

Are You a Credible Christian?

1 Thes. 2:1-12

For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. 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 during much conflict. For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, 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. For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. 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. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. For you know how, like a father with his children, 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.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CREDIBILITY

Many people have a “bad taste” in their mouth when it comes to people who call themselves Christians. People have been lied to by those who claim to be Christians. People have had their money stolen by those who claim to be Christians. People have been “scammed.” So, called “Christian Priests” have been charged with sexual misconduct.

Recent elections; ugly things said and done by those who profess to be a Christian. People see these things and denounce religion all together or are driven to a different form of religion.

Therefore, for the sake of effective evangelism, it is essential that we, as God's people, be credible.

THE BACKGROUND.

Due to a potential threat, Paul has had to leave Thessalonica; Acts 17. Because of Paul's quick departure, he is vulnerable to malicious rumors and gossip. These accusations were being made to destroy Paul's credibility. Paul writes 1 Thessalonians to counter those accusations.

THINGS THE APOSTLE PAUL SAYS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR CREDIBILITY.

Steadfastness: vs. 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.*

In Acts 16 Paul and Silas had been beaten and locked in stocks. Despite the mistreatment and suffering they still "boldly preached the gospel." That gave them credibility.

We must be the same way if we are to have credibility also. It is the faith that always manifests itself and especially in the face of adversity that makes people say, "He or she truly is a Christian." If we are going to have **CREDIBILITY** we must be **STEADFAST** no matter what.

No error, no impurity, no deceit and pleasing to God.

Vs. 3-4: For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, 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.

- "Error" speaks of "fraudulence" or "deceit."
- "Impurity" speaks of "moral uncleanness."

- “By way of deceit” literally means “by way of trickery.”
- If your message is wrong, if you have an immoral, ulterior motive, if people perceive you as a “huckster”, or if you do what pleases people, you will destroy your credibility.

No flattering speech, no pretext of greed, no self-seeking glory, and no assertion of authority.

Vs. 5-6: For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.

At the end of verse 6 Paul says that they didn't “assert their authority.” He is saying that he didn't “throw his weight around.”

Some have done this today; people hate to see them come around. An elder in CA was often heard to say, “you need to do this because as your Elder I'm telling you to do this.” Would you be surprised to know he was not held in high esteem as an Elder and was ultimately removed?

If we are going to have CREDIBILITY with people, both in and out of the Lord's church, respect who they are and their situation...and do not throw your weight around.

Must show people you care.

Vs. 7-8 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

The Christians at Thessalonica were infants when it came to a knowledge of the word. Consequently, Paul and Silas were gentle with them. They were as “nursing mothers who tenderly care.”

Paul and Silas put aside what they wanted or needed and gave themselves up for them; vs. 8. If you want to be CREDIBLE, people have to know and see that you sincerely CARE.

People must see that you want what is BEST for them.

Vs. 9-12 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. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. For you know how, like a father with his children, 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.

In the culture of Paul's time, the fathers did the instructing. They took upon themselves the responsibility of seeing to it that their sons especially were as educated as they could afford. In matters around the farm the Father would teach the son everything that he would need to know to run his own successful farm when the time came. There was a saying amongst Jews – “if you don't teach your son to work – you teach your son to steal.” A very high value was placed upon a work ethic that would sustain a family and possibly an extended family.

Here Paul says he was like a father to them. Paul tells them in verse 12 that he wants the best for them spiritually. To accomplish that, Paul gives them his time and talent to ensure they grow. To have credibility in the eyes of others, they must see that you want what is best for them.

Our daughter Melissa was about 5 when I left the Navy and started college. I worked at an apartment complex and one of my duties was to care for the pool onsite. Melissa enjoyed going with me late in the evening (in FL) to clean and check the balance of the water. She was fascinated by how the water would change colors in the test kit.

One evening we got there a little early and she was in her bathing suit. She had not worn that before, so I asked when we were done if she wanted to get in the water.

She just lit up thinking about getting into this pool. She walked down the few steps in the shallow end till the water got to just above her waist. She stopped as if she were scared and looked at me. I was already in the water, so I moved over to her and took her hands and led her down the last step. When she stood on the bottom she was grinning ear to ear because she had thought it would be over her head. She started coming toward me and I told her that the more she moved that way the deeper the water would get. She came till the water was at her shoulders and then scurried back to the safety of her stairs. After about four nights of this she was standing on the side of the pool waiting for me to put my cleaning stuff away. As soon as I did she wanted to know if she could get in the water. I said, “just jump here in the deeper end and I’ll catch you”. She looked at me as if I had suddenly grown another head! I said “honey, I’ll catch you” at which point she jumped, and I almost wasn’t ready. I caught her and took her to the point where the water was now up to my shoulders and she was giggling the whole time.

The point? I had created credibility with my daughter by showing her that the water was not going to be too deep at the bottom of the stairs; I had also told her that the water would get deeper and it did; when I told her to jump she believed everything I said because of past performance.

If you want CREDIBILITY people must see that you want what is BEST for them. If we are going to have the CREDIBILITY that we must have to lead others to Jesus, that we so desperately need to manifest to a lost world, a credibility that will make us stand out and be separate and apart from all others so that the Lord can be seen through us, here is what we must do and be:

- Steadfast in our faith.
- Truthful in our message.
- No ulterior motives.
- No tricks...just be open and honest.
- Pleasing to God...not men.

- Sincere
- Not Greedy
- Not self-seeking
- Caring
- Seek what is Best for others.

How's your credibility? As a preacher? As an elder? As a deacon? As a teacher? As a child of God? Is it such that it honors God or does it bring Him shame.