

## To the Church of the Thessalonians – Their Reception

### 1 Thessalonians 2

#### Introduction

1. Paul extends his thoughts concerning his initial coming to Thessalonica with the truth, and reflects on their reception of it, and the great relationship it brought them all.
  2. The great power of the gospel is displayed in many ways when it is proclaimed and received.
  3. It is imperative that we allow the gospel free course, whether we are those bringing it, or as we continue to receive it by faith.
  4. When the true gospel touches and convicts honest hearts, it is shown in very dramatic and specific ways.
- I. Their Introduction to the Gospel (vv. 1-12)
    - A. The Integrity of the Gospel (vv. 1-6a)
      - a. Paul builds on his words mentioned in chapter 1 – 1:5, 9 – How did the gospel come to them? What kind of men were they among them? What manner of entry did they have among them?
        - i. Whether Paul is giving a defense of his conduct, or is distancing himself from the culture, or encouraging the Thessalonians, his words not only speak volumes about his character, but of the nature of the gospel they received from him.
      - b. The circumstances under which they came to Thessalonica answer to the substance of what they brought (vv. 1-3):
        - i. (v. 1) – “not in vain” – empty – “(1) pert. to being without someth. material, empty; (2) pert. to being devoid of intellectual, moral, or spiritual value, empty fig. extension of mng. (1)”
        - ii. (v. 2) – cf. Acts 16:22-23 – falsely accused, beaten and imprisoned – yet entered Thessalonica with full intent to preach the gospel, even though it resulted in more conflict.
        - iii. (v. 3) – would they have acted this way if what they preached wasn’t legitimate?
          1. **Motives** – to promote error, and to do it for the sake of the impurity of dishonest gain.
            - a. 1:10 – the resurrected Christ – would they suffer for a lie?
          2. **Method** – through deceit, rather than straightforward clarity.
          3. What would lead such men to preach even though it would bring more conflict? What they had was the truth!  
(Cf. Acts 4:19-20; 5:29)
      - c. Their integrity, and motive with which they brought the gospel answer to the integrity of the gospel – that it is true, reliable, and worthy of faith (vv. 4-6a):

- i. **(v. 4)** – their time in Thessalonica was a demonstration of stewardship.
    1. It didn't belong to them, and they acted accordingly – **1 Corinthians 4:1-2** – their time in Thessalonica was a test from God.
    2. This mindset safeguarded the integrity of the message – **1 Corinthians 3:11, 16-17**
  - ii. **(v. 5)** – they didn't win the Thessalonians with:
    1. Not flattery – **(1:5)** – convicting power of the Holy Spirit.
    2. Not a **"pretext for greed" (NASB)** – they didn't put on a front as godly men to cover up their true motive of greed – **(cf. 1 Timothy 6:5; 2 Timothy 3:5)**
  - iii. **(v. 6a)** – they didn't do it to be seen of men – thus, the message was protected from defilement – **(cf. John 5:41-44; 7:16-18)**
- B. The Affection of the Gospel **(vv. 6b-12)**
- a. The gospel was not presented to the Thessalonians as something to benefit Paul and his companions but was always with the well-being of the Thessalonians in mind – this continues to be Paul's motive, and the gospel's aim.
  - b. **(v. 6b)** – Their willingness to forgo their right to receive support as those sent forth by Christ with the gospel shows their pure intentions, as well as that of the gospel.
    - i. **"might"** – *dynamai* – "to be able, have power whether by virtue of one's own ability and resources, or of a state of mind, or through favourable circumstances, or by permission of law or custom" (THAYER)
    - ii. **"made demands"** – *emi* (to be) *baros* (weight) – "been a burden to you" (LSB).
    - iii. I.e. they had permission by the Law of Christ to receive support from them, burdening them financially, but they didn't – **(cf. 1 Corinthians 9:14-15; 2 Corinthians 11:7-10)**
  - c. Rather than having **"asserted our authority" (v. 6, NASB)**, Paul says they acted as a nursing mother – not for self-interest, but the interest of the other – **(v. 7)**
    - i. **(v. 8)** – Their view and treatment of them was with the intense affection of a mother – desiring their best interests.
      1. So he gave them the gospel – **1 Peter 2:2** – pure milk to help them grow.
      2. They gave their lives – **(v. 9)** – by laboring with physical work on top of the great spiritual labor just to avoid burdening them.
    - ii. The work of Paul and his companions among the Thessalonians demonstrates the Gospel's fruit of affection – **cf. Titus 3:4** – *philanthrōpia* – love toward man, practically resulting in

beneficence – **those who are won by the gospel are motivated by the same affection.**

- d. All is summed up – **(vv. 10-12)** – they, and God can attest to their behavior among them.
  - i. **Devoutly** – their conduct toward God.
  - ii. **Justly** – their conduct toward man.
  - iii. **Blamelessly** – their freedom from any negative charges on both fronts.
  - iv. **(v. 11)** – they acted as a father.
    - 1. **Exhorted** – urged them to pursue a course of conduct.
    - 2. **Comforted** – consoled them with the precious truths of the gospel.
    - 3. **Charged** (*martyromai*) – an appeal based on testimony, evidence.
  - v. **(v. 12)** – to submit to God to receive the blessing He offers.
- II. Their Reception of the Gospel **(vv. 13-16)**
  - A. The Identity of the Gospel **(v. 13)**
    - a. **(v. 13a)** – what they heard from them was claimed to be the **“word of God”** – based on what was presented, how it was presented, and the evidence with which it was presented they believed its claim.
    - b. **(v. 13b)** – they took it for what it actually was – God’s word, not that of man – of divine origin.
  - B. The Power of the Gospel **(vv. 13-16)**
    - a. **(v. 13)** – because it was the word of God, and they received it as such, it worked powerfully in them. **(1:5)** – power, holy spirit and assurance
      - i. If we understand that it is God’s word, it will move us to do great things.
      - ii. We will move with fear and trembling, and allow God to work in us toward His will – **cf. Philippians 2:12-13**
    - b. Evidence that the word of God works in them is their endurance of persecution for their faith – **(v. 14)**
      - i. They suffered like the earliest Christians in Judea suffered – Paul himself was a leader in this campaign against the church.
      - ii. **“from your own countrymen”** – likely those who were Gentiles in Thessalonica **(4:5)**
        - 1. Start – Jewish opposers stirred up a mob.
        - 2. After Paul left – persecution continued on the Gentile front.
      - iii. **NOTE: The Gospel preached by Paul is shown to bear the weight of truth in that he held firm to it despite persecution (v. 2), and it is shown to bear the weight of truth in that the Thessalonians were immediately willing to suffer for it.**
        - 1. This is the powerful conviction that is shown by true believers **(1:5).**

- c. However, as powerful and true as the Gospel is, there will always be the hard hearted, unreasonable men who do not have faith (**cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:2**) (**vv. 15-16**):
  - i. Their refusal of the gospel translates into the opposite of what Paul demonstrated in his coming to Thessalonica.
  - ii. (**v. 15a**) – killed and persecuted the Lord and those who proclaim His name – contrary to truth.
  - iii. (**v. 15b**) – opposed to God and opposed to men. (opposite of **vv. 4, 8**)
  - iv. (**v. 16**) – they are not simply indifferent but radically opposed to the mercy of God which seeks to come upon all men – in rejecting the truth they refuse His mercy and grace and choose wrath.
- III. Their Fellowship in the Gospel (**vv. 17-20**)
  - A. The Binding Tie of the Gospel (**vv. 17-18**)
    - a. “Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.” (Blest Be The Tie)
    - b. He calls them **“brethren”** – a term of familial affection which is not lightly inserted by Paul.
      - i. They are all of the family of God, suffering for the same truth, living for the same Father and Savior who died of them, and according to the same Spirit who directs them.
    - c. **“having been taken away”** – *aporphanizō* – literally make an orphan of; figuratively and passive, of an unwanted separation be torn away from, be deprived of, be (unwillingly) separated from (ALGNT)
      - i. Speaks to his affection for them, and the agonizing effect the separation had.
    - d. **“not in heart”** – distance hurts, but it cannot destroy the fellowship in Christ.
    - e. (**vv. 17b-18**) – Paul consistently sought to come to them again – He greatly desired to be with them but was kept from it by Satan.
  - B. The Hope, Joy, and Glory of Fellowship in the Gospel (**vv. 19-20**)
    - a. The sincerity and love of Paul’s ministry is displayed in the object of his hope, joy, and glorying – the Thessalonians’ consummated faith.
    - b. Nothing brings Paul greater joy than to know these people were made children of God, and nothing would bring him greater joy than to see them reach the goal in the end.
    - c. Paul’s preaching of the gospel, and their receiving of the gospel gave them both something to greatly rejoice in and anticipate concerning each other – such a relationship is not the selfish-ambition denied by Paul before (**vv. 4-6**).
    - d. “When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus we’ll sing and shout the victory.” (When We All Get To Heaven)

**Conclusion** – Let us hold fast the gospel’s integrity, affection, power, and fellowship.