

1 Thessalonians Chapter 2

Verses 1-2: Paul denies his adversaries' accusation that his ministry in Thessalonica had been in vain, that is, "empty" of proper motive. That he had been physically abused (suffered), and insulted (shamefully entreated), previously at Philippi, yet was bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel, verifies the purity of his ministerial motives.

Otherwise, persecution for the gospel would probably have prevented his courageous preaching. There was no impure incentive of any kind in his ministry (verse 3).

1 Thessalonians 2:1 "For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:"

"Not in vain": Paul's ministry among the Thessalonians was so fruitful that not only were people saved and a vibrant, reproducing church planted, but the church also grew and flourished even after Paul left (1:5-8).

Paul says you know that the message we brought was Truth and you received it unto yourself. It was empowered by the Spirit of God and now you received it so fully that you are empowered with that same Spirit to minister.

Paul had asked nothing from them in return for bringing the gospel to them. His reward was in knowing that they received the True Word of God and were transformed into servants of the Most High God.

1 Thessalonians 2:2 "But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention."

"Entreated ... at Philippi": Paul and Silas had been brutalized in Philippi before coming to Thessalonica (Acts 16:19-24, 37). They suffered physically when beaten (Acts 16:22-23), and incarcerated (Acts 16:24). They were arrogantly mistreated with false accusations (Acts 16:20-21), and illegally punished, in spite of their Roman citizenship (Acts 16:37).

"Much contention": Like their treatment in Philippi, Paul's team was falsely accused of civil treason in Thessalonica (Acts 17:7), and suffered physical intimidation (Acts 17:5-6).

Paul never allowed a little persecution to keep him from bringing the gospel message to all who would receive it. Contention, in this verse, means conflict or fight. Everywhere Paul went, there seemed to be conflict. Most of his problems came from the Jews.

He had been a Pharisee of the Pharisees, before he came in close contact with the Light of the world on the road to Damascus. It seemed the conflict at Philippi had been so great that he had left there and come to Thessalonica. He did not stop preaching because of the conflict, he just moved locations.

Paul counted it a pleasure to be able to suffer for Christ and the gospel message. The message that Paul had brought to Thessalonica was not made milder by the conflict, but if anything was even bolder and more sure. Paul's boldness seemed to increase with every persecution.

1 Thessalonians 2:3 "For our exhortation [was] not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:"

Paul used 3 distinctly different words to affirm the truthfulness of his ministry, each expressing a contrast with what was characteristic of false teachers. He first asserts that "his message" was true and not erroneously false. His "manner of life" was pure, not sexually wicked. His "method of ministry" was authentic, not deceptive.

Paul was not a man of untruths. He spoke the message of God, exactly the way the Lord had given it to him. He did not alter the message to please man. Guile, in this verse would possibly mean trick.

Paul had not tried to trick anyone. He knew the Jews were caught up in the outward cleanness of a man. He explains that he was not an unclean man. Paul's message was straightforward. He never varied to the right or the left. He spoke Truth.

1 Thessalonians 2:4 "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."

"Allowed of God": It could be that some false teachers came into the church to discredit Paul's ministry. This would account for his emphasis (in verse 1-12), on his divine appointment, approval, integrity, and devotion to them. (Acts 9:15; 16:9-10).

Allowed and trieth translates the same Greek verb dokimazo differently because it has two different meanings in this same verse. "Allowed", means that God had carefully examined Paul and found him to be fit for the ministry, thus entrusting the apostle with this responsibility.

"Trieth" means that the Lord examines him daily to see whether he remains fit and can continue in the ministry. This habitual divine scrutiny is the reason Paul seeks to please God rather than men. God then, is the ultimate cause and motive of Paul's ministry, not impurity (verse 3), or covetousness (verse 5).

I love the word "allowed" in the verse above. Paul counted it a privilege to be trusted with the gospel message. We should count it a privilege to be allowed to work for God ourselves. Paul spoke as an oracle of God. Paul did not choose what he would say. He turned his tongue over to God and spoke the words as the Spirit gave him utterance.

Most ministers today have this all turned around. They are preaching what the people want to hear. The Bible calls that preaching to itching ears.

2 Timothy 4:3 "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"

This verse in Timothy is speaking of ministers called of men to preach, not called of God. Paul was called of God to carry the message God chose to the people. The people did not always want to hear what the Spirit of God speaking through Paul had to say. It many times, stepped on their toes. The Spirit brought out sins in them that they thought no one knew about but God knew.

Paul had no desire to please men. His desire was to bring the message God wanted the people to have as accurately as he could. Paul's desire was to please God, not man.

If it brought persecution, so be it. God looks on the heart, and judges righteously. He looks on the heart of the minister, and the people he is ministering to. Let me mention, one more time, the gospel is (good news).

Verses 5-6: "Flattering words": Paul used 3 disclaimers to affirm the purity of his motives for ministry:

- (1) He denied being a smooth-talking preacher who tried to make favorable impressions in order to gain influence for selfish advantage;
- (2) He did not pretend to be poor and work night and day (verse 9), as a pretense to get rich in the ministry at their expense; and
- (3) He didn't use his honored position as an apostle to seek personal glory, only God's glory (1 Cor. 10:31).

1 Thessalonians 2:5 "For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God [is] witness:"

"Cloak" (Greek prophasis), signifies "excuse," "cover up," or "front"; for an impure motive of greed.

Paul was not trying to get anything from them. He did not covet anything that belonged to them. When someone flatters you, they are usually setting you up to get something from you. Paul had none of these desires. He was compelled within himself to bring the Truth of the gospel to all who would receive it.

Some believe that Paul was trying to make up for the times when he himself had persecuted the Christians. I really believe that Paul loved God so much that he wanted everyone to know and love God as he did. He was truly grateful that God had loved him enough to turn him around on the right path.

I believe that Paul loved God even when he was persecuting Christians. He even thought he was doing that for God. His eyes of his understanding had not been opened where he could see Jesus for who He really is. Paul knew that even if the people did not understand what he was trying to do, God did. He really had to answer to no man but God.

1 Thessalonians 2:6 "Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor [yet] of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ."

“Might have been burdensome”: may be rendered, “though we could have wielded authority”. Paul and his coworkers did not seek esteem (glory), from men nor from the Thessalonians (neither of you), although they could have ‘thrown their weight around’ as the apostles of Christ, and thus demanded honor.

“Apostles of Christ”: This plural is designed to include Paul with the 12 for the sake of emphasizing his unique authority. Silvanus and Timothy were “apostles (messengers), of the church” (Rom. 16:7; Phil. 2:25).

We already mentioned in the book of Philippians that Paul would not accept any gifts from any of the churches except the church at Philippi. Paul preached the gospel to them with no strings attached. He did not even ask for an offering from them.

We see in this that Paul was not seeking to be thought of as the great apostle. He included Timothy and Silas in this letter right at the beginning. Paul was not looking to be honored by these people. He knew his reward would be in heaven. He did not ask them to think of him as the number one apostle.

Verses 7-8: Paul may have had in mind Moses’ portrayal of himself as a nursing mother to Israel (Num. 11:12). He used the same tender picture with the Corinthians (2 Cor. 12:14-15), and the Galatians (Gal 4:19).

Paul’s affection for the Thessalonians was like that felt by a mother willing to sacrifice her life for her child as was Christ who was willing to give up His own life for those who would be born again into the family of God (Matt. 20:28).

1 Thessalonians 2:7 "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:"

“Nurse cherisheth”: Just as a nursing mother selflessly cares for her children, so Paul gave himself to the Thessalonians. He changes the figure of speech to that of a father (In verse 11).

Paul had made himself as one of them. He had not elevated himself up above the people. His message to them had been a message of the love of God. He was tenderly teaching them as a parent would his own child.

1 Thessalonians 2:8 "So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."

In this, Paul was bringing them the good news of the gospel of Christ, but wanted them to feel the love that he had for them as well. Paul had such great love for them that he would have been willing to face most any hardship to bring them this message that would bring Life to them.

He is also saying that he preached from his heart. He was not trying to scare them out of hell, but love them into heaven.

1 Thessalonians 2:9 "For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God."

“Laboring night and day”: Paul explained this (in 2 Thess. 3:7-9). He did not ask for any money from the Thessalonians but rather lived on what he earned and what the Philippians sent (Phil. 4:16). So that his motives could not be questioned, unlike the false teachers who always sought money (1 Peter 5:2).

Paul did not stop when the sun went down. He preached into the night when necessary. He also prayed for the people he preached to. The call of God is not an 8 hour a day job. The called of God are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for the rest of their life.

Paul is saying that he will not be held responsible by God for not telling them the good news of the gospel. He told them all. He will have a clear conscience when he stands before God.

1 Thessalonians Chapter 2 Questions

1. What is Paul saying to them in verse 1?
2. What was the power in the message brought?
3. What was the only reward Paul wanted and got?
4. Where had Paul suffered persecution just before he came to Thessalonica?
5. Did the persecution Paul faced alter the strength of his message?
6. What does "contention", in verse 2, mean?
7. Where did most of Paul's problems come from?
8. What had caused Paul to change from being a Pharisee?
9. He did not stop preaching because of the conflict he just _____.
10. For our exhortation was not of _____, nor of _____, nor in _____.

11. What did "guile", in verse 3, mean?
12. The Jews were caught up in the _____ cleanness of man.
13. What word in verse 4 did the author say she loved?
14. Paul counted it a _____ to be entrusted with the gospel message.
15. What did Paul speak to the people?
16. The Bible calls it preaching to _____ when we preach what the people want to hear.
17. Why did the people sometimes take offence at what Paul preached?
18. What does gospel mean?
19. God was witness that Paul had not done what in his ministering?
20. When someone flatters you, what do they do it?
21. What was Paul truly grateful to God for?
22. Who did Paul have to answer to?
23. Who was the only church Paul would allow to help him financially?
24. What does Paul compare the gentleness of his message to them to in verse 7?
25. What did Paul want them to feel besides the love of God in the gospel message?
26. Why did Paul want to do this?
27. He was not trying to scare them out of _____, but to love them into _____.
28. Why would Paul feel no guilt when he stands before God
29. It pleased God to save them that believe by the foolishness of _____.