

Theme: Holy ministry is always done before the face of God — springing from pure motives, expressed in Christlike gentleness and holiness, and sustained through conflict until God rewards faithful labor with fruit.

I. Intro - Church Leadership Scandals

- A. Medieval scandals - popes with kids; wealth; power
- B. Same scandals plague us today!
- C. Personal sexual sins; greed; lying; abuse of power; compromise Scripture under pressure
- D. How do we know what leaders we can trust and follow?
- E. What does holy ministry look like?

II. A Holy Endurance

- A. The apostolic team had endured suffering & conflict
For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. ² But though **we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi**, as you know, **we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.** (vv1–2)
 - 1. Already **suffered, been shamefully treated at Philippi**
 - 2. You can read about this in Acts 16
 - 3. Many would give up & go home - but not this team!
 - 4. They had **boldness to declare the Gospel** again
 - 5. Even in **the midst of conflict** in Thessalonica!
- B. Holy endurance in ministry was rewarded
For you yourselves know, brothers, that **our coming to you was not in vain.** ² But though we had already suffered... we declared to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. 1 Th 2:1–2

- 1. They endured through opposition, and it had effect
- 2. Their ministry was not in vain/failure/without results
- 3. God rewarded their enduring labor with fruit
- 4. This promise is given to all of us regarding ministry
Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, **knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.** 1 Corinthians 15:58
- 5. This is proof that the power comes from God, not us

C. If we endure in faithfully ministering God's Word through opposition, God will reward our labors with fruitfulness.

- 1. Don't grow weary in speaking God's word to others
- 2. We are not responsible for fruit - God is. We are responsible to faithfully and consistently declare God's gospel to others
- 3. If we faithfully sow God's Word to family, friends, coworkers, over time we will see fruit

III. A Holy Motive

- A. The apostolic team had a holy motive for their ministry
For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, ⁴ 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. ⁵ For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. ⁶ Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. 1 Thess 2:3–6

1. V3 - Their appeal does not spring from wrong motives
 - a. V3 - They are not teaching error, or to deceive
 - b. They do not have impure motives to reach others
2. Their ministry comes from God & is for His approval
 - a. V4 - They were approved by God for their ministry
 - b. They had been entrusted with the Gospel - and would therefore have to give account
 - c. Therefore they were not trying to get man's approval but rather God's - for God was the one testing them
For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. Galatians 1:10
 1. We must choose – do we try to please humans, or do we want to please God?
 2. We cannot have two masters – we must choose!
 - d. V5 - This is why they did not use flattery - they were working for God
 - e. This is also why they did not do things to get money - greed was not their motive
 1. This is why our elders do not know giving records
 2. We are removing even the chance that greed motivates our shepherding
 - f. God is witness - He sees and will testify to this truth
 - g. V6 - They did not seek glory from humans - but God!

B. Godly, holy ministry is always done for God's approval rather than applause or other benefits from humans

1. We are called to live and minister coram Deo - before the face of God
2. God is the One calling, entrusting, and judging our ministry - the evaluation of others is secondary.
3. We must always test ourselves regarding our motives and our actions for ministry - motives matter!

IV. A Holy Manner

- A. Holy ministry is gentle - not demanding & domineering though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. ⁷ But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 1 Thess 2:6–7
 1. Vv5-7 all one sentence - ending with contrast
 2. As apostles we had authority to demand
 3. But instead of demanding they were gentle, like a nursing mother
 4. If someone boasts of their authority and is demanding and domineering, they are not being true ministers of Christ
 5. Never submit to leaders who domineer, constantly command you to submit to their authority, or make threats if you do not listen - this is not Christ's Spirit
 6. Holy ministry at its best is gentle, patient, encouraging
 - a. All leaders will fall short of this ideal at times
 - b. But this must be the pattern - patient, loving, encouragement to follow Christ rather than harsh, authoritarian, abusive leadership

B. Holy ministry personally shares its life - not just truth

We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. 1 Th 2:8

1. Holy ministry shares truth - but also personal life
2. Holy ministry is shepherding - which requires personal contact and life
3. Many today want to proclaim truth from a screen - that is not the personal ministry the NT envisions
4. Look for a shepherd - not just a teacher
5. When trouble or grief comes, you need a shepherd who will walk with you, not just someone who can speak well or build an impressive organization.
6. If you can't know a teacher personally, you can't really know their motives, lifestyle, or character

C. Holy ministry is built on a holy life

For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. 1 Thessalonians 2:9–10

1. Holy ministry flows from a holy life
2. Those who minister must be hard working and godly in their personal life
3. Holy ministry requires holy living because you cannot encourage and pass on to others what you do not possess and live yourself.

“People were not converted because of Paul’s miracles; no, it was not the miracles that produced faith, nor did Paul base his high calling upon the miraculous but on other grounds: a man must be irreproachable in conduct, prudent and discreet in his dealings with others, regardless of the dangers involved, and apt to teach. These were the qualifications that enabled Paul to reach his goal.” – St John Chrysostom

4. This is a requirement for leaders, but it is true of all of us. We must be letting the Spirit form us into the character of Christ if we want others to hear and respond to the Gospel.

D. Holy ministry urges others to follow God’s commands

For you know how, like a father with his children, ¹² we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. 1 Th 2:11–12

1. This is the flip side to point A (holy ministry is gentle)
2. Holy ministry is gentle - but does not flinch from telling the truth
3. They were gentle and patient - but exhorted the Thessalonians to embrace and obey God’s Word
4. This urging to growth and holiness was to “each one” of you (v12) - emphatic in Greek - (personal ministry again)
5. This included both tender encouragement but also strong ‘charging’ - as the situation warranted
6. These verbs are present tense - they continually did this with the believers in Thessalonica

7. We should never submit to leaders who are unwilling to speak the truth of God to us, calling us from personal sin to holy lives worthy of God

E. Summary: Holy ministry is Christlike!

1. It is built on a proper motive, pleasing God, not man
2. It is gentle, serving rather than domineering
3. It is personal and incarnational, sharing life not just truth
4. It is consistent, flowing from a life of personal holiness
5. It is courageous - calling others to obey God's Word

V. Applying the Word

A. Do I have biblical or worldly standards for ministry?

1. This is the type of church leadership we should look for and demand
2. Many today look at worldly things - charisma, success in numbers, good CEO skills - and ignore what Scripture teaches
3. At BRCC or elsewhere, look for Holy Ministry! (Summary from point E above)
4. Never be lured to or settle for something else!
5. This is what a faithful church should be like!

B. The same is true for all believers as we minister to others

1. Leaders must meet these standards – but all of us are called to strive for this!

2. As I pray, share with, and lead others, these things must characterize my life in a growing way!
3. This is how the Spirit is working to make me more like Christ!

C. The Table of Holy Waiting

1. We are holy because God had called us to Himself
2. But we are also called to live like God's holy people
3. This is the Table of holiness - for those set apart by God, a place to confess sin, a place to receive strength as we look forward to Christ's return.
4. Come to the Table of holiness

A Holy Ministry

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

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Communion

Hebrews 13:20-21

Teaching keywords: leadership; holiness; endurance; correction; church

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,²¹ equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20–21