

Studies in the Book of 1 Thessalonians
Lesson 2 - 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16
Hope for a Hopeless World
Paul's Ministry

Chapter 1 describes the ideal church, while chapter 2 provides a picture of the ideal pastor or Christian servant. Paul has told us how the Gospel came to Thessalonica, now he tells us how he ministered to the young believers.

What a tremendous privilege “*to be entrusted with the gospel.*” We often speak of the stewardship of material things, but we need also to remember that every believer is a steward of the Gospel and the Word of God. In order to be faithful to his or her stewardship, a believer must be willing to suffer. Paul and Silas had been treated shamefully in Philippi, and they could have made all kinds of excuses for taking a vacation. But they knew that God had entrusted them with the Gospel and that they had to carry the message to other cities. Instead of being fearful, they were bold to proclaim the Good News.

The faithful steward must live to please God, not men. It is tempting to compromise the message in order to win friends, but God cannot bless a steward whose message and ministry are not according to His divine pattern. In verse 3, Paul states that his message was not of deceit or error. It was the true Word of God. Verse 5 states that Paul did not resort to flattering people for personal gain.

It seems odd that the man Paul should compare himself to a “*nursing mother*” in verse 7. New Christians need love, food, and tender care, just as a mother would give to her own children. Newborn babes need the milk of the Word and then must “graduate” to the meat. How a mother feeds her child is almost as important as what she feeds it. How important it is that we who are older Christians feed the younger believers lovingly and patiently.

One of the duties of fathers is to exhort and educate their children. Paul not only taught them the Word, but he encouraged them from his own experiences in the Lord. He knew that the Spirit of God would work in their lives if they received the Word and believed it. Finally, Paul warned his spiritual family of the enemies who would persecute them. If Christians become followers of the Lord and of the churches, then they can expect to be persecuted by Satan and his followers.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 and answer the following questions

1. How did Paul describe their coming to the Thessalonians in 2:1? What does Paul mean by the statement “*our coming to you was not in vain*”?
2. Despite this bad treatment, how had they taught in Thessalonica? How should we apply this lesson to our own teaching?
3. What example did Paul use to describe his relationship with the Thessalonians in 2:7? What do you think he wants to get across by using this image?
4. How devoted was Paul to their well-being according to 2:8? What reason does he give for his concern for them?
5. In verses 11-12, Paul uses the example of “father” to describe his relationship to the Thessalonians. How does this image of spiritual fathering build on Paul’s description of spiritual mothering?

6. What is the importance of Paul describing his relationship to the Thessalonians as “parent-child” rather than say, “teacher-student” or “commander-soldier”?

7. What was the purpose of Paul’s teaching according to 2:12? What should we learn?

8. How had the Thessalonians received the word according to 2:13? Explain why it’s important for people to recognize the gospel is God’s word, not just the word of men. What problems result when people fail to truly appreciate the gospel as God’s word?

9. How did the Thessalonians become “imitators” of God’s churches in Judea? (See 2:14)

10. What accusations did Paul make against the Judeans? (See 2:15)

11. What have you learned from 2:1-16 that you can apply to your life personally?

A Straightforward Approach

1 Thessalonians 2:5

“For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness, God is witness.” 1 Thess. 2:5

Many people in today’s culture have grown cynical about religion. So as we believers think about presenting the gospel to others, we need to be careful to make our message credible and straight forward.

Paul mentions two dangers that he avoided so as not to compromise his credibility. The use of “*flattering words*” which amounts to telling them what they wanted to hear, and “a cloak for covetousness” which involves hidden motives. To use either of these approaches is to deceive people. That’s unacceptable for someone who presents himself as a representative of Christ.

The key to Paul’s integrity was his realization that God Himself had entrusted him with the message. The task of taking the gospel to the Gentiles was not something that Paul had thought up, but was a calling from God. His aim was not to please people, but to please God.

Paul did not need to worry about his material blessing, even less to covet what others had. As a messenger of God, he could rely on God to provide for his needs and remain content in whatever circumstances came his way.

As we consider ways in which to communicate Christ to people around us, we might ask ourselves the following questions: 1. What other obstacles to our credibility might there be? 2. Are there things about our methods or motives that conflict with the message we have been entrusted?