

# 1 Thessalonians 2:3-4 Commentary

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1 Thessalonians 2:3 For our [exhortation](#) does not come from [error or impurity](#) or by [way](#) of [deceit](#); ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [e gar paraklesis hemon ouk ek planes oude](#) ex [akatharsias oude en dolo](#).

**Amplified:** For our appeal [in preaching] does not [originate] from delusion or error or impure purpose or motive, nor in fraud or deceit. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**ESV:** For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive,

**GWT:** When we encouraged you, we didn't use unethical schemes, corrupt practices, or deception.

**ICB:** Our message was a message to encourage you. We were not trying to lie. We had no evil plan. We were not trying to trick you.

**KJV:** For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

**NLT:** So you can see that we were not preaching with any deceit or impure purposes or trickery. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Our message to you is true, our motives are pure, our conduct is absolutely above board. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**TEV:** Our appeal to you is not based on error or impure motives, nor do we try to trick anyone.

**TLB:** So you can see that we were not preaching with any false motives or evil purposes in mind; we were perfectly straightforward and sincere.

**Weymouth:** For our preaching was not grounded on a delusion, nor prompted by mingled motives, nor was there fraud in it.

**Wuest:** For our exhortation did not have its source in error nor even in immorality, nor even in deceit, ([Eerdmans](#))

**Young's Literal:** for our exhortation is not out of deceit, nor out of uncleanness, nor in guile,

## FOR OUR EXHORTATION DOES NOT COME FROM ERROR: e gar paraklesis hemon ouk ek planes

- 1Thes 2:5,6,11; 4:1,2; Numbers 16:15; 1Samuel 12:3; Acts 20:33,34; 2Corinthians 2:17; 4:2,5; 7:2; 2Corinthians 11:13; 12:16, 17, 18; 2Peter 1:16

### ERRORLESS EXHORTATION

**For** (gar) is a conjunction which introduces an explanation and here indicates the basis for their **boldness**.

**Hiebert** adds that "With his explanatory "for" Paul indicates what enabled and obligated the missionaries to preach with boldness in spite of suffering and opposition. He categorically denies three false motives imputed to them (1Thes 2:3) and asserts that their preaching was that of men who had been tested by God and divinely entrusted with the gospel (1Thes 2:4). Had they acted under the false motives attributed to them they would have been unable to preach as they did under the circumstances. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

One thought widely held by many conservative commentators is that in this verse Paul explains that he, Silas and Timothy are innocent of the malicious charges made against them by the jealous Jews.

**Our exhortation** ([paraklesis](#)) **does** (absolutely) **not come from error** ([plane](#)) - Paul defends the truth of what he has taught them. He absolutely has not "gone astray" from the truth in his teaching to the saints at Thessalonica.

**L W Grant** notes that in this verse Paul presents 3 negatives -- "Idolatry was guilty of all three evils mentioned here, and the Thessalonians would certainly discern a difference in the message of these men. Idolatry itself was religious deception; and many today, as then, are most practiced in the ability to deceive, being so deceived themselves that they are blinded to the deception of their own ways. Uncleanness too accompanied idolatry, with a profession of being sanctified because it was for a religious purpose. Nor is it any less evident in the religious systems of men today. In fact many things that even natural conscience condemns are calmly justified by many who glory in their particular religion. Guile too is characteristic of the methods used by idolaters to secure followers. They may give very nice, proper things to begin with, and when one is persuaded to accept what appears to be a drink of cold water, then the poison is slipped in. Every false religion uses such methods. Nothing of this, however, was true of Paul, Silas, and Timothy. ([1 Thessalonians 2](#))

**F F Bruce** notes that there were "So many wandering charlatans (γόητες) made their way about the Greek world, peddling their religious or philosophical nostrums, and living at the expense of their devotees (like Lucian's false prophet Alexander), that it was necessary for Paul and his friends to emphasize the purity of their motives and actions by contrast with these. The same kind of contrast is made by Dio Chrysostom in Oration 32 (mentioned in comment on v 2 above). "The normal heathen 'missionaries' ... were itinerant apostles and miracle-workers of the most varied persuasions, heralds of heathen gods, and dispensers of salvation, adroit and eloquent, ardent and evoking ardor, but also smart and conceited in extolling the mighty acts of their gods and fooling the masses ... There can be no doubt that they constituted dangerous rivals of the gospel and that general popular opinion expected the Christian missionaries to be able to vie with them" (Bornkamm, Paul, 64). ([Bruce, F F: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated. 1982](#))

In his second letter to the Thessalonians Paul makes allusion to a deceptive message writing...

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter **as if from us**, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. (2Thess 2:1-4+)

**Not** ([3756](#)) (**ouk**) is an adverb strongly negating an alleged fact.

**MacDonald** nicely summarizes this verse commenting that "The apostle's exhortation to believe the gospel was true in its source, pure in its motive, and dependable in its method. As to its source, it did not spring from false doctrine but from the truth of God. As to its motive, the apostle looked on the Thessalonians unselfishly, with their good in view, and not with any ulterior, impure desire. As to its method, there was no clever plot to deceive them. Apparently his jealous enemies were accusing him of heresy, lustful desire, and

craftiness. (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Ryrie** - Paul attacks what must have been charges brought against him: **oferror** (i.e., that the gospel he preached was based on error); of **impurity** (that Christianity encouraged sexual immorality); and of **deceit** (that his methods were underhanded). (Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible](#))

**Exhortation** (3874) (**paraklesis** from **pará** = side of, beside + **kaléo** = call) literally means a calling to one's side for admonition, encouragement, exhortation, consolation or comfort.

**Paraklesis** - 29x in 28v - Luke 2:25; 6:24; Acts 4:36; 9:31; 13:15; 15:31; Rom 12:8; 15:4, 5; 1Cor 14:3; 2 Cor 1:3, 4, 5, 6, 7; 7:4, 7, 13; 8:4, 17; Phil 2:1; 1Th 2:3; 2Th 2:16; 1Ti 4:13; Philemon 1:7; Heb 6:18; 12:5; 13:22.

**NAS** = appeal(1), comfort(13), consolation(1), encouragement(6), exhortation(7), urging(1).

**Gloag** has an interesting note on **paraklesis** in the present context writing that "This word has a twofold signification, denoting both "**exhortation**" and "**consolation**;" when it refers to the moral conduct it denotes exhortation, but when it is an address to a sufferer it denotes consolation. In the gospel these two meanings are blended together. ([The Pulpit Commentary](#))

**Barnes** explains **exhortation** refers to their "exhortation to embrace the gospel. The word seems to be used here so as to include preaching in general. The sense is, that the means which they used to induce them to become Christians were not such as to delude them. ([1 Thessalonians 2 Commentary](#))

**Green** adds that "The gospel is not simply an announcement of the good news but also a call to respond to the divine initiative contained in it. ([Pillar NT Commentary](#))

**Alexander** remarks "As addressed to the careless, slothful, tempted, fallen, it is exhortation; as addressed to the sad and seeking it is solace and comfort.

**MacArthur** says that in the present context it "means an urgent cry, appeal, or call, with an emphasis on judgment. Such usage stressed for Paul's readers the urgency and directness of his preaching. ([MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press](#))

What **exhortation** did Paul present when he came to **Thessalonica**?

Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths **reasoned** with them from the Scriptures (Old Testament teachings about Messiah), **explaining** ("opening them") and **giving evidence** that the Christ (the Messiah) had to **suffer and rise again** from the **dead**, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ (the Messiah)." (**Note:** that here Paul proclaimed the essential Gospel points - Messiah died, implied that he was buried, was resurrected - 1Co 15:1-8-see notes on 1Co 15:1; 15:1; 15:2; 15:3; 15:4; 15:5; 15:6; 15:8) 4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a great multitude of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. 5 But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and coming upon the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. (Acts 17:1-5)

**Paraklesis** in this context refers to persuasive discourse, stirring address—instructive, admonitory, consolatory; powerful hortatory discourse.

**Paraklesis** implies an appeal having for its object the direct benefit of those addressed, which may be either hortatory or conciliatory depending on circumstances. The word was used to encourage soldiers before going into battle and it was said that encouragement was necessary for hired soldiers; but for those who fight for life and country no exhortation is required

The word **appeal** has been adopted for many translations (TCNT, Weymouth, Moffatt, Goodspeed, RSV, NEB, NIV).

**TDNT** on **paraklesis** and **parakaleo**... writes that these two words have a wide range of meaning...

1. the first sense being that of **calling to** either literally or with such nuances as calling for aid, inviting, and summoning.
2. A second sense is that of **beseeking**, e.g., calling on the gods in prayer, or, from a superior to an inferior, proposing.
3. A third sense is that of **exhorting** or **encouraging**, and even on occasion of "winning over" for a plan.
4. The final sense is that of **comforting**, mostly in the form of giving exhortation or encouragement in times of sorrow. This is not a common use. (Borrow [Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament : abridged in](#)

[one volume](#))

**Not come from error** - In the first century world Paul lived in, there were many competing religions (not too different from our modern times!), and many ministers of those religions were motivated by greed and gain (certainly not different from today!). Accordingly, certain questionable practices common among unsound religious leaders found no place in his evangelistic labours. And so Paul begins by emphasizing that their exhortation was without any evil intent.

**Paul** is saying that their exhortation...

was pure in its content and in its intent. It was pure in the sense that there was no deceit or, literally, no error. There was no uncleanness or impurity of motive either. Sometimes truth is mixed with error. In fact, the most dangerous kind of preaching is that which is partly true. But Paul said, "my message was not just partly true. It is without error. It has no deceit in it. It is the pure truth. It is not adulterated by human philosophy and human speculation." It was, then, God's message to them concerning Christ (cp 1Th 2:13). (Walvoord, J. 1 Thessalonians)

**Neil** notes that "There has probably never been such a variety of religious cults and philosophic systems as in Paul's day ... 'Holy men' of all creeds and countries, popular philosophers, magicians, astrologers, crack-pots, and cranks; the sincere and the spurious, the righteous and the rogue, swindlers and saints, jostled and clamored for the attention of the believing and the skeptical.

**Error** (4106) (**plane**) is an interesting word which describes a going astray, a straying about, a roaming or wandering, a forsaking of the right path. By straying about one is led away from the right way and thus roams here and there, which is not good in spiritual matters. And it is in this latter metaphorical sense that Paul uses plane, as if to say our exhortation is not given to cause mental straying in the arena of morals and spirituality.

**Plane** -10x in 10v - Matt 27:64; Rom 1:27; Eph 4:14; 1 Thess 2:3; 2 Thess 2:11; Jas 5:20; 2 Pet 2:18; 3:17; 1 John 4:6; Jude 1:11 **NAS** = deceit(8), stealth(2).

**Plane** is used figuratively in the NT of mental straying from the truth and thus refers to error, wrong opinion relate to morals or religion, a delusion or a deception. **Plane** thus describes a straying from orthodoxy or piety. The opposite of plane (error) is **aletheia** (truth).

I agree with **Richison** that...

A plethora of people peddle their own viewpoints in the church today. Paul did not come with his own viewpoint; he came with the Word of God. We must set forth truth as it is rather than the way we want it to be. We should not manipulate Scripture for the sake of elegance in preaching. We simply set forth truth as it is. Our preaching should be as accurate as the multiplication table. We must never alter or water down the Word or the gospel. Inaccurately stating of God's Word will ruin its message. ([Ref](#))

In the NT **plane** is used only as a figurative extension of the primary meaning of roaming or wandering, whether **indoctrinate**, 2Pe 3:17 (note); 1John 4:6, or in **morals**, Ro 1:27 (note); 2Pe 2:18 (note); Jude 1:11, though in Scripture **doctrine** and **morals** are never really divided for one always **behaves** as one **believes** (or at least this should be the case)!

Herodotus (1, 30) writes of Solon, who roamed **plane** the earth in search of new information -- to reiterate plane thus means a wandering from the path of truth.

In the present context, Paul was confident that their gospel message was genuine and stood in marked contrast to the erroneous teaching of their adversaries. Paul, Silas and Timothy had themselves not been carried away by any wiles of error, nor had they sought to mislead others by such winds of doctrine (Ep 4:14-note). Furthermore, they had not been deceived and were not deceivers (2Ti 3:13-note, where related verb **planao** is used).

**TDNT** writes that the basic idea behind this word group (noun = plane, verb = planaō) "is that of going astray. Wandering is usually denoted, but the group may also be used for the pulsing of the blood through the body and the journeys of merchants. We find wanderers in tragedy, e.g., Iō and Oedipus. In the case of Iō the lack of a goal has an inner effect in a combination of geographical and spiritual wandering. (Borrow [Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament : abridged in one volume](#))

**Vine** writes **plane** is a "wandering, whereby those who are led astray roam hither and thither, is always used in the N.T., of mental straying, wrong opinion, error in morals or religion... Errors in doctrine are not infrequently the effect of relaxed morality, and vice versa.

**Vine** goes on to add that "The missionaries were confident theirs was a genuine gospel, standing out in contrast to the fatal delusion, for instance of which the apostle had already forewarned them, 2 Thessalonians 2:5. They had not themselves been

carried away by any wiles of error, neither had they sought to mislead others by such wiles, Ephesians 4:14 (note); they had not been deceived, neither were they deceivers, see 2 Timothy 3:13 (note), where the corresponding verb, planao, is used ([Collected writings of W. E. Vine](#))

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**For** (1063)(gar) is a subordinating conjunction expressing cause or explanation and thus introduces an explanation. GAR is "a causative particle standing always after one or more words in a clause and expressing the reason for what has been before, affirmed or implied. For, in the sense of because, and so forth." (Borrow [The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament - Page 357](#) and [Page 358](#) - see the preceding pages for Zodiates' lengthy description of **gar**)

**THOUGHT** - In simple terms **for** is a [term of explanation](#) and its occurrence should always prompt one to pause and ponder the text and context, always asking at least one **5W/H** question "*What is the text explaining?*" which will force you to examine the preceding passages, which in turn will hone or refine your skill of **observation** and help you establish the **context**, which will lead to a more accurate **Interpretation**, which is essential for valid **Application** of the text.

While not every "for" in the Bible is a [term of explanation](#), most are and since there are over 7500 uses of for (NAS), you will have ample opportunity to observe and interrogate the text. Two clues that the for is a term of explanation - (1) It is at the beginning of the sentence or clause or (2) you can substitute the word "because" and it makes good sense. As you practice this discipline of pausing to ponder, you are establishing the **context** (which leads to more accurate [interpretation](#) and thus more apropos [application](#)) and you are in effect engaging in the blessed activity of [Biblical Meditation](#) (See Ps 1:2+, Ps 1:3+ and Joshua 1:8+ for the blessed benefits of [meditation](#) = I like to call it a "mini-meditation").

#### OR IMPURITY: oude ex akatharsias:

Literally but **not** (3761) (**oude**) which is an absolute negation. This adverb proceeds impurity and deceit.

**Impurity** - is literally "**absolutely never out of impurity**". Although the Greek word **akatharsia** often refers to sexual misconduct as discussed below and this could be the primary meaning, the context refers primarily to their message and motives -- their preaching is not from **impure motives** such as ambition, pride, greed, popularity. Their message was not that which characterized the traveling charlatans of Paul's day.

**F F Bruce** explains that "So many **wandering charlatans** made their way about the Greek world, peddling their religious or philosophical nostrums, and living at the expense of their devotees (like Lucian's false prophet Alexander), that it was necessary for Paul and his friends to emphasize the **purity** of their motives and actions by contrast with these. ([1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated. 1982](#)) (Bolding added)

**Impurity** (167) (**akatharsia** from **a** = without + **kathairo** = cleanse) is literally worthless material, waste; of graves decayed flesh, causing ceremonial uncleanness. It is a broad term referring to moral uncleanness in thought, word, and deed and thus describes a state of moral impurity and especially sexual sin or immorality ("the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living"). It is not surprising that **akatharsia** was used to describe filth or refuse. **Akatharsia** medically referred to an infected, oozing wound and the general term often used of decaying matter, like the contents of a grave. It defines a state of moral impurity, esp sexual sin, impurity, immorality, filthiness, state of moral impurity, especially in relationship to sexual sin (note Romans 1:24). It is a filthiness of heart and mind that defiles (mars, sullies, spoils) the person. The unclean person sees dirt in everything. The word **akatharsia** suggests especially that it defiles its participants, making them unusable for sacred purpose. While **akatharsia** includes sexual sin, it comes from a wider Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew OT) usage where "unclean" could refer to anything that made a person unfit to go to the temple and appear before God. In a medical sense Hippocrates used this word to describe an infected, oozing wound with pus and crusty impurities that gather around the sore or wound.

What is "**impure**" is filthy and repulsive, especially to God, whether it is lewd actions or as in this verse preaching from impure motives.

**MacArthur** feels that **impurity** refers not just to their **motives** but actual **practice** writing that "In Paul's day many of the mystery religions and Greek cults practiced and even exalted sexual perversion. Those religions were very popular because in most of them the primary religious experience centered on the cult adherents having sex with a ritual temple prostitute or the cult leader. Temple orgies were not uncommon. Sexual intercourse had such a central role in those pagan religions because the members believed that when one had sex with a male leader or female prostitute—those supposedly closest to the gods—the individual connected with the deities. Therefore, through fornication they supposedly achieved some sort of mystical or metaphysical union with the gods. Thus

wicked, unscrupulous leaders would seek converts for the purpose of having a sexual encounter with them. ([1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press](#))

**Vine** commenting on the use here in 1Thessalonians makes note of "the description of the false teachers in 2 Peter 2:18(note), where sensuality and error are again associated. See also Jude 4, and Revelation 2:20 (note). Both in Corinth and in Thessalonica gross vice was consecrated to the service of religion, cp. Romans 1:22-32. ([Vine's Expository Commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#))

**Barnes** comments that **not... impurity** means "Not such as to lead to an impure life. It was such as to lead to holiness and purity. The apostle appeals to what they knew to be the tendency of his doctrine as an evidence that it was true. Most of the teaching of the heathen philosophers led to a life of licentiousness and corruption. The tendency of the gospel was just the reverse. ([1 Thessalonians 2 Commentary](#))

#### OR BY WAY OF DECEIT: *oude en dolo*:

**By way of deceit** - This is more literally **never in deceit** or guile ("nor in guile" Young's Literal). Again Paul modifies this phrase with the Greek particle **oude** which signifies absolute negation. Paul is not saying he was perfect but he does say that the word he spoke was perfect and unmixed with hidden snares. Paul is keenly sensitive against charges against the correctness of his message and the purity of his life. His message was not given so as to bait or trap his listeners, which is the meaning of **dolos** (discussed below).

Paul means that his his message was without guile, in other words...

Paul did not come to trick them and to use methods that were questionable. He did not try to get a superficial decision for Christ, but he laid down plainly before them the truth of the gospel and the issues of heaven and hell that were concerned. The result was that when they trusted in Christ it was a clear-cut decision which resulted in a real testimony that stood the test in the days that followed. It depended upon the purity of the message in both its content and intent. (Walvoord, J. 1 Thessalonians)

**Wiersbe** explains that "The word translated "**guile**" (deceit) carries the idea of "baiting a hook." In other words, Paul did not trap people into being saved, the way a clever salesman traps people into buying his product. Spiritual witnessing and "Christian salesmanship" are different. Salvation does not lie at the end of a clever argument or a subtle presentation. Often we hear, "I don't care what your method is, just so long as your message is right." But some methods are unworthy of the Gospel. They are cheap, whereas the Gospel is a costly message that required the death of God's only Son. They are worldly and man centered, whereas the Gospel is a divine message centered in God's glory. (Borrow [Be ready](#))

**Deceit** ([1388](#)) (**dolos** derived from **dello** meaning to bait) literally refers to a fishhook, trap, or trick all of which are various forms of deception. We use guile when we fish by using bait that appears like food to the fish. It is not food but a decoy. **Dolos** is a deliberate attempt to mislead, trick, snare or "bait" (baiting the trap in attempt to "catch" the unwary victim) other people by telling lies. It is a desire to gain advantage or preserve position by deceiving others. A modern term in advertising is called "bait and switch" where the unwary consumer is lured in by what looks like an price too good to be true!

**Richison** writes that "Secular literature used "deceit" for a huckster. They used this word for a tavern keeper of the ancient world who would water down the wine of an inebriated person. There are those who also water down the Word. They use guile and tricks with the message of Christ. These are spiritual hucksters. Authenticity in content and delivery are the essence of the gospel.

**Dolos** describes deceit, treachery, fraud, deceitful cunning, duplicity, trick, wile, guile, subtility, snare, deliberate dishonesty. It represents a deliberate attempt to mislead other people by telling lies. It is a desire to gain advantage or preserve position by deceiving others. As noted the idea is to set bait so as to catch them. To bait or deceive in order to achieve one's end. When a person wants something, he looks at the other person's weakness or ignorance, and he tries to appeal to it. He appeals to it by deceiving and beguiling the person.

**Vine** - the preceding words deny a wrong source (**error**) and a wrong motive (**impurity**); **deceit** denies a wrong method. The meaning of the word is best seen in its first New Testament occurrence, Matthew 26:4 ("and they plotted together to seize Jesus by **stealth** {dolos} and kill Him"), or from the use of the corresponding verb in 2Corinthians 4:2, "**nothandling** the word of God **deceitfully** {dolo}," or craftily, that is, with some personal end in view. Such a charge was afterwards made against Paul at Corinth, 2Corinthians 12:16, "being crafty I caught you with guile" words quoted, apparently, from the language of his detractors. ([Collected writings of W. E. Vine.](#))

**Barnes** writes that the **exhortation** was **not** "in guile. Not by the arts of deceit. There was no craftiness or trick, such as could not bear a severe scrutiny. No point was carried by art, cunning, or stratagem. Everything was done on the most honourable and fair

principles. It is much when a man can say that he has never endeavored to accomplish anything by mere trick, craft, or cunning. Sagacity and shrewdness are always allowable in ministers as well as others; trick and cunning never. Yet stratagem often takes the place of sagacity, and trick is often miscalled shrewdness. Guile, craft, cunning, imply deception, and can never be reconciled with that entire honesty which a minister of the gospel, and all other Christians, ought to possess. ([1 Thessalonians 2 Commentary](#))

**Larry Richards** explains that **dolos** "picks up the metaphor from hunting and fishing. **Deceit** is an attempt to trap or to trick and thus involves treachery... Deception sometimes comes from within, as our desires impel us to deceive. But more often in the NT, deceit is error urged by external evil powers or by those locked into the world's way of thinking. (Borrow [Expository Dictionary of Bible Words](#))

**Barclay** amplifies the meaning of **dolos** noting that "We best get the meaning of this from the corresponding verb (doloun). **Doloun** has two characteristic usages. It is used of debasing precious metals and of adulterating wines. **Dolos** is deceit; it describes the quality of the man who has a tortuous and a twisted mind, who cannot act in a straightforward way, who stoops to devious and underhand methods to get his own way, who never does anything except with some kind of ulterior motive. It describes the crafty cunning of the plotting intriguer who is found in every community and every society." In another writing Barclay explains that **dolos** can be translated "guile" and that "It comes from a word which means **bait**; it is used for trickery and deceit. It is used for instance of a **mousetrap**. When the Greeks were besieging Troy and could not gain entry, they sent the Trojans the present of a great wooden horse, as if it was a token of good will. The Trojans opened their gates and took it in. But the horse was filled with Greeks who in the night broke out and dealt death and devastation to Troy. That exactly is **dolos**. It is crafty, cunning, deceitful, clever treachery. **Dolos** is the trickery of the man who is out to deceive others to attain his own ends, the vice of the man whose motives are never pure. ([1 Thessalonians 2 Commentary](#))

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**Careless Preachers** -Some opponents of Christianity may not be so much against Christ as they are against the hypocrisy of His followers. Ironically, it hasn't occurred to them that no one was more opposed to hypocrisy than Jesus Himself.

We've all met scoffers who thoughtlessly parrot the phrase, "The church is full of hypocrites!" But let's not be thoughtless in our response and dismiss such pronouncements without taking heed lest they be true.

We tend to think that it's not true of us. But let's think again. Have we ever been like the Christian who glanced through her window, only to see a nosy, noisy neighbor approaching her door? Her young, impressionable children heard her as she growled, "Oh, no—not her again!" Whereupon she opened the door and gushed insincerely, "How very nice to see you!"

Our lips and our lives often preach a mixed message. In Matthew 23:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, Jesus described the hypocritical teachers of the law and warned His disciples, "Do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do" (Mt 23:3).

God forbid that some opponent of Christ would be influenced by careless hypocrisy in our lives.

Lord, help us to be "careful preachers." —Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

You can fool the hapless public,  
You can be a subtle fraud,  
You can hide your little meanness,  
But you can't fool God. —Kleiser

**A hypocrite will often pray on his knees on Sunday  
and prey on his neighbors on Monday.**

1 Thessalonians 2:4 but **just** as we have been **approved** by **God** to be **entrusted** with the **gospel**, **so** we **speak**, not as **pleasing men**, but **God** who **examines** our **hearts**. (**NASB: Lockman**)

**Greek:** [alla kathos dedokimasmetha](#) (1PRPI) [hupo tou theou pisteuthenai](#) (APN) [to euaggelion outos laloumen](#), (1PPAI) [ouch os anthropois areskontes](#) (PAPMPN) [alla theo to dokimazonti](#) (PAPMSD) [tas kardias hemon](#).

**Amplified:** But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the glad tidings (the Gospel), so we speak not to please men but to please God, Who tests our hearts [expecting them to be approved]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**ESV:** 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.

**GWT:** Rather, we are always spreading the Good News. God trusts us to do this because we passed his test. We don't try to please people but God, who tests our motives.

**ICB:** But we speak the Good News because God tested us and trusted us to do it. When we speak, we are not trying to please men. But we are trying to please God, who tests our hearts.

**KJV:** But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

**NLT:** For we speak as messengers who have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to please God, not people. He is the one who examines the motives of our hearts. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** We speak under the solemn sense of being trusted by God with the Gospel. We do not aim to please men, but to please God who knows us through and through. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**TEV:** Instead, we always speak as God wants us to, because he has judged us worthy to be entrusted with the Good News. We do not try to please people, but to please God, who tests our motives.

**TLB:** For we speak as messengers from God, trusted by him to tell the truth; we change his message not one bit to suit the taste of those who hear it; for we serve God alone, who examines our hearts' deepest thoughts.

**Weymouth:** But as God tested and approved us before entrusting us with His Good News, so in what we say we are seeking not to please men but to please God, who tests and approves our motives.

**Wuest:** but even as we have been approved by God as worthy of being entrusted with the good news, that approval being based upon the fact that we had met His requirements, thus are we speaking, not as pleasing men but as pleasing God who puts His approval upon our hearts after we have met the test to which He has subjected us. ([Eerdmans](#))

**Young's Literal:** but as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the good news, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who is proving our hearts,

**BUT JUST AS WE HAVE BEEN APPROVED BY GOD TO BE ENTRUSTED WITH THE GOSPEL: alla kathos dedokimasmetha (1PRPI) hupo tou theou pisteuthenai (APN) to euaggelion:**

- 1Corinthians 7:25; Ephesians 3:8; 1Timothy 1:11, 12, 13
- Luke 12:42; 16:11; 1Corinthians 4:1,2; 9:17; Galatians 2:7; 1Timothy 1:11,12; 6:20; 2Ti 1:14; 2Ti 2:2; Titus 1:3

**But (235) (alla)** introduces a strong contrast truth regarding their activity as missionaries.

**GWT** has a helpful rendering - Rather, we are always spreading the Good News. God trusts us to do this because we passed His test. We don't try to please people but God, Who tests our motives.

**We have been approved by God** - The character of these men was like a coin that had been "put to the test" for genuineness or full weight, and which passed the test.

As **MacArthur** summarizes "With this point, the discussion moved from the apostle's commitment to the truth to his commission from God, from which he derived that commitment to truth. ([MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press](#))

**Approved (1381)** (**dokimazo** from **dokimos** = tested, proved or approved, tried as metals by fire and thus purified from **dechomai** = to accept, receive) means to assay, to test, to prove, to put to the test, to make a trial of, to verify, to discern to approve. **Dokimazo** involves not only testing but determining the genuineness or value of an event or object. That which has been tested is demonstrated to be genuine and trustworthy. **Dokimazo** is never used of Satan, as he never tests that he may approve but only to cause the one tested to fail.

In this verse **dokimazo** is in the **perfect tense** which signifies that Paul and Silas and Timothy were tested and found valid by God and that His approval had lasting effect. God had validated and continued to approve Paul's ministry. God demands that those whom He commissions for His service first prove themselves before being assigned to a responsible sphere of activity. The **perfect tense** also implies that there was a time of testing prior to their being entrusted with the gospel.



**Dokimazo** was used to describe the passing of a candidate as fit for election to public office. Just as Greek candidates for office were tested for their fitness before they were allowed to assume public office, so the missionaries were tested before they were commissioned as God's messengers.

**F F Bruce** writes that "Only if they conducted themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel which they proclaimed could they reasonably expect their converts to live in a manner worthy of the gospel which they received ([Bruce, F F: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated. 1982](#))

**Ryrie** - Paul was already a veteran of local church ministry (Acts 11:25-26), of an evangelistic, missionary trip (Acts 13-14), a potentially explosive church wide debate (Acts 15), and now part of a second missionary trip. In all this he was approved by God. (Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible](#))

**Green** adds that "Despite the fact that he was chosen by God to be an apostle even before his birth (Gal. 1.1, 15), there was a period during which he was tested and after which God set his seal upon him as one approved for the ministry. Cultural norms of the day required that a person be tested and approved before being commissioned for some office. Not only the inscriptions but also a number of texts indicate that those who served as public officials should first be approved for the post. Xenophon, for example, says that Socrates asked about the membership of the Areopagus in Athens (cf. Acts 17.19, 22, 34), "But what of the Court of the Areopagus, Pericles? Are not its members persons who **have won approval**?" Josephus notes that, under Moses, the tribal chiefs were those "**approved** by the whole multitude as upright and just persons." Having been approved by God, the apostles were entrusted with the gospel by God himself. In a number of ancient writings, the naming of officials to their post or giving a person a position of responsibility was described using the same verb "entrust." Josephus, for example, wrote about Beryllus, "who was Nero's tutor and who had been appointed {pisteuo} secretary of Greek correspondence." ([Pillar NT Commentary](#))

**Entrusted** (4100) (pisteuo from pistis = faith) in this context refers to having confidence in a person, giving credence to them. This is explanatory serving to define more nearly that to which the approval was directed - **entrusted with the Gospel**.

Paul was not self appointed and so was not ministering on his own authority but God's. When Paul met Jesus on the Damascus Road, the Lord **entrusted** him with the gospel declaring to Ananias...

Go, for he (Paul) is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake. (Acts 9:15-16+)

In Acts 26:16-18+ as Paul gave his "personal testimony" in his defense before King Agrippa, he elaborates on the his Damascus Road encounter with Christ quoting His Lord's command to...

arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint (literally to hand forth and figuratively here meaning to appoint, choose, destine, often with the idea of doing so in advance) you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you 17 delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, 18 to open their eyes so that they may turn (purposeful, personal not private decision to as He leads us to repentance {Repentance is a gracious gift! See Ro 2:4+, cp note 2Ti 2:25+, Acts 3:26, 5:31, 11:18} turn to God not only in mind but in conduct) from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

Paul reiterated the truth of that concept a number of times in his other epistles...

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. (1 Cor. 15:10+)

To me, the very least of all saints, **this grace was given**, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ. (see note Ephesians 3:8)

According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because **He considered me faithful, putting me into service**. (1Ti 1:11-12+)

But at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was **entrusted** according to the commandment of God our Savior. (see note Titus 1:3)

Thus Paul looked upon himself as a steward of God's message, under His call, His command and His authority.

Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and **stewards** of the mysteries of God (as revealed in the Gospel). In this case, moreover, it is required of **stewards** that one be found **trustworthy**. (1Cor 4:1-2)

**MacDonald** writes that "It was clear to him that he couldn't please both God and man, so he chose to please God, who tests our hearts and then rewards accordingly. A **steward** is obligated to please the one who pays him. Preachers may sometimes be tempted to hold back the full truth for fear of repercussion from those who contribute to their support. But God is the Master, and He knows when the message is watered down or suppressed. (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#)) (Bolding obligated)

**Paul** conveyed this same important truth to his young disciple **Timothy** explaining that the **Gospel** is a sound standard and special trust and for him to...

**Retain** (present imperative) the standard (outline, sketch, or model used by an artist; rough draft forming the basis of a fuller exposition of a writing) of sound (hygiaino means "healthy and wholesome" and gives us our English "hygienic"!) words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. (see **note 2 Timothy 1:13**)

**Guard** (aorist imperative) through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure (the Gospel) which has been **entrusted** to you. (see **note 2 Timothy 1:14**)

**Gospel** ([2098](#))(**euaggelion** from **eú** = good + **aggéllō** = proclaim, tell) originally referred to a reward for good news and later became the good news itself. The word **euaggelion** was in just as common use in the first century as our words good news today. "Have you any good news for me today?" would have been a common question. In this secular use euaggelion described **good news** of any kind and prior to the writing of the New Testament, had no definite religious connotation in the ancient world until it was taken over by the "Cult of Caesar" which was the state religion and in which the emperor was worshipped as a god (see more discussion of this use below). The writers of the New Testament adapted the term as God's message of salvation for lost sinners.

A similar sentiment of God's trusting the Gospel to Paul other **vessels of honor** is expressed in several NT passages...

Ephesians 3:8+ To me, the very least of all saints, **this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles** the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things

**1Ti 1:11** according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted. (pisteuo) 12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because **He considered me faithful** (pistos = trustworthy, dependable, reliable), putting me into service; 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; 14 and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.

**1 Cor 9:17** For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, **I have a stewardship entrusted to me.**

**Gal 2:7** But on the contrary, **seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel** to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised

**1 Tim 6:20** O Timothy, **guard what has been entrusted to you**, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge"--

2 Timothy 1:14 (note) Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, **the treasure which has been entrusted** to you.

2 Timothy 2:2 (note) And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these **entrust** to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

Titus 1:3 (note) but at the proper time manifested, even His word, **in the proclamation** with which I was **entrusted** according to the commandment of God our Savior

**SO WE SPEAK, NOT AS PLEASING MEN: houtos laloumen, (1PPAI) ouch os anthropois areskontes (PAPMPN):**

- 1Corinthians 2:4,5; 2Corinthians 4:2; 5:11,16; Galatians 1:10; Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 3:22

Regarding the introductory pronoun so (houtos) Hiebert comments that **so** indicates that they preached under the consciousness that they were men who had been tested and commissioned. It was a simple yet confident claim that they were loyal to their assignment. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

**Speaking to please God not men** was always Paul's aim as the following passages emphasize...

It is because we know this solemn fear of the Lord that we work so hard to persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too. (NLT, 2Cor 5:11)

As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the favor of men (by toning down his message) or of God (by speaking the truth without compromise)? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. (Gal 1:9-10)

The Gospel has been entrusted to every believer, not just the preacher and teacher and Scripture provides **strong motivation** for all believers to speak so as to please God and not men...

And he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.' (Luke 16:2)

So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. (Ro 14:12<sup>note</sup>)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences. (2Cor 5:10-11)

Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, **as those who will give an account.** Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. (He 13:17<sup>note</sup>)

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment. (James 3:1)

**L W Grant** observes in Paul in this verse addresses

that which is positive. It is a refreshing spirit of lowly thankfulness seen in the expression "we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel." Having such realization, that the gospel was a sacred trust committed to them by the grace of the eternal God, how could they do otherwise than speak it as directly responsible to God? God's gospel was not for the mere pleasure of men. It is a message of pure truth that the apostle was diligent to speak in the manner that pleased his Master, who tried their hearts. Men could not always decide as to another's motives, but God knew them perfectly. How vitally important then that the soul should be fully opened as before God, to be diligent to honestly please Him. ([1Thessalonians 2](#))

**Speak** ([2980](#)) (**laleo**) is the Greek verb meaning to make a sound and then to utter words. **Laleo** was used originally just of sounds like the chatter of birds, prattling of children, but was also used of the most serious kind of speech. It takes note of the sound and the manner of speaking.

In this use the **present tense** indicates that it was their habit to share the good news with others.

**Not** ([3756](#)) (**ou**) is an adverb which absolutely negates what follows. They thoroughly and completely rejected any thought of composing their message in such a way as to be man pleasing or to gain a favorable reaction from the people to whom they preached. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians...

my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. ([1 Corinthians 2:4,5](#))

**Bruce** commenting on **not as pleasing men** writes that the idea is...

not as seeking to please human beings. Cf. Gal 1:10; Col 3:22. Paul's versatility, his readiness to become all things to all men for the gospel's sake (1Cor 9:22), could easily have been misrepresented as the policy of a fence-sitter, who adapted his message to suit his varying audiences. Indeed, he himself could go so far as to say that he pleased everyone in everything, but in the sense of seeking their advantage in preference to his own (1Cor 10:33). Basically, he insists that it is God, not human beings, Whom he aims to please. Cf. Col 1:10 (note),

Every clause and phrase here expresses the sense of responsibility which Paul constantly felt with regard to his apostolic commission; cf. Ro 1:14 (note); 1Co 4:1, 2, 3, 4; 9:16, 17; 15:9, 10; 2Cor 2:17; 4:1-15; Gal 1:15, 16, 17; 2:7, 8, 9, 10; Eph 3:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13; Col 1:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5. He was frequently charged with altering his message to please his constituency, with being all things to all men in an unworthy sense; here is his answer. ([1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word.](#)

[Incorporated. 1982\)](#)

Paul is not saying that in **pleasing God** he was advocating being displeasing to people for he wrote of the opposite goal in Romans...

Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just **please** ourselves. Let each of us **please** his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not **please** Himself; but as it is written, " THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED THEE FELL UPON ME. (Ro 15:1, 2, 3-notes)

**Spurgeon** - A minister said to me, "If I were to preach in your bold style, I would lose some of my richest people and offend the rest." And if he did, would he not have an easy conscience, and is not that worth more than money? The minister who cares for any man's opinion when he is doing his duty is unworthy of his office. (Ed note: Amen!)

**Pleasing** (700) (**aresko**) means to be satisfying or behaving properly toward one with whom one is related. **Aresko** is found in ancient inscriptions praising those who have served their fellow citizens and thus conveys the sense of service and obedience.

The **present tense** indicates that pleasing God was the continual desire of the missionaries.

**TDNT** writes that **aresko** "originally meant to set up a positive relation, hence to make peace, then aesthetically to please, with such nuances as a. to be well disposed, b. to take a pleasant attitude, and c. to please. (Borrow [Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament : abridged in one volume](#))

**Aresko** is used two other times in 1Thessalonians, the first use explaining how not to be pleasing and the second use how to be pleasing to God...

1 Thessalonians 2:15+ who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are **not pleasing** to God, but hostile to all men

1 Thessalonians 4:1+ Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and **please** God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more.

**Keathley** comments that "Whenever our primary aim is to please men, we lose our capacity to please God. Conversely, only when we seek to please God and speak according to His Word in love, do we truly have the capacity to minister effectively to others. Pleasing people stems from wrong motives such as fear of rejection, desire for approval, power, praise, and so on. Also, pleasing people occurs when we are seeking to meet our needs by our own strategies of protection or defense. ([1Thessalonians 2:1-12 Compelling Example](#) )

## **CHECKLIST FOR MOTIVES FOR MINISTRY**

**Paul Apple** sees the truths in 2Th 2:3 4 as providing an excellent checklist of motives for ministry (the following is adapted from his recommended online notes - see [1Thessalonians](#)).

**(1) Motivated by Ministry Integrity - Transparency - 3 Negatives - NOT FROM...**

1. **ERROR** – The source of Paul's message was not the product of deception or illusion. Contrast the innumerable cults and sects that have arisen under the leadership of men (sometimes women) who were seemingly very sincerely motivated. Part of their problem is like that of the Jews who had zeal but not in accordance with knowledge (Ro 10:2-note). And so the first boundary for Ministry Integrity must be the Truth – the church is called to be the pillar and foundation of the truth.

2. **IMPURITY** – The ministry and minister must not be associated with sexual impurity which was even an expected component of many of the debauched pagan religions of Paul's day. We have all heard sad stories where women became emotionally dependent upon the male ministry leader (who hold to a form of godliness but lack the power thereof 2Ti 3:5-note) in such a way that the end result was inappropriate conduct (2Ti 3:6, 7, 8, 9-note). Unfortunately, it is all too easy for unscrupulous, lascivious spiritual leaders to take advantage of the emotions of those who are in stressful situations (cp 2Pe 2:2, 3-note, 2Pe 2:12, 13-note, 2Pe 2:14-note)

3. **DECEIT** – A ministry of integrity does not use crafty methods, as if they are out to catch fish by luring them with attractive bait all with the intent to deliberately mislead (2Pe 2:17-note, 2Pe 2:18-note, 2Pe 2:19-note). The transparent ministry does not try to manipulate people to accomplish their personal agenda. Satan is a

master of deceit and so are his emissaries (2Co 11:12, 13, 14, 15). Furthermore his agents of deceit are in the process of themselves becoming more and more deceived by their own lies and treachery! (2Ti 3:13-note) Beloved if you suffer the experience that you have been tricked in one area, then you should not ignore it but should question whether you are being told the whole truth in other areas.

## (2) Motivated by Divine Commissioning (approved by God)

Paul understood that it was God Who had taken the initiative to equip them for the proclamation the gospel (cp 2Ti 1:1-note= not Paul's will but God's will >>> Acts 9:15 = at time of Paul's conversion Jesus commissioned him!). We need to understand that today it is the Holy Spirit Who makes someone a leader (cp Acts 13:2, 16:6, 7, 1Co 12:11) and the objective of a local church is to recognize what the Holy Spirit has already accomplished (that that minister has been in fact tested and approved by God).

Apple adds this important caveat - "this commissioning is not just some one time event that you can point back to and say "Don't question me or what I do...I was ordained by God and called to this ministry"...No...there is an ongoing process of accountability to God that is equally important."

## (3) Motivated by Divine Accountability - "not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts"

Notice that Paul is not saying just doing what is pleasing to God (which is certainly the foremost objective in all ministry), but doing it from a heart motivation that truly desires to please Him. The ever present danger in ministry is the temptation to be "men-pleasers" instead of God pleasers! If we fall into the former "trap", we begin to experience some of its rotten fruits such as allowing ourselves to be wrongly influenced by others, showing favoritism, and compromising in various areas (especially in the purity of your message or your methods - cp 2Ti 4:3, 4-note), cp Pr 29:25, 28:21, Jas 2:1) **Dear pastor, are you allowing God to examine your hearts and your motives?**

The late, godly pastor **Ray Stedman** had some words of wisdom on this section in his sermon entitled ["Whatever Became of Integrity?"](#)...

First, he (Paul) says, he did not preach out of "error or uncleanness." In other words, he did not come peddling some particular private revelation. Today, we are confronted with a parade of gurus, prophets, seers, avatars and others, peddling their peculiar forms of doctrine. The Hare Krishnas confront you in airports; the Moonies, under the leadership of Sun Myung Moon, who claims to be the Messiah, boldly peddle their doctrine across the country and around the world. On the surface they appear to be bold and courageous. They seem to be driven by conviction -- and perhaps they are in some degree -- but it is wrong conviction. But Paul did not come to Thessalonica peddling any private doctrine. It was the truth of God, confirmed by the prophets and by Jesus Christ himself.

Nor did he come inviting people to sexual license, encouraging them to indulge themselves, to throw over all moral bonds and do whatever they liked. That is how some attract a big following today. Think of Jim Jones and what he did in San Francisco. The Bhagwan commune in Oregon indulged in sexual orgies and people flocked there, attracted by that kind of degenerate teaching. But this was never part of the apostle's doctrine.

Also guile, flattery, and greed played no part in his preaching (1Th 2:5-note). I appreciate his words along that line, when so many teachers on television today are appealing to our ego, to the macho instinct in us. Many of you have seen a certain fellow on television who wears a crazy hat, smokes a cigar, orders people around and demands that they send him money. He appears to be bold and uncompromising, but he manifests every indication of sheer ego and disguises it by an attempt to be a teacher of the Word. What he is teaching has a degree of truth to it, but it is mixed with a great deal of error. I can name people right around here who have succumbed to that kind of an appeal.

Others offer a promise of prosperity. If you follow them, they say, you will become rich. This was not Paul's doctrine, either. "We did not come with a cloak for greed," he says. What a true description that is of much that we hear on television today! ...

three marks of a faithful shepherd, courage, a loving, gentle heart, and a faithful spirit (see the full message [Whatever Became of Integrity?](#))

Hiebert adds this insight...

In refuting the enemy accusations Paul uses the method of simply letting the record speak for itself. The facts were still fresh in the memory of the readers. In thus repeatedly asking them to recall what they witnessed he is letting them judge if the evidence fits in with the charges being made against them. It was a masterly defense. It proved that the facts needed for their vindication were a matter of common knowledge. Nothing had been concealed from them. The readers needed no new and hitherto unknown information to bolster their new faith. When evaluated in the light of the known truth the malicious charges being made against them could

not survive. Such a defense is the best proof of the purity of a preacher's life. That Paul himself advocates this test is a strong witness to the integrity of his character and work. The missionaries had left their converts the memory of true Christian character and unselfish Christian service. To the consciousness of that fact they appealed as a safeguard to the readers. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

Steven Cole...

Paul mentions three areas where we need to focus on pleasing God: **Pure doctrine; pure living; and, pure motives.**

#### **A. We please God through pure doctrine.**

"Our exhortation does not come from error" (1Th 2:3). God's Word is the only standard for absolute truth (John 17:17). Paul's challenge to Timothy applies not only to those of us who preach and teach God's Word publicly, but to every Christian man: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (2Ti 2:15-note). There have always been those who have twisted the truth, but the end times especially will be marked by widespread apostasy (2Th 2:3; Mk 13:21, 22). We need to be men of truth.

As I've mentioned before, David Wells in his book, No Place for Truth [Eerdmans], and its sequel, God in the Wasteland [Eerdmans], shows how the American church has on a wide scale abandoned biblical truth and embraced whatever works and whatever makes us feel good. We're being encouraged to magnify "love" and de-emphasize doctrine because it only divides. So when popular Christian authors come out with stuff that is heretical and anyone dares to challenge them on it, the critic is called unloving. The false teacher is a poor, misunderstood victim of heresy hunting. If we're men-pleasers, we'll be tempted to bend the truth to please people. Frankly, there are some hard teachings in God's Word, and it's always tempting to water them down so as not to offend anyone. That's even true in presenting the gospel. The doctrine of eternal punishment in hell isn't exactly popular or heartwarming (no pun intended!). But it's God's truth and we can't waffle on truth and be men of integrity. We please God through pure doctrine.

#### **B. We please God through pure living.**

"Our exhortation does not come from ... impurity" (1Th 2:3). Nor did Paul use the gospel as "a pretext for greed" (1Th 2:5-note). In Paul's day, as in ours, there were men who used religion as a cloak for seducing emotionally needy women (2Ti 3:6-note) and/or for making an easy buck and living in luxury. Paul was especially careful not to fall into either sin. He was morally pure; he was on guard against greed; and he worked hard to provide for his needs (1Th 2:9). In seminary, Dr. Walvoord preached a chapel message just before graduation warning us about the dangers of **sex**, **silver**, and **sloth** in the ministry. He was certainly on target, since those three sins have brought down many men. About 31% of men in our culture watch at least one X-rated video or movie per year (Leadership [Fall, 1992], p. 133). Shockingly, 20% of pastors admit to viewing pornography in some form at least once a month (Leadership [Winter, 1988], p. 24)! Only 64% of evangelical seminary students think that watching pornographic movies is morally wrong (Christianity Today [1/15/88], p. 25)! If a man doesn't think it is displeasing to God, then there's not much of a reason to root it out of his life!

Sexual purity begins in the mind, as Jesus taught (Mt 5:27, 28, 29-note; Mk 7:21, 22, 23). If you judge lustful thoughts, it won't go any further. If you yield there, you'll be susceptible to the temptation of pornography. If you yield there, it's a short step to outward sexual sin. To please God, we've got to get radical against sexually impure thoughts.

There's often a link in Scripture between **sexual immorality** and **greed** (Eph 5:3-note; Col. 3:5-note). A district in the Assemblies of God denomination did a study of their ministers who had been disciplined for sexual impurity and discovered that every one had failed earlier in financial dealings--living a lie about tithing, or not paying bills (Leadership [Spring, 1988], p. 15). Whether the common factor is a lack of self-discipline or a living

for selfish gain, we all face the temptation to exploit God's truth to take advantage of others, either through improper sexual relationships or through bad business practices.

I've known men who use the church for making business contacts. A man in my church in California who was in a business where you're supposed to recruit people to sell under you told me that he had a goal of meeting at least five new people at church each week. I told him that would be a great goal if his motive were to meet these people so he could minister to them. But his goal was to meet them so he could get them signed up to sell soap! But, he assured me, this was ministering to them, since it helped them become successful people! To be men of integrity, we must commit ourselves to pleasing God through pure living, being free from impurity and greed.

### **C. We please God through pure motives and goals.**

"For our exhortation does not come ... by way of deceit" (1Th 2:3). The word "deceit" should be familiar to every fisherman. It means "bait." A fisherman is practicing deceit on those poor fish, because he holds out in front of them what looks like a tasty meal, but there's a hook in it. The fish bites and instead of getting a meal, it becomes one.

Paul wasn't using the gospel to try to trick people so that he could use them for his own advantage or to build a name for himself as a successful preacher. He wasn't after glory from men, nor did he use his title as "apostle" for his own advantage (1Th 2:6-note). Nor did he use trickery or slick salesmanship to sell the gospel, promising people things that the gospel never promises. Sometimes, in an effort to get people to receive Christ, we tell them how Christ will solve all their problems, but we don't tell them the hardships and cost of following Christ. So they come to Christ under false pretenses.

When their problems don't go away, or grow even worse, they grow bitter and fall away. Paul's motives were to please God who had graciously entrusted him with the gospel (1Th 2:4). He lived consciously before God's sight (1Th 2:5-note, 1Th 2:10-note). His aim was to preach and live in such a way that others would come to know God and learn to walk in a manner worthy of God (1Th 2:12-note). When you live as Paul did, you realize that God knows every corrupt thought you have, and so you instantly judge such thoughts and take them captive to Christ (2Cor 10:4-note). God is witness to every conversation you have, and so you don't allow any rotten words to come out of your mouth, but only words that build up others (Ep 4:29-note). God sees all your deeds, and so even when you're out of public view, you seek to please Him with good deeds (Mt 6:3, 4-note). The starting place for integrity is genuinely believing the gospel of God; the focus for developing integrity is to please God in every way, through pure doctrine, pure living, and pure motives. ([Becoming Men of Integrity](#))

## **BUT GOD, WHO EXAMINES OUR HEARTS: *alla theo to dokimazonti (PAPMSD) tas kardias hemon:***

- Nu 27:16; 1Ki 8:39; 1Ch 29:17; Ps 7:9; 17:3; 44:21; 139:1,2; Pr 17:3; Jer 17:10; 32:19; John 2:24,25; 21:17; Ro 8:27; Hebrews 4:13; Revn 2:23

**God Who examines our hearts** - The writers are in invoking God as Witness to the integrity of their motives, which are viewed as having their source in the heart. Their motive was to please God not men. Their message was not popular in the eyes of men, but they dare not be unfaithful in the eyes of God. When we present a message to seek people's favor or praise, we lose God's approval, for He sees our hearts.

One of the most poignant passages regarding God's examination speaks of the future internal heart examination that every believer must face, Paul explaining...

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until **the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts;** and then each man's praise will come to him from God. (1Cor 4:5)

**Examines** - see discussion of meaning of dokimazo above. God is the one Who continually examined and approved them, and they were responsible to Him, not to the audience whom they addressed. And the same principle holds today for every preacher and teacher of God's holy Word, which should be spoken forth with a sense of reverence and awe that God would be willing to trust us with this precious, eternal, life changing truth that the world desperately needs to hear (2Ti 2:15-note)

**MacArthur** adds that "The apostle Paul was consumed with pleasing God because he knew that only God truly examines the hearts of those who serve Him. Here **hearts** refers to the inner self, the real person, where thought, feeling, will, and motive converge. God

scrutinizes all those factors and knows with certainty whether His servants are seeking to please Him or people. Paul's recognition of that omniscience was what motivated his service. ([MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press](#))

In context, Paul, Silas and Timothy's motives were continually scrutinized (this use of dokimazo is in the **present tense**) by the omniscient God. Would it be true that every pastor and teacher could and would write such a declaration! Paul is saying that God Himself is witness to their integrity since He is the only One Who can continually examine the inner workings of their hearts, especially their motives!

Writing to the Corinthians Paul alludes to the fact that God examines hearts writing...

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time (Judgment Seat of Christ), but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and **disclose the motives of men's hearts**; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. (1Cor 4:5) **Comment:** Note that all believers will receive some praise from God!

## **HAVE YOU HAD A GOOD (GOD) HEART CHECK UP LATELY?**

**Hearts (2588) (kardia)** does not refer to the physical organ but is always used figuratively in Scripture to refer to the seat and center of human life, the very depths of their inner life. The heart is the center of the personality, and it controls the intellect, emotions, and will.

And so in this verse Paul uses **heart** to refer to the inner self, the real person, where thought, feeling, will, and motive converge.

**Hiebert** adds that "The heart lies at the root of man's moral nature, determining moral conduct. In His testings God deals with His servants as moral, responsible beings. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

**Hughes** explains that "The **heart** is the wellspring of man's spiritual life, and that is where the Roman Christians' obedience was rooted. It was not just a formal obedience—it came from the center of their being. This is the example of slavery Paul holds up for us all: a heartfelt obedience to Christ and his Word. It is an obedience which brings liberation. ([Romans: Righteousness from heaven. Preaching the Word](#))

While **kardia** does represent the inner person, the seat of motives and attitudes, the center of personality, in Scripture it represents much more than emotion, feelings. It also includes the thinking process and particularly the will. For example, in Proverbs we are told, "As (a man) thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Jesus asked a group of scribes, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?" (Matthew 9:4). The heart is the control center of mind and will as well as emotion.

**Vine** writes that **kardia**..."came to denote man's entire mental and moral activities, and to stand figuratively for the hidden springs of the personal life, and so here signifies the seat of thought and feeling. ([Collected writings of W. E. Vine](#))

**MacArthur** commenting on **kardia** writes that "While we often relate **heart** to the emotions (e.g., "He has a broken heart"), the Bible relates it **primarily to the intellect** (e.g., "Out of the **heart** come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders," Matt 15:19). That's why you must "watch over your heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23-note). In a secondary way, however, **heart** relates to the will and emotions because they are influenced by the intellect. If you are committed to something, it will affect your will, which in turn will affect your emotions." (Drawing Near. Crossway Books)

**MacArthur** adds that "In most modern cultures, the **heart** is thought of as the seat of emotions and feelings. But most ancients—Hebrews, Greeks, and many others—considered the **heart** to be the center of knowledge, understanding, thinking, and wisdom. The New Testament also uses it in that way. The **heart** was considered to be the seat of the mind and will, and it could be taught what the brain could never know. Emotions and feelings were associated with the intestines, or bowels." ([MacArthur, J: Ephesians. 1986. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

God's examination of one's heart is a frequent theme in the OT...

**Psalms 17:3** Thou hast **tried** (Lxx = dokimazo) my heart; Thou hast visited me by night; Thou hast tested (Lxx = puroo - try by fire) me and dost find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.

**Psalms 26:2** **Examine** (Lxx = dokimazo, aorist imperative) me, O LORD, and **try** (Lxx = peirazo; aorist imperative) me; **Test** (Lxx = puroo = burn by fire as in testing and refining precious metals; aorist imperative) my mind and my heart. (**Comment:** All this is a very bold appeal, and made by a man like David, who feared the Lord exceedingly, it manifests a most solemn and complete conviction of innocence. The expressions here used should teach us the thoroughness of the divine judgment, and the necessity of being in all things



profoundly sincere, lest we be found wanting at the last. [Spurgeon's Complete Comment](#)) (How many saints dare pray such a prayer! How can we not pray such a pray if we would desire like Paul to have our motives for ministry be pure in God's eyes.)

**Psalm 139:1** For the choir director. A Psalm of David. O Lord, Thou hast **sought** (Lxx = dokimazo) me and known me... **23 Search** (Lxx = dokimazo, aorist imperative) me, O God, and know my heart; Try (aorist imperative) me and know my anxious thoughts (disquieting thoughts) (**Comment:** David frequently asked the Lord to examine him in the Psalms for he knew his heart was deceitful [Ps 51:5, Jer 17:9], prone to wander [Ps 119:10] and this might also have something to do with why David was called a man after God's own heart [Acts 13:22]) ([Commentary on 139:23:](#))

**Proverbs 17:3** The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD **tests** (Lxx = dokimazo) hearts.

**Proverbs 27:21** The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold, and a man is **tested** (Lxx = dokimazo) by the praise accorded him.

**Jeremiah 9:7** Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, I will refine (Hebrew = smelt, test; Lxx = puroo - literally to set on fire and here to test by fire) them and **assay** (Lxx = dokimazo) them; For what else can I do, because of the daughter of My people?

**Jeremiah 11:20** But, O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously, **Who tries** (dokimazo) the feelings (inmost thoughts) and the heart, Let me see Thy vengeance on them, For to Thee have I committed my cause.

**Jeremiah 12:3** But Thou knowest me, O LORD; Thou seest me; And Thou dost **examine** (dokimazo) **my heart's attitude** toward Thee. Drag them off like sheep for the slaughter And set them apart for a day of carnage!

**Jeremiah 17:10** "I, the LORD, search the heart, I **test** (Lxx = dokimazo) the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds.

**Jeremiah 20:12** Yet, O LORD of hosts, Thou who dost **test** (Lxx = dokimazo) the righteous, Who seest the mind and the heart; Let me see Thy vengeance on them; For to Thee I have set forth my cause.

**Zechariah 13:9** "And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine (Lxx = puroo - test by fire) them as silver is refined, and **test** (Lxx = dokimazo) them as gold is **tested** (Lxx = dokimazo). They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'" (**Comment:** This prophecy speaks of Israel's final refining by the "fire" of the "Great Tribulation", at which time that third of Israel who are declared righteous by faith will enter into the Millennial Kingdom)

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**Our Daily Bread - What Motivates Us?** - My wife and I received a notice that we had won a prize of either \$1,000 dollars in cash or \$250 in vouchers. When we arrived at the collection site, we were told that to be eligible, we would have to sit through a 90-minute presentation.

As we listened, we learned that we could receive vacation accommodations for 25 years at today's prices, which would amount to about \$15,000 in savings. But to enjoy this privilege, we had to pay a membership fee of \$5,200. We declined the offer but were given some discount vouchers, which we realized we'd probably never use.

Reflecting on that experience, my wife and I wondered why we had endured what had become a 3-hour presentation. What had motivated us? We wanted to be polite, but we also had to admit we were partly motivated by greed.

Wrong motives can even slip into our service for the Lord. Paul wrote to the believers at Thessalonica: "You remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you" (1Thessalonians 2:9). He had the right to receive financial help from them, but he didn't want to be accused of unworthy motives.

What motivates us? Let's learn from Paul's example, remembering that God tests our hearts.—Albert Lee ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

You know me, O Lord, for who I am,  
My motives are open to You;  
Oh, help me to live as Jesus did—  
With motives both noble and true. —Sper

**The world sees what we do-  
God sees why we do it.**