

# Paul's Ministry

1 Thessalonians: 2:1-10

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## 1 Thessalonians 2:1-10 – (NIV)

*You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results. <sup>2</sup> We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition. <sup>3</sup> For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. <sup>4</sup> On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. <sup>5</sup> You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. <sup>6</sup> We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. <sup>7</sup> Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, <sup>8</sup> so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. <sup>9</sup> Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. <sup>10</sup> You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.*

### v1 – Why did Paul defend his ministry?

Paul had many enemies in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-6 and 17:13) who discredited him in his absence, especially because of his hurried departure from Thessalonica. Paul's enemies said he left town quickly because he was a self-serving coward.

- Paul wrote here in a personal manner, but this really wasn't a personal issue for Paul. He knew that it mattered for the sake of the Gospel. If Paul was discredited, then the Gospel message itself would be discredited.

### What false charges were made against Paul?

This was evident from the way Paul explained himself in this chapter:

- "Paul has a police record and is therefore untrustworthy" (1 Thessalonians 2:2, *suffered before* referring to his imprisonment in Thessalonica).
- "Paul is delusional" (1 Thessalonians 2:3, *error*).

- "Paul's ministry is based on impure motives" (1 Thessalonians 2:3, *uncleanness*).
- "Paul deliberately deceives others" (1 Thessalonians 2:3, *in deceit*).
- "Paul preaches to please others, not God" (1 Thessalonians 2:4, *not as pleasing men*).
- "Paul is in the ministry as a mercenary, to get what he can out of it materially" (1 Thessalonians 2:5, 2:9, *nor a cloak for covetousness*).
- "Paul only wants personal glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:6, *nor did we seek glory from men*).
- "Paul is something of a dictator" (1 Thessalonians 2:7 *we were gentle among you*).

### How was Paul's ministry not without success?

It was evident to everyone that Paul's ministry in Thessalonica was a success, so it is better to see it as a reference to the *character* of Paul's ministry. His coming was not empty or hollow, as if he were a mere salesman or marketer.

### v2 – What happened to Paul at Philippi?

Acts 16:23-24 records that the suffering included a public flogging and having their feet in stocks while confined in the city's inner prison. Such a Roman flogging was no light matter; it was an experience not soon forgotten.

- When Paul arrived in Thessalonica, the wounds on his back from Philippi were still fresh. If Paul was in it for himself, he wasn't very smart about serving his own self-interest.

### What was notable about Paul sharing the gospel with the Thessalonians?

*We were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict:* Despite what some of Paul's accusers said, he did not only preach the Gospel when it was easy or convenient. He knew what it was like to speak boldly for the Lord even **in much conflict**.

### What is it like to speak boldly?

It denotes the state of mind when the words flow freely, the attitude of feeling quite at home with no sense of stress or strain. This attitude includes both boldness and confidence.

### **What was it about the strong opposition that demanded boldness?**

The word rendered *strong opposition* or *conflict (agon)* contains a metaphor drawn from the athletic games or the arena. It means the place of contest, and then the contest itself — a race, a struggle, a battle.

- Such a conflict always involves intense exertion and strenuous, persistent effort to overcome the determined opposition or the dangerous antagonist.

### **v3 – What impure motives or tricks could people sharing the gospel be accused of?**

People have always used religion to have power over or to control others. They have also used religion to make themselves wealthy.

- In the first century world Paul lived in, there were many competing religions, and many ministers of those religions were motivated by greed and gain.

### **Why couldn't Paul be accused of using religion to control others or get wealthy?**

- The persecution he endured
- The uniqueness of his message
- His desire to move on and share the message with as many people as he could

### **Why were the Thessalonians exposed to a lot of competing religions?**

The city of Thessalonica sat on the Egnatian Way, the famous highway that went east to west through Macedonia. Thessalonica was also an important port and a melting pot city with cultures from all over the world. There were a staggering variety of religions and religious professionals in Thessalonica.

- The gods of the Olympian pantheon, especially Apollo, Athena, and Hercules.
- There were the native Greek mystery religions, celebrating Dionysis and the sex and drinking cult.
- The Greek intellectual and philosophical traditions were also represented.
- There were shrines to many Egyptian gods: Isis, Sarapis, Anubis.
- Also present were the Roman State cults that deified the political heroes of Rome.
- There were also the Jewish people and the God-fearing Gentiles.

Most of these religions were missionary minded and sought to spread their faith using itinerant evangelists and preachers. Most of these missionaries were opportunists, who took everything they could from their listeners, and then moved on to find someone else to support them.

### **v4 – Why wasn't Paul looking for praise from men in his gospel message?**

Paul knew his Gospel wouldn't always please men, but he knew that it was pleasing to God.

### **Why is the gospel offensive to some?**

It makes you dependent on and accountable to God instead of yourself.

### **How can the gospel be made more attractive?**

Emphasize the fact that God did everything necessary for forgiveness of our sin; that salvation is not a function of our performance.

- Eternal security is a reality if we are not dependent on our own performance.

### **What must we never compromise on when sharing the gospel?**

Issues like man's need, God's Savior, the cross, the resurrection, and the new life.

### **How would people know that Paul's message was approved by God?**

It was reinforced by the Scriptures (Old Testament)...

*Acts 17:11 – These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.*

### **What Scriptures might the Bereans have looked at to confirm Paul's gospel message?**

That Jesus was the Suffering Servant Messiah... Psalm 16:8-11, Psalm 22, Isaiah 53...

### **v5 – What was not part of Paul's ministry?**

*For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness:* Paul understood that **covetousness** always has a **cloak**. It is always concealed by a noble sounding goal. But Paul did not use the **flattering words** that often are a **cloak for covetousness**.

### **What is wrong with flattery?**

It is usually insincere and is directed to the pleasure of the person being flattered. The Greek term has rather the idea of using fair words as a means of gaining one's own ends."

### **What is the problem with greed?**

*Pleonexia* is self-seeking of all types, a quest for anything that brings self-satisfaction. It grows out of complete disinterest in the rights of others — an attitude foreign to Paul and his helpers.

**v6 – How do we know Paul did not seek personal glory in his ministry?**

When Paul ministered among the Thessalonians, he didn't need fancy introductions or lavish praise. His satisfaction came from his relationship with Jesus, not from the praise of people.

**Why didn't Paul seek glory from men?**

Paul's needs for security and acceptance were met primarily in Jesus. This meant that he didn't spend his life trying to seek and earn the acceptance of man. He ministered from an understanding of his identity in Jesus.

**What authority did Paul have that he didn't exercise?**

*When we might have made demands as apostles of Christ:* Paul was among the Thessalonians to *give* something to them, not to *take* something from them. He did not come making demands as an apostle.

**v7 – What was Paul like with the Thessalonians?**

*But we were gentle among you:* Paul was like a **nursing mother**, who only looks to *give* to her child. Though some among the Thessalonians had accused Paul of ministering out of self-interest, but Paul simply asks the Christians in Thessalonica to remember the **gentle** character of his ministry **among** them.

**v8 – How had Paul demonstrated his love of the Thessalonians?**

*We were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives:* The sacrifices Paul endured for the sake of ministry to the Thessalonians were not a burden. He was **well pleased** to do it because Paul was **affectionately longing** for the Thessalonians **because** they **had become dear to** Paul and his associates.

**How had Paul given his own life to the Thessalonians?**

The time he spent with them, his openness about his life, and all the things he did to show that he cared for them.

- It has been said that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

**v9 – What was Paul's toil and hardship?**

Paul recognized his right to be supported by those he ministered to

1 Corinthians 9:14 – *the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.*

But Paul voluntarily gave up that right to set himself apart from missionaries of false religions. Paul denied his rights and took a higher standard upon himself.

**How was Paul able to not be a burden?**

He worked the trade of a tentmaker to support himself. About his ministry in Corinth we know...

Acts 18:3 – *he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.*

**v10 – How could Paul invite the consideration of his life in evaluating the legitimacy of the gospel?**

Paul freely appealed to his own life as an example. Paul wanted people to look to Jesus, but he could also tell them to look at *his* life, because the power of Jesus was real in his life.

- Paul also offered up his life as an example in Philippians 3:17 and 1 Corinthians 11:1.

**Why should each of us also seek to be an example for other Christians?**

This is a worthy goal for any Christian today; to live a life that declares **how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among** others.

- This is the kind of life that draws others to follow Jesus for themselves.

**What applications come to mind from this passage?**

- We should always speak the good news of Christ boldly and with confidence.
- Scripture confirms those speaking God's Word; make sure those you listen to do.
- Our presentation of the gospel should be attractive as possible but without compromise.