

1 Thessalonians 2:4

Authorized King James Version (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.

Analysis

But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak—dedokimasmetha hypo tou Theou pisteutheēnai to euangelion (δεδοκιμάσμεθα ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ πιστευθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, 'we have been tested by God to be entrusted with the gospel'). Dokimazo (δοκιμάζω) means 'to test/examine/approve' (used of testing metals for purity); God examined and approved Paul for gospel stewardship. The passive voice emphasizes divine initiative—Paul didn't seize the ministry but received it through God's testing and entrusting. Pisteuō (πιστεύω, 'to entrust') indicates solemn responsibility, like a treasurer entrusted with funds.

Not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts (οὐχ hōs anthrōpois areskontes alla Theō tō dokimazonti tas kardias hēmōn, οὐχ ὡς ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκοντες ἀλλὰ Θεῷ τῷ δοκιμάζοντι τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν)—ministry orientation determines content and method. Human-pleasers adjust the message for approval; God-pleasers speak truth regardless of response. Dokimazonti (present participle, 'the one continually testing') reminds ministers that God continually examines heart motives, not just external results. Gospel stewards answer to God who tests hearts, not people who judge appearances.

Historical Context

Paul's emphasis on divine approval over human applause countered both pagan rhetoric (sophists who performed for crowd approval and payment) and Judaizing influences (those who preached circumcision to avoid persecution, Gal 6:12). Thessalonian believers faced pressure from family, neighbors, and authorities to compromise. Paul models uncompromising faithfulness: he preaches truth even when it provokes persecution (Acts 17:5-9) because God, not crowds, is his judge. This courage sustained the Thessalonians' own boldness under pressure.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How do you determine whether your Christian witness aims to please God or gain human approval, especially when the two conflict?
2. What evidence demonstrates that you've been 'tested and approved' by God for your ministry responsibilities (whether vocational or lay)?
3. How does remembering that God 'continually tests our hearts' affect your ministry motives, methods, and message?

Interlinear Text

ἀλλὰ καθὼς δοκιμάζοντι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεῷ πιστευθῆναι τὸ
But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust G3588
G235 G2531 G1381 G5259 G2316 G4100 G3588

εὐαγγέλιον οὕτως λαλοῦμεν οὐχ ὡς ἀνθρώποις
with the gospel even so we speak not as men
G2098 G3779 G2980 G3756 G5613 G444

ἀρέσκοντες ἀλλὰ τῷ θεῷ τῷ δοκιμάζοντι τὰς καρδίας
pleasing But G3588 God G3588 we were allowed G3588 hearts
G700 G235 G2316 G1381 G2588 G2588

ἡμῶν
our
G2257

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 1:10 (References God): For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Romans 8:27 (References God): And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Galatians 2:7 (Parallel theme): But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;

Psalms 17:3 (Parallel theme): Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.

2 Timothy 1:14 (Parallel theme): That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

Ephesians 6:6 (References God): Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

Jeremiah 32:19 (Parallel theme): Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings:

Ephesians 3:8 (Parallel theme): Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

1 Chronicles 29:17 (References God): I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee.

Titus 1:3 (References God): But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;