

## Study 3 – Book of First Thessalonians

### Topic: Paul's Service, Motivation and Conduct

#### Study text: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-9

Let's look at these text verse by verse as we study Paul's commendations to the Thessalonians and what we can learn from it, individually and corporately as Christians.

#### Outline

- I. Paul's service among the Thessalonians (1-4)
- II. Paul's motivation and conduct in ministering to them (5-9)

#### *I. Paul's service among the Thessalonians (1-4)*

#### Cross-References

Acts 16:19-24, 37 – This passage tells the background of Paul and Silas serving in Philippi.

#### Verse by Verse Study

**Q: What was the result of Paul's ministry among the Thessalonians?**

**Q: What incident helped give Paul and Silas boldness? What happened in Philippi? So, what is one known reason why God allowed this seemingly bad thing to happen to them?**

Verse 1-3. Also see Acts 16:19-24

**1. Our coming to you was not in vain** – In fact, preaching the gospel to others is never in vain. See Isaiah 55:11. It always accomplishes exactly what God purposes. That doesn't mean it always bears as much fruit as it did in this case in Thessalonica. Paul and his comrades in teaching could have felt discouraged when they left that city. After all, they were only able to stay about three weeks. Then they were forced to leave by an angry mob who rejected what they had preached and were furious enough to start a riot that threatened their very lives. **Sometimes we may not immediately see the fruit of our efforts, but we must keep sowing and believing.**

Example: Someone shared this..." **I recently knew of a lady who had become a believer after I shared the good news with her. In the meantime, ten years passed, and I never knew how she had responded. It turns out she believed and had been regularly going to church and sharing her faith.**"

**2. Had suffered in Philippi** – See Acts 16:19-24. How was Paul treated there? What hardships did they face in that city? How could these very hardships embolden them? This verse teaches us an important lesson.

**A. It shows us that God had a plan for allowing Paul and Silas to face hardship in Philippi.** While there were probably many facets of this plan, many of which we don't even know, one seemed to be to embolden them. Seeing God work miraculously amid their hardships to save the jailer and his family, to send an earthquake that unchained them, and finally free them from the leaders there strengthened Paul and Silas to have more faith in God and continue preaching the Word no matter what obstacles they faced.

Remember that God has a plan for you even when you face hardships. Ask yourself if you have learned the lesson or lessons, He has for you in the midst of it. Sometimes, It is very difficult to grow more courageous if you never face

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dangerous situations. If you never face annoying situations, it is hard to grow more patient. If you never get sick, it is challenging to appreciate health. Sometimes, difficulties happen to refine our Christian character.

**Q: What is the distinctive motivation for Paul's sharing with them? What does it mean to be "entrusted with the gospel"? Are we entrusted with the gospel? Verses 3-5**

**3. Paul's pure motivations** – Many false teachers are motivated by their own agenda. Like snake oil salesmen, they use smooth speech to cover up the faulty product they sell. False teachers deceive and lie. They twist the Scriptures to make them sound like they support their own warped views. **See 2 Timothy 4:3**. Paul defends their teaching ministry by making it clear that not only what they said is true, but their motivations are also pure. Their goal was not pleasing man but pleasing God.

**4. Entrusted with the gospel** – Paul and his co-workers realized the important truth; they were merely stewards of the gospel. This work had been entrusted to them from on high. How did this knowledge affect how they served? Are you entrusted with the gospel? Which verses in the Bible show that we are entrusted with the gospel? How does this affect you? What should you do since you have been entrusted with this? What should you not do?

**Application:** Here are a few ways the knowledge that '**I am entrusted with the gospel**' should affect me.

1. I should never change the gospel, add my own opinions, or make it sound more or less attractive than it is. It is God's gospel, not mine. So, I have to be faithful to share it accurately.

2. It was entrusted to me and to each of us for a reason, to share it. I should not be like the man who hid his coin in the ground. I need to let the gospel sound forth from me.

3. I should not rely on others to share with my family or friends. One reason God entrusted the gospel to each believer is to share with the people we know. If we don't share with the people we know, who would or should share with them?

## *II. Paul's motivation and conduct in ministering to them (5-9).*

**Q: What are the distinctive of Paul's motivation and conduct among the Thessalonians?**

**Q: Why would some teachers engage in flatter?**

**Q: How did Paul act among them? Why?**

Verse 5

**1. We never came with flattering speech** – Flattering speech often comes from a person who has an agenda. False teachers may flatter others as they would then be easier to deceive. Salesmen use this method. But we should not engage in flattery. Ephesians 4:15 says to "speak the truth in love." The truth is always best. Relationships built on flattery are built on shaky ground and are doomed to failure. Flattery is one kind of manipulation. We should not manipulate others into doing what we want. If you want a favor from someone, just ask.

**Verse 6 – Q: How did Paul act among them? Why?**

**2. Nor did we seek glory from men** – In other words, their motivations were pure. They did not share the gospel to get attention from people. Paul and his companions did not pray so that others would look at them and praise them for their spirituality. They did not memorize Scripture to impress others.

It can be easy for us to seek glory, perhaps unconsciously. Or we can look at it another way. Are you perfectly happy to do a job for others (either your spouse or roommate or at church) even if no one ever noticed you did it and, therefore, no one showed any appreciation? We should not do good works to be noticed by people. It is enough that God is our witness and that He sees you.

**Q: What can we learn from Paul about how to treat others? Vs 7**

**3. We might have asserted our authority** – Notice that Paul rarely asserted his authority. Why did Paul not do it often?

**A. Good leaders generally lead by example, not by giving commands.**

B. If a leader often asserts his authority, it generally isn't long before his followers become exasperated. See Ephesians 6:4, which commands fathers not to exasperate their children to anger. One way fathers may do that is by often asserting their authority.

Husbands, how can you apply this to your marriages? How can fathers apply this? Teachers?

It is almost always better to talk together and come to a decision together with your wife, child (especially once older, not referring to little children), or student rather than giving a blanket command. The attitude of "I am the boss, and you need to do what I say!" should only be used as a last resort if sound reasoning, discussion, and prayer have already completely failed.

**What can you learn from Paul about his attitude toward the Thessalonians?**

**5. Verse 7 – We proved to be gentle among you.** This is another example of positive and gracious leadership. Paul was not like a dictator to the Thessalonians. Instead, he chooses one of the most tender images in all of nature, a nursing mother. Some of us here may be inclined toward "tough love." We might say, "My way or the highway." While we do see a bit of tough love from Jesus and Paul, we mostly see gentleness, patience, and compassion. This is how our attitudes toward others should be characterized. If 90% of our communication towards others is gentle and compassionate, they will be much more inclined to accept the 10% of tough love. But if we treat others harshly and strictly as a matter of course, this will slowly grind on them more and more. Bitterness and anger may well up in their hearts. They may become more distant until we lose them altogether. Unfortunately, this happens in many marriages and parent-child relationships. It also occurs in churches and fellowships. We should learn from Jesus and Paul to treat others with gentleness and patience and only rebuke when necessary.

**Q: What can you learn from Paul imparting the Thessalonians?**

**6. Verse 8 – Paul not only imparted the gospel. He imparted their very lives.** He genuinely cared about them as people, not just as numbers in his mission report. This is a challenge to all of us who also share the gospel. How can you do this? How can you show more care towards those you teach and share with? Do not just count up the numbers. Listen to their struggles and their questions. Spend time with them. Try to help them in the real situations they face. Show patience when they are slow to "get it." Contact them outside of Bible study time. Reach out to them by email, phone, or face-to-face meetings. Treat other people as people, not as objects. This applies to all areas of life.

**Q: What job did Paul often do so as not to be a burden to the people he served?**

**Q: Did he have to do this? Why not just let them provide for him? Which way is better?**

**7. Verse 9 – Paul and Silas were self-supported while at Thessalonica. Acts 18:3.** Paul sometimes supported himself by making and selling tents. He did this so that he would not be a burden to the people he shared with. See 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. Paul's example doesn't mean that in every case, preachers and missionaries should follow this approach. When Jesus sent out the disciples in Luke 10, He specifically told them not to take their own provisions, giving locals a chance to practice hospitality and responsibility in caring for them, which also encouraged their growth and maturity. Christian workers must be discerning and Spirit-led to know when and where each method should be followed.