ministry to your spouse if you're married.

[ 9 : 37 ] You have a gospel ministry to your neighbors and to your coworkers and to your friends and to our community. We all have a gospel ministry. If we are going to live out that gospel ministry faithfully, this is the pattern that we need to follow.

This is what we must imitate. Now, regarding the structure of these four verses, there are three not-but statements.

Not-but statements. And I want to use them as a guide. In fact, so if we're going to use something to kind of trace our way through the argument here, that's the way that I would like for us to do it this morning.

These three not-but statements. Each contains a negation, what faithful ministry is not, and each contains an affirmation, what faithful ministry is.

And in these three statements, I think we can discern the manner of faithful gospel ministry, the motive of faithful gospel ministry, and the mission or the goal of faithful gospel ministry.

[ 10 : 41 ] So the first thing I want you to see is the manner of faithful gospel ministry. Look with me again at verses 1 and 2. Paul writes, Now, the first negation comes in verse 1.

Paul wrote that their coming to Thessalonica, their entrance, you might say, into Thessalonica, was, quote, not in vain.

Not in vain. Vain here is used in the sense of empty, hollow, wasted. Our coming to you was not empty.

Our coming to you was not wasted. It was not vain. And at first glance, we might suppose that Paul refers to the fact that their coming to Thessalonica was effective, that it wasn't in vain because it was effective in that many who heard the gospel were actually converted.

And that indeed happened, but I don't think that's what his emphasis is here. It's not what he's intending to communicate, at least as a matter of first importance in the text.

[ 12 : 09 ] And we know that because the affirmation that pairs with the negation, the but statement here, does not focus on the effect of Paul's ministry, but on the reality of God's work in his own life.

So that the not emptiness has to do with the manner in which Paul and Silas and Timothy ministered in the city.

Now let's put it together. There's all these different phrases, right? Let's take the two main phrases, the not but statement, and put them together. Our coming to you was not in vain, but we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel.

Do you see what I'm getting at? Of course, this was effective. That's a part of it. His ministry was not empty because it was effective. That's certainly a part, but that's not what he intends to communicate as the primary issue here.

He's saying that our coming to you was not in vain, but we, not you, we, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel.

[ 13 : 16 ] So what was this manner like? What was his manner of gospel ministry? Well, in a word, boldness was bold. And the context of Paul's boldness was suffering, shameful treatment, much conflict.

And he cites his experience in Philippi. Acts chapter 16, verses 11 through 40, they tell us about Paul's experience there. You know the story well, probably.

He and Silas, after having success initially in gospel preaching, were dragged into the marketplace, stripped naked before the people and the magistrates, beaten almost to death, and thrown in prison.

That's pretty extreme. Can you imagine? You decide this afternoon, you know what? I'm gonna go where people are lining up to vote, and I'm gonna just, I'm gonna preach the gospel, and initially, as you're preaching that gospel, you see wonderful fruit of it.

There's this lady over here named Lydia, and she, the Lord opens her heart to believe, Acts 16 tells us, and she trusts in Christ, and you rejoice with her. And then you've got this other girl over here.

[ 14 : 40 ] She's being abused. She's being abused by people who are making money off of her. She's possessed by a demon, and people are taking advantage of her. And so you preach the gospel, and the Lord delivers her, and she comes to faith in Jesus Christ.

And then, because those people get mad at you, they just lost their income. They were abusing this girl. They just lost their income. And their response then is to take you and drag you in the town hall in Cornelius, strip you naked before everybody that's there, beat you almost to death, and then cast you in prison for the night.

Now, would you say that's a pretty successful day? The next day, the magistrates, they should have done their homework first.

They didn't do that. They realized the next day, Paul's actually a Roman citizen, which means what they did was illegal. And they were the ones who were gonna face a significant punishment if they didn't try to right the ship.

So they come to Paul, and they say, sorry, but we want you to leave. You can't stay. So Paul goes where?

[ 15 : 45 ] Thessalonica. Now, he's got an opportunity here. When he gets to Thessalonica, he can do the same thing that he did in Philippi. Now, can you imagine the anxiety that you would feel in that situation?

Chris goes to Cornelius. All this stuff happens to him. The next day, Woody Washam comes to Chris and says, Chris, sorry, shouldn't have done that to you yesterday, but we'd like for you to just go and take your message to Davidson.

Just leave us alone here. And Chris says, okay, and he walks to Davidson. Now, what do you think the anxiety level is gonna be like for Chris when he is presented with an opportunity to preach the gospel there?

Or he's gonna think, oh man, I don't know if I can go through that again. That was hard. That's suffering. That's shameful treatment. That's much conflict.

And when he got to Thessalonica, it wasn't really much better, was it? We read in Acts chapter 17 that eventually the effectiveness of his gospel made the Jews in the synagogue mad.

[ 16 : 51 ] They became jealous of him because people were converting to Christianity and they didn't like that. So they wanted to punish Paul. So what they did is they made up some lies about him and they incited a riot, a bloodthirsty riot in the city.

That's much conflict, isn't it? Think about that. Can you imagine what Paul and Silas looked like when the Thessalonians first met them?

Undoubtedly, they were bearing fresh wounds. The fresh marks of their experience in Philippi.

For Paul's coming to have been in vain would mean that his suffering caused him to shrink back from preaching the gospel message in Thessalonica.

Thessalonica. I think that's what he means. That though we had this experience in Philippi, though this was our experience, even when we came into you, our coming to you was not in vain because we were still faithful to do it.

[ 17 : 59 ] We were still bold and it took great boldness and courage to do what they did after what they experienced. That's not what happened, is it?

He didn't shrink back. Despite the reality of persecution, Paul and Silas and Timothy, they dared to proclaim the gospel of Jesus anyways.

Why? Why would they go through all of this? That's really what this set of verses answers, is the why question. But we can't escape the fact that their confidence in the gospel message itself drove them to this.

Why would they subject themselves to such difficulty knowing that there is an inherent offensiveness to the gospel message?

You know that, right? Of course you do. There is an inherent offensiveness. Now we understand it as Christians. We look at the gospel and we see the glory of the gospel. Unbelievers do not.

[ 19 : 09 ] They do not see the glory of the gospel. They see the offense of the gospel. You're telling me that God will not accept me? I'm not that bad. You're telling me I'm that bad? And the Bible's answer is, you don't even know how bad you are.

It's deep. It's rooted deep. But we have the answer, right? And we want to take that to people. Paul and Simon and Timothy, they're so confident in the gospel message that they were willing to preach this truth to people even though they knew of its inherent offense and that this was probably going to be their experience almost everywhere that they went.

And yet they still did it. The effects of the gospel are not favorable to the world. In Thessalonica, it was jealous Jews.

Their egos took a shot when people in the synagogue started converting to Christianity and following Paul and Jesus. In Philippi, it was the pocketbooks of the people that were abusing this girl that incited the violence.

Same thing in Ephesus. In Ephesus, Paul comes preaching the gospel and what do people do when they believe the gospel? They turn away from idols. Well, that was big business in Ephesus. You can go back, you can read in the book of Acts, the whole riot in Ephesus had everything to do with the silversmiths losing money.

[ 20 : 36 ] The gospel effect is not favorable to the world in this world system. And when you start hitting people's pocketbooks and you start hitting their power, they get angry about that, don't they?

Let me tell you, you preach the gospel long enough, the effect of that gospel preaching, it's going to offend somebody and it's going to offend somebody in such a way that they're going to come after you.

And what's to be our response when the world does come after us? How can we manage to be so bold?

Well, the same spirit that was at work in the conversion of the Thessalonians was at work in the evangelism of Paul and his team. Isn't that his point here?

We were bold. But we must not miss, we were bold in our God. We were bold in our God to proclaim the gospel to you in spite of the conflict.

[ 21 : 43 ] Now let's think about this phrase, we had boldness in our God. What does he mean by that? I think it's layered. I think there's at least three senses in which we can glean from this phrase.

First, he was bold, his boldness was from God. His boldness was from God. So lest anyone think Paul is taking credit for what happened in the Thessalonian Christians, he was quick to say right off the bat that their boldness was sourced in the grace of God.

Do you see that? He doesn't say, I was bold, there ain't nobody like me. If you want somebody to come in despite the struggle, you better call Paul. That's not what he says.

He says, no, I didn't want to do it probably. I was aching, hurting from Philippi. But God's doing something in me that I can't explain.

My boldness was from God. He's crediting God for the work that's happening. Now we know that's the case because he's already done that so many times in chapter one. And he hasn't left that subject altogether.

[ 22 : 51 ] He's just shifted the perspective. It is God's grace that was at work in the conversion of the Thessalonians and it was God's grace that was at work in Paul and his team as they had boldness to preach the gospel.

So his boldness was from God. I think there's a second way for us to understand this. Their boldness was toward God. Boldness was toward God.

And what does that mean? God's grace had produced in them a confidence in the gospel that could not be shaken by conflict. They were bold because they were convinced that Jesus really is the Messiah.

That he really is the sinless son of God. That he really did die as a propitiation as we read earlier for the sins of the elect.

That he really did raise from the dead. That he really does invite all to come and believe and receive salvation from him. They believed. They were fully convinced.

[ 23 : 56 ] Their confidence came from God and that grace of God at work in them produced a confidence toward God. Toward his gospel. And it motivated their preaching.

But there's a third way here and we'll get to this a little bit more towards the end but at least it's worth noting here that their boldness was before God. It was in the presence of God.

That's their mindset here. God is watching. Everything that we're doing is before his face. It was his call on their lives that produced such courage.

You say, well what does faithful ministry look like? Well, at its heart is the gospel message, isn't it? If you're not proclaiming the gospel of Jesus then you don't have a ministry.

But once you've got that settled and that's assumed here in the text, once you're preaching the gospel, what does it look like for that to be faithful? Well, you're going to have to be bold when it's not real easy to do it. And there will come a time where it's not very easy to do it.

[ 25 : 01 ] All of these things working together in Paul and Silas and Timothy produced this boldness that resulted by God's grace in effective ministry in Thessalonica. We know that suffering is guaranteed in the scriptures for those who are faithful to Christ and faithful ministry in the name of Christ is bold through the conflict.

Okay, so what's the manner of faithful ministry? Well, it's bold. It's bold even when things are hard. Okay, number two. Notice the motive of faithful gospel ministry.

The motive. Look at verse three and the beginning of verse four. For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive.

But, just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak. This is the issue of motive here. Now, it is entirely possible it may even in some cases be common to engage in gospel ministry sinfully.

Now, think about that. Process that for a second. We use phrases like the ends don't justify the means, right? Well, most people don't live that way. Most people live as if if the result is good, then it doesn't really matter how you got it.

[ 26 : 30 ] And as sinful people, we bring that into our faith as well. We bring that into our gospel ministry. It is entirely possible to engage in gospel ministry sinfully with sinful motive.

And that is the issue I think that Paul takes up in this second not-but statement of the text. You know, apparently it was common for there to be itinerant philosophers at the time of Paul's life and ministry.

And according to scholars, they were known for entering cities with great pomp and circumstance. And the reason for that is so that they might gain a greater following.

Because their following, the greater it was, the result meant more notoriety, more power, more honor, more money, right?

And at our hearts, that's really what we're chasing most of the time isn't it? We're chasing money, we're chasing sex, we're chasing notoriety and power. And that was no different for the people of Paul's day.

[ 27 : 35 ] According to some ancient sources, among the plethora of greedy motivations, sometimes people just simply desired to deceive people. They were sociopaths, psychopaths, they literally made up things that they knew were wrong just so that they could assert some type of power over other people.

Now that's just as common today as it was then. And so when Paul comes preaching the gospel and people begin to turn to the gospel in Thessalonica, the enemies of the gospel in Thessalonica began to accuse Paul of being such a charlatan, saying that he was preaching this gospel for personal gain.

And there's three sinful motives that Paul enumerates here for us. first he says our appeal, our preaching of the gospel, it did not spring from error.

Error is the first sinful motive. Error here, in this case, it suggests fraud, fraudulence, so like a knowing error.

And that's further confirmed in verse 5 where Paul says, he kind of reiterates these three things. He says, I did not come with flattering words. I didn't come to you with fraudulent flattery.

[ 28 : 56 ] No, how did Paul come? Well, Acts 17 tells us. Acts 17 verses 2 and 3, Paul went in as was his custom on three Sabbath days, he reasoned with them from the scriptures.

He didn't say, sit down, let me tell you something, don't talk back. He reasoned with them. That's not a sign of impure motive, is it? He's reasoning with them. And what is he reasoning with them about?

He reasoned with them from the scriptures. This wasn't Paul's idea. This wasn't Paul's opinions. He was reasoning with them about the text itself, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, saying, this Jesus whom I proclaim to you is this Christ.

Paul's gospel was rooted in the scriptures, not in flattery, not in fraudulent opinions. This was his appeal. In fact, that word appeal is unique here.

In fact, if you make it on Saturday night to Laurel, I might just come back to this text and really just focus on this one word, appeal. This urgent request, that's what the gospel preaching actually ultimately is.

[ 30 : 15 ] It's not just a dissemination of information. It is an appeal. It is an urgent request that people would act upon this information.

And that's what Paul was doing. He wasn't just preaching a philosophy. He was calling for people to respond. And he was calling for them not to respond to him.

He wasn't building his own following. He was calling for them to follow the Christ. to follow Jesus. That's a key difference between him and the charlatans of his age.

These other people coming into Thessalonica and they're saying, follow me. I've got great ideas. I've got wonderful charisma. You follow me. You'll be safe with me. Paul comes in and he says, I'm not coming with flattering words.

To the Corinthians, he said, I didn't come with this lofty speech. No, I just want you to follow Jesus. It doesn't matter about me. Just follow Jesus. He's the Christ.

[ 31 : 13 ] He'll save your soul. That's not error. That's truth. And that's what his appeal was based on. There's a second sinful motive here though, and that is impurity.

Impurity. Every other time Paul uses this word in his letters, every single time except for this one, it's always used in reference to sexual sin.

sin. So why is he using it here? What he means is that he did not prostitute the gospel message for personal gain. He wasn't prostituting the gospel.

He wasn't preaching the gospel in order that he might get something from the people that believed it. Whether that be glory, whether it be money, or sex, whatever it might have been.

And again, he restates this in verse 5. He says that when they came, they had no pretext for greed. Later in the chapter, he even recalls how they refused to take money from the Thessalonian Christians for this very reason.

[ 32 : 17 ] They didn't want to be accused of being like the philosophers who were known to come to the city. There's a third sinful motivation. Deceive is the last thing.

Our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive. This is trickery. It's baiting somebody is the idea behind this one.

It wasn't a made-up story meant to deceive people into following Paul. He says in verse 6, we did not seek glory from people. That's not what he was motivated by. Now, let's look at the big picture here.

Though this isn't unheard of and it's certainly possible, it's very unlikely that these motives would have produced the kind of boldness that we see in Paul in Thessalonica.

If you're a charlatan who is beaten nearly to death and shamed in front of an entire city in Philistine and you know that what you're doing isn't real, why do you just subject yourself to it all over again?



[ 33 : 30 ] That just doesn't logically make sense. I think that's what Paul's saying here. There is credibility to the gospel message because he did not come as a charlatan. So then what was his true motive?

The true motive for Paul's ministry to the Thessalonians was very simple actually. Look at verse four. But, here's the affirmation, just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak.

What's his motive? Simple. God has called me to do this. He was motivated entirely by God's call on his life.

That's amazing. He wasn't motivated by money or power or sex. He was motivated by a desire to fulfill his call.

And he was far more concerned with obeying God's call than even preserving his own life. And since God had entrusted the gospel message to him, Paul was then entrusting his own life to the sovereign will of God.

[ 34 : 42 ] Faithful ministry is motivated by God's truth and it is motivated by God's call. Which, by the way, is something that all of us have.

my call as a pastor might be unique in its scope and in its context. But that doesn't mean that I'm the only one in this room that has a call of God to proclaim the gospel.

That belongs to all of us. We've already mentioned the various ways that that will be lived out in your life. But it belongs to each and every one of us. Now, how will you be motivated to fulfill that call?

Or do you even care that the call is there? If it's for any other reason than simply to obey the Lord, then you will inevitably fall into error and impurity and deception.

Third, I want you to see the mission, or what I mean by mission here, because I just needed another M. It made me think better. I mean the aim or the goal.

[ 35 : 49 ] What was Paul's ultimate goal here? He and Silas and Timothy. The last part of verse 4. So we speak, not to please man, but to please God, who tests our hearts.

He doesn't just see what we do, he knows our hearts, and we desire to please him. This third not-but statement, it gets to the heart of the matter, revealing that the ultimate goal of Paul's ministry in Thessalonica was to please God, not men.

Which is instructive for us, isn't it? When our primary objective is to please men, we will succumb to the pressure to diminish the gospel message.

Do you not feel that? I feel that. That if there's a way to water it down so people aren't so hateful, we're tempted to it, aren't we?

No, if we're aiming to please God, we will not succumb to that pressure. We'll be bold in the conflict, right?

[ 37 : 03 ] When we aim to please men, we will inevitably engage in fraudulent flattery, we will prostitute Christianity for personal gain, and we will willingly deceive for our own glory.

However, when our sole mission is to please God, we test our hearts, we'll proclaim the truth in conflict, and we'll avoid the sinful motivations that take so many captive.

Now, is this not why at the end of his life, Paul writes one more letter to Timothy? And what is it that he says? Timothy, I charge you, in the presence of God, who test our hearts, in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing in his kingdom.

Preach the word, Timothy. Just be faithful. Preach the gospel. Do it when it's in season, he says. When people are believing, and they're friendly to it, and God is working, do it when it's out of season, when people are unfriendly to it, and you suffer because of it.

Reprove, rebuke, exhort with complete patience and teaching, patience there being endurance, enduring what may come as a result. For the time is coming, Timothy, when people will not endure sound teaching.

[ 38 : 32 ] Now, it's amazing that Paul says the time is coming as if it's something future. He's the one getting beaten near to death, which only means that there's no end to this, not until the Lord returns.

It should be our eager expectation that this would be the result of faithful ministry, right? Having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

But as for you, Timothy, keep your head, be sober minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, preach the gospel, and fulfill your ministry.

Do you see what he's telling young Timothy? This is going to get worse and you're going to feel pressure. You're going to feel pressure from people who say that they're Christians. You're going to feel pressure to water down the gospel, to soften it up a bit, to not be so demanding of people to believe and to be faithful.

They're going to have itching ears. They're going to want you to preach to their own passions, and they're going to threaten you in the process. Don't do it, Timothy. Just be faithful because that's what faithful ministry is.

[ 39 : 48 ] It endures. Why does it endure? Because we're not trying to please men who just want to hear a particular thing. No, we're trying to please God who has actually put a call on our lives to take his message, not our own, or one that may be suitable for the hearer.

No, we take his message. It's his call that's on us, and it's his power that goes with us. You want to finish this way? In light of Reformation Week last week, perhaps, if you want to think of it that way.

There was a Latin phrase. I think Luther might have been the one that really popularized it. *Corum Deo*. You've probably heard it before if you've studied much about the Reformation.

*Corum Deo*. It's a Latin phrase that means before the face of God. And it was used by the Reformers to describe the essence of the Christian life, that all of life is lived before the gaze of God, right?

R.C. Sproul said it this way, to live *Corum Deo* is to live one's entire life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God.

[ 40 : 58 ] Now, I think that's a pretty good summation of the model of faithful ministry presented in these four verses. Paul and Silas and Timothy understood that all of life is lived before the face of God.

And their supreme desire was to glorify God in what they did. That's why they were bold in conflict. That's why they avoided sinful motivations.

Their lives were oriented to the glory of God, so their gospel ministry was as well. And if we are going to be faithful in the gospel, if we're going to be fruitful in just our Christianity, then we must also learn to live all of life *Corum Deo*, recognizing that we live before the face of God, that we are his people, and that our aim in all of life, the very purpose for our being and existence is his glory.

And we should let that be the motivation of what we do, even when things are tough. I think that's what faithful ministry looks like.