

Pure Motives and Hard Work

1 Thessalonians 2:1-13

Paul explains that in spite of experiencing persecution, God gave him courage to speak the truth boldly motivated by a fear of God and not man's approval. He reminds the Thessalonians how he treated them and thanked them for receiving God's Word. We are encouraged by Paul's example to live with humble confidence of God's acceptance free from the need for approval.

Application

1. Paul's motivation for courage and boldness in the face of great struggle comes from a deep personal connection to God and settled confidence in who he is. In what circumstances have you been tempted to think that God is against you? How does Paul's story of persecution and his fear of God (instead of fear of man) encourage you? What truths from Scripture can you preach to yourself when God feels distant to cultivate boldness and courage?
2. Bill describes how years ago a friend noticed unhealthy patterns in his life and challenged him. Who do you have in your life who is capable of doing this for you? Why is this so important? What actions do you need to take to ensure that you have enough accountability in your life?
3. Paul demonstrates that we will not be free of the need for approval and able to be used by God powerfully as an agent of change in others' lives until we get straight that we are approved by God. How is beating ourselves up over past mistakes and sin contrary to the gospel and a hindrance to loving others? In what other ways might your need for approval be preventing you from speaking truth to someone? What steps can you take or truth do you need to believe to move away from fear of man and toward freedom and fear of God?
4. GROUP: Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 together and discuss Paul's description of how he treated the people of Thessalonica while he was with them. How can this be instructive for us in how to treat our neighbors and those around us?

Key Points

- You will live either tyrannized by what others think or freed from that fear by a greater fear and comfort in what God thinks about you.
- You can't be free to love people that you need so your needs must be met by God to free you to love them with the truth.
- There is great hope in the idea that if you will believe and receive the Word that has been given to you, it will continue to work on you and shape you even when you struggle to work at it.