

# 1 Thessalonians 2:5-6 Commentary

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1Thessalonians 2:5 For we **never** \* **came** with **flattering speech**, as you know , **nor** with a **pretext** for **greed** --**God** is **witness** -  
- (**NASB: Lockman**)

**Greek:** [oute](#) gar pote en logo kolakeias egenethemen, (1PAPI) kathos oidate, (2PRAI) oute en prophasei pleonexias, theos martus

**Amplified:** For as you well know, we never resorted either to words of flattery or to any cloak to conceal greedy motives or pretexts for gain, [as] God is our witness. (Amplified Bible - Lockman)

**NLT:** Never once did we try to win you with flattery, as you very well know. And God is our witness that we were not just pretending to be your friends so you would give us money! (NLT - Tyndale House)

**Phillips:** No one could ever say, as again you know, that we used flattery to conceal greedy motives, and God himself is witness to our honesty. (Phillips: Touchstone)

**Wuest:** For neither were we found using flattering discourse, even as you know assuredly, nor a pretext to cover up the desire to have more than one already has, God is witness,

**Young's Literal:** for at no time did we come with speech of flattery, (as ye have known,) nor in a pretext for covetousness, (God is witness!)

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**FOR WE NEVER CAME WITH FLATTERING SPEECH, AS YOU KNOW, NOR WITH A PRETEXT FOR GREED: oute gar pote en logo kolakeias egenethemen, (1PAPI) kathos oidate, (2PRAI) oute en prophasei pleonexias:**

- Job 17:5; 32:21,22; Psalms 12:2,3; Proverbs 20:19; 26:28; 28:23; Isaiah 30:10; Matthew 22:16; 2Peter 2:18
- Isaiah 56:11; Jeremiah 6:13; 8:10; Micah 3:5; Malachi 1:10; Matthew 23:14; Acts 20:33; Romans 16:18; 2Corinthians 2:17; 4:2; 7:2; 12:17; 1Timothy 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 1Peter 5:2; 2Peter 2:3,14,15; Jude 1:11; Revelation 18:12,13
- 1 Thessalonians 2 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**For** (1063)(gar) is a conjunction basically introducing an explanation (see **term of explanation**) and here extends and develops Paul's point in 1Th 2:4+ about speaking not to please men but God. Whenever you encounter a "for" at the beginning of a passage, pause, ponder and interrogate this term of explanation and you will many times be rewarded with insights on the passage that you had heretofore not seen (see 1Jn 2:20, 27, 1Cor 2:10-16).

In the present context, Paul explains that (1) they avoided flattery, (2) they were not seeking to promote their own financial gain and (3) they were not looking for fame, honor or praise. In fact, so concerned was Paul to avoid any hint of financial self-interest that could compromise the gospel that he took an additional precaution. **Dear preacher, teacher, church leader, why do you do what you do in the church of Jesus Christ? The world sees what we do but God sees why we do it!**

The **NIV Application Commentary** observes that...

Behind this concern over means and motives is Paul's obvious concern for the integrity of the message. He deliberately avoided behavior or actions that might lead people to doubt or suspect the integrity of the message or the sincerity of his preaching. As an apostle he had a right to be supported in his ministry (1Cor 9:3-18). But for the sake of the integrity of the message and for the sake of the Thessalonians, he voluntarily gave up that right.

**Never** - Literally "never (oute) at some time (pote)".

**Never** (3777) (**oute** from **ou** = not in an absolute sense + **te** = even) means Neither, nor, not even, and not, also not. The missionaries never pandered to their feelings nor did they soften the demands of the gospel. They never stooped to flattery or insincerity in order to achieve results but remained honest and transparent, and free of hypocrisy.

**Some time** (4218) (**pote** from **poú** = as adv. of place, somewhere, nearly: about, a certain place + **te** = ever) at some time, ever. When, whenever. At some time, one time or another, once used both of time past and future.

At no time did the Paul and his team use manipulation to achieve God's purposes, as Paul explained in other passages...

For such men (those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned) are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and **flattering speech** they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. (see **note** Romans 16:18).

For we are not, as so many, **peddling the word of God** but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ (**2Cor 2:17**) (**Comment:** Even in Paul's day, there were many false teachers who were corrupting the sincere teaching of God's Word and who peddled the Word for profit.)

They never used **flattery**, of which Solomon writes...

a flattering mouth works ruin. (Pr 26:28b)

He who rebukes a man (cf 2Ti 4:2-note) will afterward find more favor than he who **flatters** with the tongue. (Pr 28:23)

**Flattering** (2850) (**kolakeia** from **kolax** = a fawner) refers to cajolery which is an attempt to persuade by use of insincere speech or exaggerated praise. **Kolakeia** was a well-known secular Greek term for a practice despised as much as "boldness" was valued, and which is occasionally connected with financial gain. Flattery was a well-known, much despised practice in Paul's day.

**Kolakeia** contains the idea of deception for selfish ends. It is flattery not merely for the sake of giving pleasure to others but for the sake of self interest. It is deception by "slick" eloquence (sounds like many politicians we know doesn't it?) with the idea of winning over the listener's heart in order to exploit not edify.

**Hiebert** writes that...

Flattery does not simply mean complimentary words intended to tickle the ears of the hearers pleasurably. It is rather the smooth-tongued discourse of the orator aimed at making a favorable impression that would gain influence over others for selfish advantage... Paul denies that he and his fellow workers had used the preaching of the gospel as a foil for securing selfish advantage. That such a charge could easily be given a ring of plausibility is clear from the known conduct of the heathen rhetoricians of the day. Nor was the early church exempt from this evil. Barclay reminds us that the early Christian churches were plagued with "people who did attempt to cash in on their Christianity" ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

**Lightfoot** writes that...

Kolakeia, a word which occurs here only in the New Testament, is defined both by Theophrastus ... and Aristotle ... to involve the idea of selfish motives. It is flattery not merely for the sake of giving pleasure to others but for the sake of self-interest"

**Moulton and Milligan** write that **kolakeia**...

carries with it the idea of the tortuous methods by which one man seeks to gain influence over another, generally for his own ends, and when we keep in view the selfish conduct of too many of the heathen rhetoricians of the day... we can easily understand how such a charge might come to be laid against the Apostles. (Moulton, J. H., & Milligan, G.. The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament. London: Hodder and Stoughton. 1930).

**ISBE** writes that...

The term "flattery" as used by the RSV is always associated with deception.

**Green** writes that...

The ancients recognized that flattery was evidence of the bad character of the person who used it to persuade or move others to action. It was a way to gain the favor of someone, equal to the way one could gain another's favor through giving gifts or entertaining the person one wished to influence. Plato advised that one should shun any kind of flatterer, while sometime later Plutarch stated that a flatterer corrupts the morals of the young and only pretends to be a friend. Dio Chrysostom warned that flattery was a characteristic of charlatans and sophists. Plutarch was so concerned about flatterers that he wrote a whole treatise about how to distinguish between them and true friends. As communicators of the truth of God and as those who sincerely cared for the well-being of their hearers, the apostles never flattered their audience in an attempt to gain something for themselves. The Thessalonians knew this well. ([Green, G. L. The letters to the Thessalonians. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.: Apollos](#))

**Richison** writes that...

Flattery operates under ulterior motives. Flattery misleads people by making them think you believe in them more than you do. This is the sin of smooth words. Putting people off-guard by smooth words is lying. ([1 Thes 2:5 1 Thes 2:5b](#))

The **flatterer** compliments you merely as a ploy to win your favor or to gain power over you. **Aflatterer** is a man that tells you your opinion and not his own. On the other hand, the smaller we become, the more room God has to work.

**Wiersbe** writes that...

a flatterer is a person who manipulates rather than communicates. A flatterer can use either truth or lies to achieve his unholy purpose, which is to control your decisions for his own profit. Some people even flatter themselves. "For he flatters himself in his own eyes" (Ps. 36:2). This was the sin of Haman, that evil man in the Book of Esther. He was so interested in flattering himself that he even plotted to slaughter all the Jews to achieve that goal. Some people try to flatter God. "Nevertheless they [Israel] did flatter Him [God] with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues" (Ps. 78:36). Flattery is another form of lying. It means saying one thing to God with our lips while our hearts are far from Him (Mark 7:6). Some Christians try to win friends and influence people by appealing to their egos. A true ministry of the Gospel deals honestly (but lovingly) with sin and judgment and leaves the unbeliever with nothing to boast of in himself. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

**Flatterers** look like friends just as wolves resemble dogs. Treachery lurks in honeyed words — Danish proverb

**Aristotle** distinguished between friends and flatterers writing

The man who always joins in the pleasures of his companions, if he sets out to be pleasant for no ulterior motive, is Obsequious (marked by or exhibiting a fawning or excessive attentiveness); if he does so for the sake of getting something by it in the shape of money or money's worth, he is a Flatterer.

**Eupolis** explains what a flatterer's might say...

And when I catch sight of a man who is rich and thick, I at once get my hooks into him. If this moneybags happens to say anything, I praise him vehemently and express my amazement, pretending to find delight in his words.

**Flattery** is like soft soap...90 percent lye.

Only two groups of people fall for **flattery**—men and women.

A man's body is remarkably sensitive. Pat him on the back and his head swells.

We do not hate **flattery**, any one of us – we all like it. —C. H. Spurgeon

**Flattery** corrupts both the receiver and the giver.—Edmund Burke

The **Psalms** speak of **flattery**...

There is nothing reliable in what they say. Their inward part is destruction itself. Their throat is an open grave; They **flatter** with their tongue. (Psalm 5:9)

They speak falsehood to one another; With **flattering** lips and with a double heart they speak. May the LORD cut off all **flattering** lips, The tongue that speaks great things (Psalm 12:2-3)

A man who flatters his neighbor Is spreading a net for his steps. (Proverbs 29:5)

Gossip is saying behind a person's back what you would never say to his or her face; **flattery** is saying to a person's face what you would never say behind his or her back. The Scriptures warn us repeatedly against **flatterers**, for they are destructive people who carry a legion of unwholesome motives.

**Flattery** - The aquatic creature called the blowfish has no particular value to the one who catches it—except that it may help to develop the angler's patience because it often seizes bait intended for better fish. The blowfish is unattractive; it has a large mouth and a wrinkled body that looks like worn-out leather. When you turn it over and tickle it, the flabby fish puffs up until it is swollen like a globe. People can be like that. A little **flattery**, a little tickling of their vanity and they swell up, giving the semblance of greatness. Pride inflates them, and they puff up like the blowfish. But there's nothing substantial about them; they are all air.

Francois Fenelon was the court preacher for King Louis XIV of France in the 17th century. One Sunday when the king and his attendants arrived at the chapel for the regular service, no one else was there but the preacher. King Louis demanded, "What does this mean?" Fenelon replied, "I had published that you would not come to church today, in order that your Majesty might see who serves God in truth and who **flatters** the king."

**C H Spurgeon** wrote...

Praise is a thing we all love. I met with a man the other day who said he was impervious to **flattery**; I was walking with him at the time, and turning round rather sharply, I said, "At any rate, sir, you seem to have a high gift in **flattering** yourself, for you are really doing so, in saying you are impervious to **flattery**." "You cannot **flatter** me," he said. I replied, "I can, if I like to try; and perhaps may do so before the day is out." I found I could not **flatter** him directly, so I began by saying what a fine child that was of his; and he drank it in as a precious draught; and when I praised this thing and that thing belonging to him, I could see that he was very easily **flattered**; not directly, but indirectly. We are all pervious to **flattery**; we like the soothing cordial, only it must not be labeled **flattery**; for we have a religious abhorrence of **flattery** if it be so called; call it by any other name, and we drink it in, even as the ox drinketh in water.

Men seldom **flatter** without a purpose; and they who listen to such music may expect to pay the piper. — Aesop

**Rogers** has this note on **kolakeia**...

Dio Chrysostom explains in a speech before the Emperor Trajan (of whom he says, '*you delight in truth and frankness [aletheia kai parrhesia] rather than flattery and guile,*' The Third Discourse, 2), "... *even those flatterers who openly follow the business acknowledge that to play the flatterer is of all things most distasteful*" (The Third Discourse, 16); then he adds, "*Furthermore, flattery seems neither reputable nor honorable even when practiced to gain distinction, or from some other worthy motive. Nay, of all vices, I may say, flattery will be found to be the meanest*" (aichisten) (The Third Discourse, 17). ([Rogers, C L - originally by Fritz Rienecker: New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament. Zondervan. 1998](#))

**McGee** writes that...

Flattery disarms us—we really never know what to say. When people criticize me, I know what to say, but I never know what to say when someone flatters me. It disarms a person...

Paul never used flattery. There is a group of wealthy laymen across this country who are literally owned by the

people who flatter them. If a Christian work or program doesn't butter them up, they are not the least bit interested in helping that program financially. God pity the church or the work that must depend on men who require flattery and compliments before they will give their support to the work. I think this is one of the curses in the Christian church today. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**F B Meyer** wrote about how tempting it is to flatter others...

When, by the grace of God, we have been delivered from grosser forms of sin, we are still liable to the subtle working of self, in our holiest and loveliest hours. It poisons our motive. It breathes decay on our fairest fruit-bearing. It whispers **seductive flatteries** into our pleased ears. It turns the spirit from its holy purpose, as the masses of iron on ocean steamers deflect the needle of the compass from the pole. So long as there is some thought of personal advantage, some idea of acquiring the praise and commendation of men, some aim at self-aggrandizement, it will be simply impossible to find out God's purpose concerning us. The door must be resolutely shut against all this, if we would hear the still small voice. All cross-lights must be excluded, if we would see the Urim and Thummim stone brighten with God's "Yes," or darken with His "No." Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the single eye, and to inspire in your heart one aim alone; that which animated our Lord, and enabled Him to cry, as He reviewed His life, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." Let this be the watchword of our lives, "Glory to God in the highest." Then our "whole body shall be full of light, having no part dark, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give light." (F. B. Meyer. Christian Living)

**As you know** (Paul repeatedly appeals to the reader's knowledge of the truthfulness of his words --1Th 1:5, 2:1, 2, 5, 11, 4:2-see notes 1Th 1:5; 2:1, 2:2, 2:5, 2:11; 4:2) - Paul permits the facts to speak for themselves. He appeals to the Thessalonians' memory (1Th 1:5-note), which should allow them to testify regarding the fact that the missionaries' did not flatter nor exhibit a cloak of greed.

**Know** (1492) (**eido**) refers to having come to a perception or realization of something. **Oida** generally means to know intuitively or instinctively. To be acquainted with. To have information about. **Know** occurs repeatedly throughout Thessalonians, emphasizing that the Thessalonians had knowledge beyond a shadow of doubt

**Pretext for greed** - They did not use a "false front" nor "put on a mask to cover up greed". The KJV rendering of **a cloak of covetousness** paints a vivid picture. Paul declares that they did not preach among the Thessalonians in order to shake out whatever financial gain they could from them, trying all the while to hide this motive. He emphasizes that he never misused his apostolic office in order to disguise, conceal or to hide avaricious designs. Instead, he reminded them that the missionaries had worked with their own hands while among the Thessalonians so as not to be a burden on any of them (1Th 2:9-note).

**McGee** writes that...

the **cloak of covetousness** (KJV) is a cloak of many colors. There are men who covet honor and fame and position. We need to search our hearts in order to uncover any covetousness there. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

The **Pulpit Commentary** writes that Paul is saying...

We did not use the gospel as a pretext to mask our real motive, which was covetousness, pretending to seek your spiritual good, whereas in reality we sought our own advantage. Paul could with perfect confidence appeal to his converts, and say,

I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20:33, 34).

He was free from all sinister motives. ([The Pulpit Commentary: New Testament; Old Testament; Ages Software](#))

In **Mark 12:40** (and **Lk 20:47**) below we see an example of the pretense made by the greedy Scribes who used their positions of authority to unjustly get money from widows.

**Pretext** (4392) (**prophasis** from **prophaino** = to cause to shine before, to appear before, be apparent <> **pró** = before, + **phaino** = to appear, to shine before. Vincent gives the origin as **pro** = before, in front of + **phemi** = to say, affirm) is that which is alleged as the cause, an allegation, plea. In other words it denotes something put forward for appearance to conceal what lies behind it.

In the NT it is used only in a bad sense and with the idea of an ulterior motive (Ulterior = going beyond what is openly said or shown

and especially what is proper), of a falsely alleged motive or of an ostensible reason (or excuse).

Our English word **pretext** is from the Latin, praetextum (**prae** = before + **texere** = weave) which described something woven in front of, with a view to concealment or deception or to screen or extend in front. **Pretext** is defined as a purpose or motive alleged or an appearance assumed in order to cloak the real intention or state of affairs. It suggests subterfuge and the offering of false reasons or motives in excuse or explanation (eg, using any pretext to get out of work).

It is an outward show or appearance, pretense or pretext to cover one's real intent or to hide the true state of things. Here it is an outward show or **pretext** used to conceal the reality "**of greed**".

**Prophasis** signifies the assuming of something so as to disguise one's real motives.

**Pretense** refers to that which is professed rather than that which is one's heart intention or purpose.

**Moulton and Milligan** write that **prophasis**...

is the "ostensible reason" for which a thing is done, and generally points to a false reason as opposed to the true (Moulton, J. H., & Milligan, G. The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament. London: Hodder and Stoughton. 1930)

There are 7 uses of **prophasis** in the NT...

**Matthew 23:14** Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, even while for a **pretense** you make long prayers; therefore you shall receive greater condemnation.

**Mark 12:40** who (referring to the Scribes) devour widows' houses, and **for appearance's sake** offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation. (**Comment:** The hypocritical scribes looked good outwardly but this was only a sham and a cover for their internal greed and selfishness)

**Luke 20:47** who devour widows' houses, and **for appearance's sake** offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation. (**Comment:** Exactly how they would **devour widows' houses** is not clear but could refer to foreclosing on mortgages, to excessive charges for services rendered, to eating with widows as a forced hospitality, or to insisting that widows make generous contributions to the religious causes advocated by the scribes.)

**John 15:22** "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have **no excuse** for their sin.

**Acts 27:30** And as the sailors were trying to escape from the ship, and had let down the ship's boat into the sea, on the **pretense** of intending to lay out anchors from the bow,

**Philippians 1:18** (note) What then? Only that in every way, whether in **pretense** or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice.

**1 Thessalonians 2:5** For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with **pretext** for greed-- God is witness--

**Bruce** comments that...

Ostensibly the language might be above suspicion, but if its real purpose is the speaker's advantage, it is but a pretext for covetousness. That this was not so with Paul and his companions is known both to their converts and to God (God is witness) cf. 1Th 2:10. ([Bruce, F F: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated. 1982](#))

**Hampton Keathley** asks...

I wonder how many of the problems and heartaches going on in the church are rooted in this problem, the problem of people using ministry of all sorts to promote themselves and meet their own needs and wants whether financial or emotional. It is the problem of hidden agendas. ([1Thessalonians 2:1-12 Compelling Example for Ministry](#))

**Greed** ([4124](#)) (**pleonexia** from **pleíon** = more + **écho** = have related to **pleonektes** = one who wants more, person covetous of something that others have) literally means to have more! It describes the insatiable and excessive desire to have more and thinks nothing of using another person or another's property to gain its own ends. It is thus a strong desire to acquire more and more material possessions, especially that which is forbidden or to possess more things than other people have all irrespective of need. It is insatiable selfishness, greed, avarice, covetousness.

**Greed** is what you desire and what you desire more of becomes your "god" and you end up serving (latreuo) that "god." In God's sight, greed is worshipping the god mammon, and "you cannot serve God and mammon" (see **note** Matthew 6:24)

**Hiebert** writes that here in 1Thessalonians, the fact...

That men use a mask or cover-up to conceal covetousness reveals that they instinctively believe it is an unworthy motive, yet one to which they frequently yield. Whenever covetousness is working it is always concealed under some ideal end. Paul assures the Thessalonian believers that "no secret avarice was hidden behind our zeal for your salvation." The **greed** expressed by **pleonexia** is larger than covetousness. Although it generally expresses itself in the desire for money, it includes that insatiableness that greedily grasps at anything desired for self-satisfaction. Beyond a desire for money, Paul's disclaimer rejects the thought of the missionaries' having been motivated by a spirit of self-aggrandizement while they pretended to be concerned for the spiritual interests of their followers. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

**Thomas** writes that

Pleonexia is self-seeking of all types, a quest for anything that brings self-satisfaction. It grows out of complete disinterest in the rights of others - an attitude foreign to Paul and his helpers.

**Calvin** rightly observes that...

Where greed and ambition hold sway, innumerable corruptions follow, and the whole man turns to vanity. These are the two sources from which stems the corruption of the whole of the ministry.

**Adam Clarke** warns...

Hear this, ye that preach the Gospel! Can ye call God to witness that in preaching it ye have no end in view by your ministry but his glory in the salvation of souls? Or do ye enter into the priesthood for a morsel of bread, or for what is ominously and impiously called a living, a benefice?... Is God witness that, in all these things, ye have no cloak of covetousness? ... But woe to that man who enters into the labour for the sake of the hire! he knows not Christ; and how can he preach him?"

**McGee** sums up this section writing...

I love this passage. Paul could tell the Thessalonians, "When I came to you, I want you to know that I had no ulterior motives. I didn't come for your offering. I didn't come in order to shear your sheep. I came to give you the gospel and then to build you up in the faith. That was my motive." With that kind of motive a person is really sailing on a marvelous sea. There may be storms, but the Lord will bring His servant through. ([McGee, J. V.: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Bruce** writes that **pleonexia** which is translated as greed,

Covetousness or cupidity, the desire to get more as in 1Thes 4:6, is a vice especially reprobated in the NT. In Mark 7:22 it is included, along with fornication, adultery, murder and the like, among the evil things which come from within the human heart and convey real defilement (cf. 1Cor 5:10, 11; 6:10). In Luke 12:15-21 the parable of the rich fool is told to encourage hearers to **beware of all covetousness** and to realize that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

In Col 3:5 (see note) and Ep 5:5 (see note) Greed is a form of idolatry. It is not merely the desire to possess more than one has, but to possess more than one ought to have, especially that which belongs to someone else. It is the sin of the man who has allowed full play to the desire to have what he should not have, who thinks his desires and appetites and lusts are the most important thing in the world, who sees others as things to be exploited, who has no god except himself and his desires ([Barclay, William: New Testament Words: Westminster John Know Press, 1964](#)) In 2Cor 9:5; 12:17, 18 Paul rebuts the charge of pleonexia against himself and his colleagues in reference to the gathering of the Jerusalem relief fund, but there is nothing in the present context to suggest such a reference here. ([Bruce, F. F.: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated. 1982](#))

**Barclay** has an interesting historical comment writing that...

The first Christian book of order is called The Didache, The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, and in it there are some illuminating instructions. "Let every apostles that cometh unto you be received as the Lord. And he shall stay one day and, if need be, the next also, but if he stay three days he is a false prophet. And when the

apostle goeth forth, let him take nothing save bread, till he reach his lodging. But if he ask money, he is a false prophet." "No prophet that ordereth a table in the Spirit shall eat of it, else he is a false prophet." "If he that cometh is a passer-by, succour him as far as you can. But he shall not abide with you longer than two or three days unless there be necessity. But if he be minded to settle among you and be a craftsman, let him work and eat. But if he has no trade, according to your understanding, provide that he shall not live idle among you, being a Christian. But if he will not do this, he is a Christmonger: of such men beware." (Didache, chapters 11 and 12). The date of The Didache is about A. D. 100. Even the Early Church knew the perennial problem of those who traded on charity. ([Barclay, W: The Daily Study Bible Series. The Westminster Press](#))

## GOD IS WITNESS: theos martus:

- Romans 1:9; 9:1; Philippians 1:8; Galatians 1:20
- 1 Thessalonians 2 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

For **God**, Whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, **is my witness** as to how unceasingly I make mention of you (Ro 1:9-note)

For **God is my witness**, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. (Php 1:8note)

But I call **God as witness** to my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. (2Cor 1:23)

**Witness** ([3144](#)) (**martus/martys**) refers to one Who has information or knowledge of something and hence can bring to light or confirm something. Three things are essential: (1) have seen with his own eyes what he attests; (2) be competent to relate it for others; (3) willing to testify truthfully. The present tense indicates believing is their lifestyle.

Men can judge the external conduct and can hear the **flattering words** but only God can know the real motive of their actions—He alone can discern a covetous heart seeing through the external cover or pretext.

**Hiebert** agrees writing that...

This appeal shows how important Paul regarded it to be cleared of this charge of gain-seeking in his ministry. Because the Thessalonians could judge only the character of the missionaries' conduct but could not know the true motives behind it, Paul takes his appeal directly to God who fully knows the hidden matters of the heart. Paul resorted to this appeal only in cases where human testimony was inadequate (see **notes** Romans 1:9, Philippians 1:8) ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

**Vincent** has an insightful note on **God is witness** writing that Paul is giving a testimony to his conduct appealing to both human and divine witnesses...

he appeals to the Thessalonians (**as you know**): for testimony to his motives, he appeals to God. Compare note on 1Th 2:10-note, where there is the double appeal... Compare Ro 1:9 [note]; 2Cor 1:23; Php 1:8 [note]. **God** or the Lord is **witness** is a common OT formula: see Ge 31:44, 50; 1Sa12:5, 6; 20:23, 42. (Word Studies in the NT)

1Thessalonians 2:6 **nor** did we **seek glory** from **men**, **either** from **you** **or** from **others**, even though as **apostles** of **Christ** we might have **asserted** \* our **authority** ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [oute zetountes](#) ([PAPMPN](#)) ex [anthropon](#) doxan, [oute aph' umon oute ap' allon](#) (following Greek text is translated into English in this verse but is included in v7 in Nestle-Aland - [dunameno](#) ([PPPMPN](#)) [en barei einai](#) ([PAN](#)) [os Christou apostoloi](#).)

**Amplified:** Nor did we seek to extract praise and honor and glory from men, either from you or from anyone else, though we might have asserted our authority [stood on our dignity and claimed honor] as apostles (special missionaries) of Christ (the Messiah). ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**NLT:** As for praise, we have never asked for it from you or anyone else. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** We made no attempt to win honour from men, either from you or from anybody else, though I suppose as Christ's own messengers we might have done so. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** nor seeking glory from men, neither from you nor from others, when we might have stood on our dignity as Christ's ambassadors.

**Young's Literal:** nor seeking of men glory, neither from you nor from others, being able to be burdensome, as Christ's apostles.

**NOR DID WE SEEK GLORY FROM MEN, EITHER FROM YOU OR FROM OTHERS: oute zetountes (PAPMPN) ex anthropon doxan, oute aph' umon oute ap' allon:**

- Esther 1:4; 5:11; Daniel 4:30; John 5:41,44; 7:18; Galatians 5:26; 6:13; 1Timothy 5:17
- 1 Thessalonians 2 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

It is not good to eat much honey, nor is it glory to search out one's own glory. (Proverbs 25:27)

(The Pharisees) loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God. (John 12:43)

**Comment:** Henry Morris writes that "This comment is an indictment of many modern professed evangelicals who often are so enamored of acceptance and prestige among their peers that they will dilute Biblical standards of doctrine and practice to attain and keep their standing in the world." ([Defenders Study Bible. World Publishing](#))

For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:10)

**Nor** ([3777](#))(**oute**) is a negative correlative meaning neither, nor, not even, and not, also not. This negative (oute) with the present participle (zetountes) denies any practice or habit of seeking "glory of men".

**Seek** ([2212](#)) (**zeteo**) describes a desire to have or experience something, of man's effort to obtain something (pursue, endeavor to obtain, strive for).

The apostles by virtue of their office could have sought esteem, praise and honor from the Thessalonians but they did not "take advantage" of their position. Furthermore, the love of applause was not what motivated Paul and his associates.

**Zeteo** was used in a similar way (but with a positive rather than negative sense) in **John 5** where Jesus asked...

How can you (Jews) believe, when you receive **glory** (doxa) from one another, and you do not **seek** (zeteo) the **glory** (doxa) that is from the one and only God? (**John 5:44**)

**Comment:** Jesus explains why the Jewish people refused to accept Him. They were more interested in the approval of their fellow men than in God's approval. They were afraid of what their friends would say if they left Judaism. They were not willing to endure the persecution which would surely come if they became true followers of Jesus. Fear of what others might say or do is a major impediment to true conversion.

Paul is not saying he never received honor from men or that he had no right to receive it, but he does deny that he required such a reaction from those to whom he preached the gospel. In short, not only were they not motivated by money, neither were they motivated by a desire for praise from men. As noted in the last two verses of this chapter, Paul's focus was not on present glory but future glory of the converts in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming. (1Th 2:19, 20-notes)

**Hiebert** rightly notes that...

There is the constant possibility that the preacher may use his preaching ministry as a means of building up public esteem for himself rather than conveying God's message to men. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

**Gloag** writes that the tenor of Paul's words in this verse could have one of two possible interpretations noting that...

These words admit of two meanings. The apostle may refer to his refusal to seek maintenance from the Thessalonians, and in this sense become a burden to them. But such a meaning does not suit the context; and besides, this refusal of maintenance is afterwards alluded to by the apostle. The reference here is not to maintenance, but to glory: we did not seek glory from you, when we might have been burdensome, when we might have done so. Hence, the word is to be taken in the sense of honour, importance; when we might have claimed honour. As—in virtue of our character as—the apostles of Christ. Paul does not speak of himself alone, but he includes Silas and Timothy, and therefore the word "apostles" is to be taken not in its restricted,

but in its wider meaning. ([The Pulpit Commentary: New Testament; Old Testament; Ages Software](#))

**Glory (1391)** (**doxa** from **dokeo** = to thing or have an opinion, especially a favorable one) is the condition of being bright or shining can refer to the greatness or splendor of man (as in this verse) which is based on human opinion which is shifty, uncertain and often based on error. On the other hand, there is a glory of God which is absolutely true and changeless. This contrast is seen in John 5:44 recorded above.

Paul uses **doxa** in the present verse to refer to someone's good opinion of a man, not to a man's real worth. Paul and his companions did not seek praise from men but from God (see note 1Thessalonians 2:4).

There is a **glory** that believers rightly seek, but it is not a glory that originates with men.

to those who by perseverance in doing good seek (**zeteo** - present tense - continually) for **glory** (**doxa**) and honor and immortality, eternal life (see **note** Romans 2:7) (**Comment:** If taken out of the context of other NT teaching on the mode of salvation, Romans 2:7 might suggest that one could earn eternal life by persevering in doing good. Good works are evidence of genuine conversion not the means of ones salvation. Ep 2:10-note)

Paul in fact uses **doxa** in a positive sense later in this chapter to express the idea that the Thessalonian believers were a source of "pride" or "glory" to him, affirming...

For you are our **glory** (**doxa**) and joy. (1Th 2:20-note)

**F F Bruce** feels that the reason Paul is emphasizing this negative motivation for their ministry is that there were those who had come into Thessalonica and...

stood on their dignity and required respectful attention and subservience. Paul could not esteem too highly the glory of the message with which he was entrusted (cf. 2Cor 3:7, 8, 9, 10, 11), but he himself and his colleagues were but earthen vessels in which the treasure of the gospel was placed (2Cor 3:7). Far from demanding service and deference from their converts, they presented themselves as their converts servants for Jesus' sake (2Cor 4:5)... To gain a reputation as successful evangelists or as leaders of a school which could boast a large number of disciples was not the aim of Paul or his friends. He set no store by the recognition or assessment of men: he was content to abide the Lord's judgment (1Cor 4:3, 4) (Ed note: "not as pleasing men but God Who examines our hearts").([Bruce, F F: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated. 1982 or Logos](#))

We are reminded of **Nebuchadnezzar's** desire for glory in Daniel 4...

The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the **glory** of my majesty?' While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you' (Dan 4:30-31)

**Or from others** - Who are the **others**? Although, we cannot be dogmatic, they are most likely towns people of Thessalonica who had heard Paul proclaim the gospel but did accept it as the Word of God which performs in work in those who believed.

**Guzik** adds that...

When Paul ministered among the Thessalonians, he was unconcerned for his personal **glory**. He didn't need fancy introductions or lavish praise. His satisfaction came from his relationship with Jesus, not from the praise of people. Paul didn't seek **glory** from men because his needs for security and acceptance were met primarily in Jesus. This meant that he didn't spend his life trying to seek and earn the acceptance of man. He ministered from an understanding of his identity in Jesus. ([1Thessalonians 2](#))

**Matthew Poole** paraphrases Paul's words as...

We did not seek men's honour, high esteem, or applause; we sought them not in the inward bent of our thoughts, or the studies of our mind, not in outward course of our ministry and conversation, to form them so as to gain glory from men. Though honour and esteem was their due from men, yet they did not seek it. Honour is to follow men, men not to follow it. This Christ reproved in the scribes and Pharisees, that in their prayers, alms, fasting, affected habits, and titles, they sought the praise of men (Matthew Poole's Commentary on the New Testament)

The **Psalms** gives good advice...

Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to Thy name give glory because of Thy lovingkindness, because of Thy truth. (Ps 115:1) ([Spurgeon's Comment](#))

**Richison** adds that...

Most of us feel that it is our responsibility to establish a reputation. There is a great difference between reputation and character. Reputation is what people think we are and character is what we actually are. Why should we seek to establish our reputation when we all march under the same flag, the flag of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no place for competition among Christian leaders or Christian churches. We are all in the same army and we all have the same general, Jesus. We may not all have the same rank but we all march under the same flag. We are all in the service of General Jesus. ([1 Thes 2:6](#) [1 Thes 2:6b](#) [1 Thes 2:6c](#) [1 Thes 2:6d](#) )

#### **EVEN THOUGH AS APOSTLES OF CHRIST WE MIGHT HAVE ASSERTED OUR AUTHORITY: en barei einai (PAN) os Christou apostoloi:**

- 1Th 2:9; 1Corinthians 9:4,6,12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18; 2Corinthians 10:1,2,10,11; 13:10; Philemon 1:8,9
- 1Corinthians 11:9; 12:13, 14, 15; 1Thessalonians 3:8,9
- 1Corinthians 9:1,2,4, 5, 6
- 1 Thessalonians 2 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

being able to be burdensome, as Christ's apostles (Literal)

when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. (NKJV)

As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you (NIV)

although we were in a position to make ourselves formidable as apostles of Christ. (Kistemaker)

**We might have asserted our authority** - The NAS translation is not as easy to understand as some of the other translations which more clearly convey Paul's intent...

though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. (ESV)

**F F Bruce** renders it - **being able to make demands**,

**Bruce** goes on to comment that this passage

refers to the right which preachers of the gospel had, according to Paul, to be maintained by their converts and others to whose spiritual welfare they ministered a right which Paul chose not to exercise (cf. 2Thes 3:7, 8, 9; 1Cor 9:3-18; 2Cor 11:7, 8, 9, 10, 11). This right (as Paul points out in 1Cor 9:14) was conferred by Jesus on those whom he sent out on a preaching and healing mission in his name in the course of his Galilean ministry (Mk 6:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13; Mt 10:5-15; Lk 9:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; 10:1-12): the laborer, he said to them, deserves his pay (Lk 10:7) or his food Mt 10:10). Paul took the Lord's instructions to mean that his servants were entitled to their maintenance but not compelled to require it ([Bruce, F F: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated. 1982](#))

**Michael Holmes** in the **NIV Application Commentary** (Zondervan) adds that...

Behind this concern over means and motives (**Ed note:** of presentation of the Gospel) is Paul's obvious concern for the integrity of the message. He deliberately avoided behavior or actions that might lead people to doubt or suspect the integrity of the message or the sincerity of his preaching. As an apostle he had a right to be supported in his ministry (1Cor 9:3-18). But for the sake of the integrity of the message and for the sake of the Thessalonians, he voluntarily gave up that right.

**Authority** (1510) (**baros**; English - barometer from **baros** + **metron**) literally refers to a weight or burden. In Classic Greek **baros** refers to a weight or heaviness and then a burden. In the NT **baros** is used only figuratively meaning something pressing on one physically or emotionally either in a bad or good sense.

Figuratively **baros** refers to a burden or hardship, experience of something that is particularly oppressive (Mt 20:12), experience oppressive suffering (as in Gal 6:2), a difficult duty (Re 2:24-[note](#)). A secular source refers to a "burden" of oppression and a burden of taxation.

The phrase *en barei einai* found here in 1Th 2:6 literally reads "**be in weight**" and figuratively may mean something like make one's weight felt, insist on one's importance, claim high status, influence that someone enjoys or claims, claim of importance or making demands (all are in the context of apostle).

The Greek metaphor of **weight** is well brought out in Spanish Common Language Translation - We could have made you feel the weight of our authority

Paul makes clear his right as an apostle to financial support but in the next verse says he behaved as selflessly as a nursing mother. The point is that Paul and his companions were among the Thessalonians to give something to them (the gospel of Jesus Christ), not to take something from them, be it money or praise. And so they did not come making demands as apostles.

**Milligan** gives a clear explanation of **baros** writing that "Baros is here understood (1) in its simple meaning of 'weight,' 'burden'... with reference to the Apostle's right of maintenance ... or (2) in its derived sense of 'authority, dignity' ... pointing to the honour they might have expected to receive at the Thessalonians' hands... The two meanings are however compatible, and it is probable that St. Paul plays here on the double sense of the phrase" (**Comment:** Arndt and Gingrich have for this passage: "Wield authority, insist on one's importance")

**Baros** is used once in **Judges 18:21** and 5 times in the NT...

**Matthew 20:12** saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the **burden** and the scorching heat of the day.'

**Acts 15:28** For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater **burden** than these essentials

**2 Corinthians 4:17** For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal **weight** of glory far beyond all comparison,

**Galatians 6:2** Bear one another's **burdens**, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.

**1Thessalonians 2:6** nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our **authority**.

**Revelation 2:24** ([note](#)) 'But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them-- I place no other **burden** on you.

**Apostle** ([652](#)) (**apostolos** from **apo** = from + **stello** = send forth) (Click discussion of apostle) means one sent forth from by another, often with a special commission to represent another and to accomplish his work. It can be a delegate, commissioner, ambassador sent out on a mission or orders or commission and with the authority of the one who sent him.

**Apostolos** referred to someone who was officially commissioned to a position or task, such as an envoy. Cargo ships were sometimes called *apostolic*, because they were dispatched with a specific shipment for a specific destination. In secular Greek **apostolos** was used of an admiral of a fleet sent out by the king on special assignment.

In the ancient world a **apostle** was the personal representatives of the king, functioning as an ambassador with the king's authority and provided with credentials to prove he was the king's envoy.

This is the first time Paul describes himself and his companions as **apostles**. However Silas and Timothy are not described elsewhere as **apostles**, but not in the same restricted sense as the original 12 disciples (minus Judas plus Paul) but in a wider, more general sense of those who are sent out by God as messengers or envoys.

**Hiebert** writes that **apostolos**...

The term denotes one who is commissioned and sent forth as the representative of another. It has the force of our word **missionary**, which is the corresponding term from the Latin. Lattey renders the phrase "as missionaries of Christ." ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

We find **apostle** used with this same more general meaning in the following passages..

But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your **messenger** (apostolos) and minister to my need (Php 2:25-note)

As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, they are **messengers** (apostolos) of the churches, a glory to Christ. (2Cor 8:23)