

A Study of 1 & 2 Thessalonians (NIV 1984)

“To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess. 1:1b and 2 Thess. 1:1b)

1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

Still focusing on the truth of the Gospel which the readers had received, Paul now shifts his discussion to the way that he and his associates brought that Gospel to Thessalonica.

The purity of their motives and actions is consistent with the Divine message that they proclaim.

So, just as the Thessalonians’ reception of the Gospel demonstrates that it is truly God’s message, so now the behavior of the missionaries does the same. Unlike many traveling religious teachers and philosophers, these missionaries were motivated by their desire to please God, not by pride or greed. And their work was characterized by an urgency and love consistent with their message.

It is difficult to know whether Paul is responding in this section to a specific problem in the church.

Some have suggested that, as in the Galatians or the Corinthian epistles, Paul was defending his apostleship against opponents who claimed that he did not have the genuine apostolic authority.

But the emphasis of this passage is less on the authority of Paul than on the significance of his behavior; he mentions his apostolic authority in a way that assumes the readers’ acceptance of it (see 2:6). If he has any anxiety about their attitude toward him, it would appear to be that they would mistake his absence from them as a lack of concern (cf. 2:17-20).

Therefore, he focuses on his consistent love and care for them while he was in Thessalonica founding the church.

This discussion then prepares for the emphasis of 2:17-3:10.

Paul’s absence from the Thessalonians should not be interpreted as a consequence of his indifference toward them, for he has demonstrated his deep concern in many ways.

But this section has a wider connection to the rest of 1 Thessalonians as well.

By showing that his life is consistent with the message that he preaches, Paul demonstrates how one who believes the Gospel is to put it into practice.

With this emphasis, this discussion will provide the basis for Paul's later exhortations to please God (4:1), love others (4:9), and work for one's own support (4:11-12).

1) Note v.1. Paul says that they know that their visit to Thessalonica was what?

For "you" Paul uses an emphatic Greek pronoun (*autoi*) to draw attention to the fact that the Thessalonians' personal experience confirms what he is about to say. The effect might be paraphrased, "You of all people know...."

2) Compare 2:1 with 3:5. What did you learn?

3) Note v.2. What two things had happened to Paul and his companions in Philippi?

4) Note v. 2. How did they know? (For background see Acts 16:20, 22-23, 37)

5) Note v.2. What had they dared to tell the Thessalonians? How does Paul say they were able to this?

6) Note v.2. They told them the Gospel in spite of what? (For background see Acts 17:5-9)

7) Note v.3. Paul says the appeal they make does not spring from what two?

8) Note v.3. Nor were Paul and his companions trying to do what?

Paul indicates that his behavior was free of dishonesty of any kind.

9) Note v.4. Paul says they speak how?

10) Note v.4. To be what? With what?

Paul begins his sentence here with the statement of God's endorsement. Literally: "As we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel, so we speak."

11) Compare the last part of 2:4 with 4:1. What should be the goal of every Christian?

Having been called by God, Paul seeks to please Him alone, unlike others who may seek the approval of their human audience for their own gain. Certainly the kind of opposition that Paul faced in Thessalonica would demonstrate that he did not seek to please people.

Paul will remind the readers that every Christian's objective is to please God continually.

12) Note v.5. They did not use what method?

13) Note v.5. Nor did they do what?

14) Note v.5. Whom did Paul call on to attest to his life and words?

The point is clear; Paul's actions in Thessalonica were not a way to disguise a grasping for material gain. Confident in God's ability to know the heart, Paul now appeals to God's witness to corroborate what he says.

15) Note v.6. They were not looking for what? From whom?

Paul does not seek the human praise which might motivate others. Praise may come, but it is not his pursuit.

16) Note v.6. As what of Christ? Paul says they could have been what to them?

The Greek "*apostolos*" indicates a messenger or spokesman who derives his authority from the one who sends him with the message. On the basis of that authority, Paul could have expected a variety of benefits from those to whom he preached (see 1 Corinthians 9).

The plural "apostles" in this verse has caused some discussion as to whether Paul included Silas and Timothy as apostles.

Paul does occasionally use the term "apostle" to refer to persons other than "the twelve" and himself. Reference 1 Corinthians 15:7; 2 Corinthians 8:23; Romans 16:7; Philippians 2:25; cf. Acts 14:4, 14.

But more commonly in the New Testament "apostle" was used as a technical term to refer to the twelve apostles appointed by Jesus, perhaps to others who saw the risen Lord and were commissioned by Him, and to Paul, the "one abnormally born" (1 Corinthians 15:8).

Paul referred to himself as the one to whom the Lord appeared "last of all" (1 Corinthians 15:8). Hence, as the last to have "seen the Lord" (1 Corinthians 9:1), he had apostolic authority which none who came later could claim.

17) Note v.7. What metaphor does Paul use to illustrate their gentleness?

Instead of seeking his own benefit, Paul sought to nurture and protect his converts.

18) Note 8. What word describes their feelings for the Thessalonians?

Paul begins this statement by describing his feeling toward the Thessalonians. Paul's feelings are grounded in the relationship they shared in Christ.

19) Note v.8. What two things were they delighted to share with the Thessalonians? Why?

The message of God's love in the Gospel is so much a part of Paul's life that sharing his life comes naturally.

20) Note v.9. Surely they should remember what?

21) Note v.9. In order to not be a what? They worked how?

See 2 Corinthians 11:27.

We can probably conclude that Paul worked at his trade during the day and perhaps before sunrise or after sunset as well. Undoubtedly, Paul shared the Gospel with those who did business with him, and spent the other daylight and evening hours preaching and teaching

22) Note v.9. What did they preach to them?

See 2 Corinthians 11:27; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-10

23) Note v.10. What two do they call on as witnesses?

Paul repeatedly appealed directly to the Thessalonians' knowledge of his behavior.

24) Note v.10. Paul says they were what three? Among whom?

Taken together, the three terms underscore Paul's unimpeachable integrity in all aspects of his life.

25) Note v.11. Using what metaphor, how does Paul say they dealt with Thessalonians?

26) Note v.12. What 3 "ing" words does Paul now use?

These 3 words represent well the actions of a father who loves his children.

27) Note v.12. Paul wants them to live what kind of lives?

The goal of Paul's exhortation is a life lived in consistent response to God's initiative in salvation.

28) Note v.12. God has called and continues to call them into what?

Paul's emphasis is on his exhortation that their behavior in the present is to be conformed to what they will receive in the future.

Paul concludes this section, as he did in 1:10, with a reference to the return of Christ, preparing again for the crucial discussion of eschatology in 4:13-5:11.

Eschatology is a branch of theology that studies the end of the world, human history, or the present age, and the expectations of what will happen. It also involves beliefs about death, judgment, and the final fate of souls and humanity. The word "eschatology" comes from the Greek word *eskhatos*, which means "last."