

# A Sincere Ministry

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Preacher: Raymond Smith

[ 0 : 00 ] Take your Bible from 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 this morning as we take a few moments here to look into the word of God and be encouraged.

You know, we see and know the reality of eternity. And here is the apostles writing here to the church at Thessalonica. It is built upon that of living in light of eternity.

You know, understanding that one day Christ is going to return. And as a believer, we will stand with him. And so we see here this morning as the believers at Thessalonica had taken the truth that was presented to them about Jesus Christ, and it became more than just information.

It became something that impacted them in their heart, in their life. Everything had transformed. As we saw last week, we saw that their lives had changed.

Those former idols, the things that they worshipped, had been replaced by God. They no longer served their idols, but they served the living God.

[ 1 : 10 ] And we see that this change was not only evident to those that knew them, but also that just heard about their faith and hope in the Son of God. And when we realize that impact, and when you hear the good news that God made a way for you to reconcile to Him through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, it was that powerful message that changed lives there at Thessalonica.

And they began to live in light of eternity. And Thessalonians, as we're going to go through here, we're going to find that Paul is focusing them on the things they can know. He says, I know that your life was changed by the gospel.

And today we're going to talk about some things that they knew about the one who brought the message to them. Because we're going to be talking about a sincere ministry.

Because, you know, when you start telling people about the Lord, you know what? There's going to be opposition. Opposition is going to come because the devil doesn't want people to know what Christ has done for them.

Not in an applicational way, you know. Information is one thing. You know, the devil is never scared of information. You know, we live in the information age. I think sometimes we're so overwhelmed with information that we get confused and do nothing with the information that we have.

[ 2 : 31 ] You know, because it's like, well, this person says this and that's opposite over here. And we get so much information that we're not applying what is needed. But these individuals here, after Paul presented them from the scripture, in other words, they said this is our foundation.

It wasn't what Paul said that made a difference. It was the foundation of scripture that made a difference in their lives. You know, today a sincere ministry is not built upon a personality.

But it's built upon the person and the word of God. It's built upon the person of Jesus Christ. It's his church. It's his people. And when we realize that, it's important to keep that in mind.

And it's the same true today. Because when they began to seek the Savior, things changed. And we know that when the word of God is presented, it's going to do its work alongside the Holy Spirit to stir the heart of an individual.

You know, we're going to see people get saved because of what the Holy Spirit and the word of God has promised to do. Because Paul told them that it came not in just words, but in power and in the Holy Spirit.

[ 3 : 40 ] You know, we saw that last week as we looked there. And that's why Paul was confident in the work of the gospel in their lives.

He said, knowing these things, knowing from the evidence, the witness that had been there assured him what was happened in their lives was real. But, you know, one of the things that comes when people get saved is the devil tries to stir up opposition.

And we know that opposition wasn't long before they showed up there at Thessalonica. Those individuals stirred up. It said in Acts 17, it talks about them being stirred with envy against Paul. And we see these things happening. And here as Paul had to depart after just a few weeks there with them, we're going to find here that Paul's trying to answer for them some of the questions. He looks back and he says, hey guys, they're making accusations about my purpose there. But you guys know from personal experience, measure up those things that you know to see if it's true. [ 4 : 49 ] Measure it against that which is true. And so, if you found in your Bible here this morning, 1 Thessalonians, let's stand together in reading of the Word of God here today.

And we're going to get everybody, it's kind of a dreary day, so we need to get people involved. Amen. So, what we're going to do is we'll read responsibly here today. And what that means is I'll read verse 1 and all together we'll read what?

All right. You guys are sharp today. That's good. So, let's start out here together. For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you that it was not in vain.

But even after that we had suffered before and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor of guile, but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel.

[ 5 : 57 ] Even so we speak not as pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, or as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness.

God is witness. Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we come before you this morning, Lord, we just thank you for your word. Lord, we're thankful for even the reality of the impact of what we read about today even echoes down through the generations, even us today, the reality of the gospel.

And Lord, just the sincerity of our presentation of it, and that's needful. And Lord, we pray just to have your hand upon each one today, Lord, as we look at this, not only of the sincerity of the apostle and those with him, but Lord, also in our own lives and how we measure ministry.

And Lord, we pray just to have your hand upon these things that are said and done, Lord, that people be encouraged and strengthened in your truth, Lord, above all you be glorified in these things here today.

[ 7 : 12 ] And Lord, we just give you all the praise in Jesus' name. Amen. May be seated. You know, the Bible tells us that in Acts chapter 17, it says, those that opposed the scripture were moved with envy against Paul and Silas and stirred up trouble, even accusing them of seeking their own means of doing things, to seek their own glory.

But also, basically, to begin with, though, it started as seeking to overthrow Caesar. You know, they attacked on a governmental level. Here in Acts chapter 17, we find this, it says, And when they had found them, they drew Jason a certain brother and unto the rulers of the city, crying, These have turned the world upside down and have come hither also, whom Jason hath received.

Who did they talk about? They talk about Paul and Silas and Timothy. And they said they've turned the city and the world upside down with the truth of the gospel. It changed and impacted.

But notice here, and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. In other words, they're making accusations against Paul and his sincerity of why he was there.

You know, and we see those things continued because they're always looking for something to stick. You know, here, we just finished up last week in Sunday school talking about Daniel. If you remember, those that moved with envy against Daniel tried to get him in his work and with the government.

[ 8 : 46 ] And when they couldn't find anything, we're going to find a cause against his God, you know, where we cause a conflict in that. And we're going to see that this same approach, the devil doesn't change his tactics.

You know, I want you to understand, when you read the Bible and you understand, you can understand what's going to happen next. Because the devil never changes tactics. Why has he not changed tactics?

Because they're still effective. People buy right into them. People just come right alongside and believe those things. But this uproar, if we remember in the city, the brethren, they protected Paul

and Silas and sent them away by night, it tells us, to Berea for their safety.

And their sudden departure, we're going to find here, presented an opportunity for those opposing them to call into question the motives of Paul.

Have you ever noticed it's easier to question somebody's motives when they're not there? You know? Oh, you shouldn't believe them. You know? And we're going to see here, this is what Paul, when we begin looking here in 2 Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, we find here that Paul begins to refute those accusations that are being made against him about the motive.

[10:05] But what we find is what pure motive of ministry ought to look like. Because, you know, today we have some warped ideas of ministry. We have some warped ideas of what it means to serve the Lord.

And we're going to find here, because of their sudden departure, those that opposed them called it into question. Even the message that they preached, the ministry, was not what they had been accused of there at Thessalonica.

And they had observed some things about Paul. In other words, they had people making accusations. But yet, Paul says, you know. You know, look there in verse 1 of chapter 2.

Notice what it says. He says, for yourselves, brethren, notice this, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain. Now, what's Paul saying?

He says, hey guys, they're making accusations. But what I'm challenging you to do is take what you know, the truth of God's word and compare it to what took place.

[11:11] Is it measuring up? You know, are the accusations, is there anything that sticks? You know, I want you to understand, in the days of the Apostle Paul, people will make up accusations.

But as we're going to see here this morning, Paul says his ministry was one you can throw accusations about things. But when you measure it against what happened, it doesn't stick. Because you can't keep people from making accusation. But you can live and choose to do things in a way where it doesn't stick. Because they look at what they know and say, these things don't measure up.

You know, to make sure it doesn't measure, it doesn't have any merit to it. And he says, mind them that they know. In other words, Paul says, you guys saw what took place. And he could determine our sincerity by receiving the gospel and by your response to it.

You know, we see here that Paul tells him, you know, look back up here in verse 4 of chapter 1. He says, knowing, brethren, your election of God. In other words, Paul says, I know that you were saved.

[12:27] Why? Because he lists those things. Because your lies were changed. There was a definitive, distinct difference in who they are from who they were.

Paul says, I know there was something that took place. Just as you know, the reason we were there. How we behaved ourselves. What we did. And you know our sincerity in which it was given. You know, the question today oftentimes is, many question, even in our society today, the sincerity of those that serve the Lord. You know, we find a culture that's messed up and upside down. Because we do have people who say they serve the Lord. But they do it for the same reasons that Paul's being accused of. You know, we find that people serve the Lord for many different reasons. Sometimes, you know, accusations stick. Because those that profess to serve the Lord need to have a right motive.

[13:32] But oftentimes, it's a self-seeking motive. You know, ministry is something that as we serve the Lord, people forget to understand that your motive for doing so is important.

You know, we have some people serve the Lord thinking they're going to gain favor with God. Well, if I just do these things, I'm going to gain favor with God. You know what Jesus told me?

He says, there's going to come a day when people say, Jesus, look at all the things we did. And he's going to say, depart from me. I never knew you. They did a lot of things for the Lord. But their motive wasn't of a motive that was right.

It wasn't because they loved the Lord. It's because they were looking to seek something from it.

And as we're going to see here this morning, most of the things that the apostle gets accused of is saying, Paul, you're doing that for your benefit.

The reality of ministry, you don't do ministry for your benefit, even though it does benefit you. It's a great benefit to serve the Lord.

[ 14 : 34 ] But you don't serve the Lord for your benefit. You serve the Lord because you love the Lord and you love others. And we're going to see Paul directly presents this to them.

And he tells them that the accusations that have been made, do they hold merit? He says, measure it up. Measure it up to see how does it hold merit.

Are my motives sincere? Are they pure in what I'm presenting or what I presented to you? And Paul tells them, he says, you know our entrance in unto you that it was not in vain.

It was not empty. It wasn't without meaning and purpose. In other words, Paul says, we were there for a reason. And that reason came to fruition.

That reason was to tell you about the one who came and died for your sin. The one that can change your life. The one that's going to, the only one you need that makes a difference in eternity.

[ 15 : 44 ] Because remember, he's presenting to them through this. We're going to see here that hope of eternity. You know, you look up in verse 10 of chapter 1. Notice what he says, and wait for his son from heaven who was raised from the dead.

Even Jesus, in other words, we're looking for something ahead of us and not behind us. You know, that's the good thing about salvation. Salvation puts the past in the past and gives you a new future. And to be looking forward to that. And Paul says, look at the motive. What did we have to gain? Did we have something to gain here? Or did you have something to gain? You know, is it your benefit? But notice he was sincere in motive. You know, as we read the list of charges that are being refuted by the Apostle Paul, we know that some had called into question his true motive.

You know, Paul doesn't call them out by name. But the things we have here, why would he address this? He's addressing this letter back to them. Because he heard that there were some there making these accusations.

[ 16 : 47 ] They were making accusations against him. Trying to tear down the ministry that God had called him to do. The reality of preaching the gospel to them to see churches started.

You know, to be that missionary that God had called him to be. Had set him apart to be. But they called into question his motive. You know, when you think about this list that we just read.

You know, it includes things like deception. Paul, you're just deceiving them. It includes accusations of fraud. It includes accusations of just building up their ego with flattering words.

Then they even accuse him of, Paul, you just did this to pad your pocket for personal gain. Paul reminds them. He says, guys, before I get to this, I want to call you to remember to know what happened when we came.

What was taking place? Think about the circumstances, the situation, who we were, what we said, how we presented ourselves. You know, Paul reminds them.

[ 17 : 58 ] Notice here in verse 2 of our text. It says this, but even after that we had suffered before and were shamefully entreated, as you know, at Philippi. You know, Paul reminds them about how they came, that initial entrance into the city, to remind them of the trials that they faced and the contention that they went through to bring them the gospel.

You know, he says the way we were treated at Philippi was shameful. You know what people were accusing Paul of? Hey, he's got an arrest record. You'd better be careful of this guy.

Because remember what happened at Philippi? He was placed in prison after they were beaten.

Paul says he was shamefully entreated. Well, by law, he was.

If you go back and read Acts chapter 16, you'll find Paul tells them, he says, hey, you guys have beaten a Roman citizen without cause. You know, in other words, due process, what had not taken place, Paul says, we were shamefully entreated, but it didn't hinder what God had sent us to do.

He says we didn't let what somebody else did to us impact what we ought to do. We didn't let the circumstances of life hinder what God had for us to do.

[ 19 : 22 ] You know, oftentimes we get caught up in the circumstance. And Paul says, if you want to see the sincerity of ministry, we didn't get caught up in the situation and circumstance.

Even though it had substance, he says that's not the point. He says even though we weren't treated correctly, we were Roman citizens wrongfully beaten and imprisoned by the magistrates.

You can read Acts chapter 16 there at the end of the chapter later and find out. But he says it didn't keep us from doing. Notice what it says here.

He says, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God, which but with much contention. In other words, Paul says, the problems we had there in Philippi did not hinder us from coming and doing what we were supposed to do here, even though people were still contentious

and against us.

You know, when you preach the gospel, when God's words put forth, it causes people to have to make a choice. When people have to make a choice, it's a point of contention. Contention happens. [ 20 : 31 ] Contention is there in their lives. Their motive, we're going to see here, was very clear because they accused him of many things. Notice what he says here in verse 3.

For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor of guile. You know, I want you to see here, he's talking about the motive in which they came. Their motive behind it because motive is something that other people can't always know, but they can judge by what takes place.

Not only by what's said and done, but how that's responded to afterwards. Because the response sometimes tells you about somebody's motive. How somebody responds to it.

And the motive we see here was not to gain favor or ease for themselves, you know, Paul never said, hey, I want to preach the gospel in comfort.

Never once did he say, I want to do what's easy because it's best for me. You know, the reality is this, ministry puts you outside of your comfort zone.

[ 21 : 39 ] You know, oftentimes, even as believers today, we let our comfort zone hinder what God wants for us to do. I don't feel comfortable with that.

You know, let me give you a little clue. Paul and Silas probably weren't comfortable in jail and stocks after they'd been beaten. They weren't comfortable when the crowd gathered to contention against them.

It was a tense point. But you know what? Motive, a pure motive, a sincere motive allows you to stand against false accusation. Paul said, I'm not going to let what they're saying hinder what ought to be.

Paul said they needed, they were entrusted to bring this forth. We see here, as we're going to begin looking here at what Paul tells them about the gospel.

But he says that what they delivered to them that was not fraudulent. It wasn't deceitful. You know, there's people who preach the gospel today or part of the gospel, I should say, probably the best way of expressing it, because they take the parts of scripture that benefit them.

[ 22 : 48 ] You know, prosperity. You send me money and God's going to bless. You know what they're doing? They're taking a partly true statement and making it to benefit themselves. You know, this week as I was studying this, I came across a comparison I thought was rather interesting.

You know, it's interesting that just coming up here in October, you had in the 1500s, you had a man by the name of Martin Luther who nailed 95 thesis statements on a door at Wittenberg.

The irony is this. One of the things he complained about was this, that they were selling their way out of hell. They had priests coming around selling indulgences saying, you pay us and we'll shorten your time in hell.

That's pretty valid complaint against them. Their motive was not pure. Pad my pocket and we'll see how it works out for you. Flipside that, what he compared it to is the prosperity gospel preachers of today.

You send me money and God's going to bless you. One said, send me money and I'm going to get you out of hell. The other one, send me money and I'll make sure God gives you lots of things. The funny part is neither one of them could fulfill what they said.

[ 24 : 01 ] But that's what they're accusing Paul of. He says, you're just running a fraud. You're being deceitful. And Paul says, look at yourselves. Look at what took place. Was it fraudulent? Was what the gospel did in your life, did it not have merit?

Is your life not changed? Does it not match up with the truth of God? Notice he talks about this unpure motives, this uncleanness. Or guile there to trick them into following them.

You know, think about this. Paul says, I'm doing all this so I can build a big following. That's what they accused Paul of. You know, today, oftentimes people will serve the Lord saying, I want a large following.

And we're going to see here because a little later he talks about flattering words. You know what? A lot of people build audience by flattery. And flattery is unmerited telling something to gain favor.

And we'll look at that here in just a little bit. But I want you to see here the dynamic. Because look at verse 4. He says this, Paul says, I want to let you know it was not deceit or uncleanness or guile.

[ 25 : 17 ] It wasn't something fraudulent. He says, I'm there because I was put in trust with the gospel. Now this idea of trust, when we put something in trust, you're naming somebody else responsible for the care of it.

Paul says, God presented the gospel and I'm here with the truth of God that's impacted my life to share with you.

He said, it's not for my benefit that I share this, but for yours. The sincerity, he says, I'm doing my responsibility before God.

I've been put in trust with the gospel. It talks about stewardship. You know, the Bible mentions quite a bit. Jesus makes quite a few things in dynamic about stewardship.

About being a good steward. A steward is one who has possession of something that doesn't belong to them, but they're responsible for it. And we see how Paul used that. He says, I've been, reason I'm there is not for my benefit, not trying to trick you, so that you might know what God would have for you.

[ 26 : 32 ] But God which trieth our hearts. In other words, let's see how this measures with the truth of God. It was given to them by God and they were to be faithfully presenting it to do those things.

Look over to 2 Corinthians chapter 4. 2 Corinthians chapter 4, we see here in verse 1. Notice what he tells the church at Corinth about his ministry. He says, Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, we have received mercy, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness or handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

What's Paul doing? He's encouraging them to remember how the message was presented to them. You know, one of the things about motive is you can say, what does the person presenting this have to gain?

What's in it for them? You know, when somebody's trying to present something to you, do you ever ask that question? What's in it for them?

You know, when you measure that, if there's nothing in it for them, it tells you something about their motive. Especially if there's no personal gain. Most of the time in life, the things we do involve personal gain.

[ 27 : 54 ] You know, when somebody's trying to sell you something, even if it's beneficial to you, they're selling it to you because there's still personal gain behind it. We don't sell the gospel.

To tell somebody else about the gospel does nothing for you, but it does everything for them. It allows them to understand who they are, who God is, and what God has done.

It doesn't benefit you. The gospel has benefited you if you're saved. And we see that Paul's reminding them of this and he tells them that he wants them to measure it.

But notice here in the end of verse four, he says, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. He says, guys, remember this. He says, that how was the message presented?

Was it beneficial for him or the others with him? Or was it to please God? You know, God understands your motive. Paul says, let God judge my motive.

[ 28 : 58 ] He tries the heart. He says, later he has a good conscience towards God. You know, Psalm 44 and verse 21 tells us this. It says, shall not God search this out?

For he knoweth what the secrets of the heart. Paul says, I'm not scared to let God judge what I did. He said, I came with a pure, sincere motive.

Jeremiah 17 says, as I, the Lord searched the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doing. You know, I want you to see here, the message was not diluted, so it might be more easy or more palatable.

Notice what he says, not as pleasing, men. Now look at verse five. It says, for neither at any time used we flattering words.

Now notice this once again, as ye what? No. What's Paul telling him? He says, think about how I presented it. Was it just building you up?

[ 30 : 03 ] Were I building you up? Measure that. Know what you know. Notice the next part. It says, nor for a cloak of covetousness. God is witness. You know, I want you to see here today that Paul says, my ministry was sincere because I told you the truth.

You know, the problem is with truth. Oftentimes people don't like truth. Truth has a way of making us uncomfortable because truth exposes who we are. When we understand what Paul is telling them here, he's pointing out very clearly.

He says, guys, I didn't change my message to make it more palatable to you. He didn't dilute it so it'd just be, things would go a little easier. You know, oftentimes we find, as you study trends in history, when it comes to preaching and the presentation of the word of God, you know, it's interesting how certain topics become off limits.

If I preach about this, it's going to cause a disruption, therefore I won't preach about it. You know, the reality is there's a lot of places and people who will change what the word of God says to be more palatable to people.

You know, sometimes the word of God is not palatable to us as a person because it impacts what we think, how we feel. Because think about today, we talk a lot about people's feelings and today oftentimes that's the measurement, God's truth against how I feel about it.

[ 31 : 28 ] But you know, the reality is this, if it's true, it doesn't matter how I feel about it. If it's true, it doesn't matter if it makes me uncomfortable. If it's true, it doesn't matter that I don't like it.

Truth stands on its own. It doesn't care how you feel about it. The question is, how are you going to adjust how you feel with what you know to be true? You know, there's people who refuse the gospel because I don't like a God that's going to condemn people.

It's like, no, you condemned yourself. The problem is, is we've been told things to feel the way we want to feel about it instead of saying, God, how do you feel about it?

How do you think about it? How do I need to line up with truth? You know, I was just on the phone this week speaking with another friend of mine. He had an interesting statement because we were just talking about ministry and things going on and he says, yeah, he says, I have a friend that I've been talking to and he says, he's changed his view on hell.

Pastors of the church of almost 2,000 people because hell is sometimes an unpalatable thought for people. But you know what? Hell is real. It's a real place where real souls are going to go.

[ 32 : 43 ] It's not palatable. I don't know of any palatable way to tell somebody that hell is real because it's uncomfortable but it doesn't change it from being true. But people will change the truth to gather.

That's what Paul's talking about here in this. Paul says that the message was motivated by his accountability to the Lord and the scripture. It was not modified or changed to accommodate any prejudice or passions of the people.

They were not built up by flattering words. He didn't tickle their ears with things they liked or things that pleased them. You know, flattery is this. It's unearned praise to win influence or approval of the listener.

Let me repeat that. Flattery is unearned praise to win influence or approval of the listener. In other words, you tell somebody something so you can get a gain from it.

Flattery builds somebody up for a wrong motive. Paul says he told them the truth. He didn't hold back from them. Notice when he tells them to think back.

[ 33 : 50 ] You know, look back up in chapter 1 for a moment. Look here in verse 5. Notice what he says. He says, For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and with much assurance as you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

Notice what Paul's saying. He says, We were among you for your sake, not for his or Silas or Timothy's sake. They weren't there to say, Hey, let's move through here.

We can fleece some people. We can pat our pockets and move on. You know, when we realize that everyone who teaches or presents the word of God needs to ask themselves whether they're doing it with any deceit or uncleanness or guile, we need to be honest with ourselves and check our motives because everybody's ministry before the Lord needs the right motive but also, secondly here, we need the right aim because the ministry has some things to get people in trouble.

The next section we see here, he talks about three things to get people in trouble and the same problem today. See if these three things are a problem today. People want position or prominence. How about power? How about possessions? You know, those things are just as true today as they were in the days of the Apostle Paul. 1 John chapter 2 tells us this in verse 15. It says, Love not the world neither the things that are in the world.

[ 35 : 14 ] If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world.

I want you to see here, if you're going to love God, you're not going to love those things. But you know what? Those things are going to be in conflict. Paul reminds him that they had witnessed personally that he was there.

He says, Measure it up. Were these things something that we were doing? Do you see the fruit of those accusations come to bear? Or do you see the fruit of what happened with the gospel in your life bearing out?

He reminds them of the reality of the word of God that was presented. Notice here in verse 6, it says, Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you nor yet of others when we might be burdensome as the apostles of Christ.

He had a sincere aim. He says, It wasn't for our benefit but for yours. There was not a cloak of covetousness. Now I want you to see here today, coveting is something bigger than most of the time we think.

[ 36 : 21 ] Coveting covers a lot more territory because sometimes we think of covetousness and limit it to the idea of greed. But ultimately, covetousness is desiring that which is not lawful for you to have.

Turn back to Exodus chapter 20 for a moment. Exodus chapter 20, what's coveting? Notice what he says here. He says, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.

You know what? It's not lawful for you to take your neighbor's house. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife. You know what? It's not lawful for you to desire somebody else's wife. Nor his manservant or maid's service, nor his ox, nor his ass, or anything that is thy neighbor's.

Coveting is this. It's desiring something that's not lawful for you to have. That covers a lot of territory. Notice Luke chapter 12 and verse 15. Jesus said this. He says, Take heed and beware of covetousness.

For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. Think about that for a moment. Wanting things that is not lawful for you to have and we think it builds favor or benefit for us.

[ 37 : 32 ] Paul says, That's not why we came. Paul understood that covetousness always has a cloak. You know what? People that are coming after something don't usually come out and just say, That's what I'm taking. They usually have, it's wrapped in something to make it look like something different.

It's a deception to try to take things. It's always concealed by a noble sounding goal or objective. The objective of coming to them was that they might know the gospel.

It was not for glory. It was not to be praised and honored. Notice that he includes them. He says, You and others. You know, when it comes to having sincere ministry, you know, one of the things I found that gets people in trouble is who they seek approval from.

I'll give you a little insight. Preachers have a problem with this because oftentimes preachers will be concerned about what their buddy thinks about what's going on instead of what God thinks going on. Sometimes ministries happen for the appraisal and approval of others.

You know what Paul's saying here? Paul says, I was sent out of the church at Antioch, but I didn't do it so I could get glory from them when I go back home. You know, because sometimes the glory might not be worth at the present point, but it's to get glory from somebody else.

[ 38 : 48 ] You know, you think about when Paul went back and gave a report, Paul wasn't given that report to say, look at me. You know, when you read through the book of Acts and you see Paul's reports, you know what they were? I want to tell you what God did.

He says, I want you to see what God did in spite of me. You know, Paul never builds up. He never said to be a great orator. You know, he didn't build up his ability to speak or to influence people. Paul says, my goal was to speak the truth and God to get the glory. For God to do, the motive and the aim had to be there to serve the Lord.

It was about God, not about themselves. You know, he didn't spend his life seeking acceptance of others. You know, that's a problem today because oftentimes people do things to be accepted of other people.

the places we live, the clothes we put on, the things we possess, the priorities we put. We do it to say, what do other people think about that? Instead of considering what does God think about it?

[ 39 : 52 ] You know, the problem is because we have a problem with acceptance. We want the acceptance of people and as a believer, you miss the most important thing that you're accepted by God.

Look over to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 for a moment. 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 9 tells us this. Paul tells the church at Corinth, he says, wherefore we labor that whether present or absent, we may be what?

Accepted of him. At the moment of salvation, when you call upon the Lord, God says you are accepted. You have a permanent place.

You have a father that loves you. You have one that seeks your benefit. Look at Ephesians chapter 1. Ephesians 1 verse 6 says this, to the praise and glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

You know, the problem that we often have is understanding who do we want to accept us because sometimes we're more worried about how people accept us than to understand God has accepted you, the creator of the universe.

[ 41 : 04 ] the maker and keeper of all things has accepted you and knows you by name. What a reality. When you understand what God has done, you know what this boiled down to?

This means he didn't spend his life trying to seek and earn the acceptance of men. He ministered from the understanding of his identity in Jesus Christ, that he was accepted in the beloved.

It was not about demands of recognition, but for their benefit. They had come there with sincerity that they might know the Savior just as they did.

The motive and aim of serving the Lord is the grace of God should be clearly seen in the lives of those that receive it. You know, when we understand the importance of serving the Lord, think about Joshua at the end of his life.

Joshua chapter 24, verse 14, and he says this, Now therefore, fear the Lord and serve him in what? Sincerity and in truth.

[ 42 : 11 ] You know what Joshua's saying? Understand that the one that you want to accept you is Jesus. You're accepted in the beloved at the moment of salvation.

You belong to him. You become part of his family. Says you're a child of God. You're adopted.

You're placed in. The Bible speaks about being grafted in.

I mean, it has all this imagery of a permanent attachment that you're accepted in the beloved. You know, this morning, this applies to all of us. We could ask this morning, what's your motive and what's your aim?

You know, even think this morning, why'd you come to church? Why'd you come to the service?

What was your motive? Preacher, that's a hard question. Yeah, it is. Because it could be answered just responsibility.

But you know, we ought to come because we're accepted in the beloved. Because God loves you and you love him. And our aim ought to be to please him.

[ 43 : 09 ] You know, we need to measure those things all the time. Did you come today because you want to know the Lord to draw close to him? You know, there's good questions to be asked.

You know, the reality is maybe you're here and you're confused even about the gospel.

Maybe you came today because you want to know more. You know, the reality of what Christ has done for you is real. Has substance.

And when somebody gets saved, it's not for our benefit. It's for theirs. The gospel is presented for the benefit of others.

What about you today? As heads are bowed and eyes are closed, as we take a few moments, what about you today? Is there sincerity in your life when it comes to the Lord? Are you sincere seeking the right things?

Maybe you're here today and you don't understand what the truth of the gospel is. I encourage you to come with somebody to show you from God's word how you can know the sincere reality of what God has done for you.

[ 44 : 11 ] But you know, as you spend a few moments here, what about you and your motive with the Lord? Heavenly Fathers, we just come before you today. Lord, we just thank you and praise you. Lord, as we look at very important reality as Paul was being charged with wrongful things, he reminds them of what it looks like to have a sincere ministry, a sincere purpose before you.