



PAUL'S LETTERS TO THE
THESSALONIANS

Lesson 3 • 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16
September 19, 2021



LESSON PLAN



Lesson	Date	Passage
1	9/5/2021	Introduction
2	9/12/2021	1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
3	9/19/2021	1 Thessalonians 2:1-16
4	9/26/2021	1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13
5	10/3/2021	1 Thessalonians 4:1-12
6	10/10/2021	1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11
7	10/17/2021	1 Thessalonians 5:12-28
8	10/24/2021	2 Thessalonians 1:1-12
9	10/31/2021	2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
10	11/7/2021	2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5
11	11/14/2021	2 Thessalonians 3:6-18
12	11/21/2021	Review
13	11/28/2021	Reading and Reflection

Passage Outline

- Their Purpose (2:1-4)
- Their Approach (2:5-8)
- Their Practice (2:9-12)
- Their Reward (2:13-16)



5 minutes – 11:10 to 11:15

- **Review – What were the three main points of the beginning of Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians?** Greeting, Thanksgiving, and Encouragement.
- Read the passage 1 Thes. 2:1-16
- **Review outline**
- Last week we saw how Paul opened this letter. In his opening, we heard about their thanksgiving in coming to the city, their thanksgiving of God’s work among them, and their encouragement in the Thessalonians response to the gospel. Paul continues these themes here in Chapter 2.
- In our text this morning, Paul begins the main part of the letter by reminding them of their recent visit.

Passage Theme

1 For you yourselves know, ... 2 ... as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God ... 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, ... 8 ... we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God ... 9 ... while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.



5 minutes – 11:10 to 11:15

Have class look at passage for a theme...

Their Purpose (v. 1-4)

- The impact of their visit (v. 1)
- The persistence of their visit (v. 2)
- The character of their visit (v. 3-4)



10 minutes – 11:15 to 11:25

- Here in these first four verses, we are reminded of their purpose in coming to Thessalonica.
- **Why might Paul want to remind them of the purpose for his visit?**
 - To address the criticism from the Jews who continued to oppose him
 - To explain his quick exit from the city and delayed return
 - To encourage them as they continued to face opposition
- Paul begins the body of his letter by connecting to his opening words of thanksgiving. In verse 1, Paul is saying “Based on all that we have to be thankful for, you know that our visit to you was not a waste of time. The word “vain” in this verse has the sense of empty or ineffective. Paul appeals to their knowledge and experience of the impact of his visit. They knew that Paul’s visit was helpful, positive, and had a huge influence on them. Even if it was shortened by opposition, it was a worthwhile and spiritually productive visit.
- Not only did their visit have an impact, we see in verse 2 it was a visit that came out of persistence in the face of opposition. **Paul continues reminding them that came even after the suffering and persecution in Philippi**, there was a persistence in ministry by Paul and his companions. Paul is appealing to their

knowledge of the determination of their work in Thessalonica. We want them to remember that in the face of consistent opposition, they carried on with their mission of proclaiming the Gospel. And not only did they carry on the mission, but they did so with confidence and boldness.

- **What was the nature or basis of their boldness?**
 - In God
 - Declaring the Gospel of God
 - In the midst of **much** conflict and opposition
- **What would be the motivation for such boldness in the face of strong opposition?** Love for God and others.
- Paul also reminds them of the character of their visit in verses 3 and 4. Look carefully at these two verses and note how Paul provides a contrast on the source of their appeal to them. He notes the purity of motivation in their appeal by contrasting what it was not and what it was.
- **Where did their appeal not come from?**
 - Error; literally wandering from the truth
 - Impurity; idea of corrupt or malicious motivation
 - Deceit; intent to trick in order to gain followers
 - Not to please man (v. 4) ; not looking for popularity or approval of men
- **Where did their appeal come from?**
 - Approved by God; in calling/commission and evidence of ministry with the Gospel
 - To please God; who is the ultimate judge of their heart's motivations

Their Approach (v. 5-8)

- What it was not (v. 5-6)
 - Not for personal gain
 - Not for personal glory
- What it was (v. 7-8)
 - Nurturing care
 - Genuine affection



10 minutes – 11:25 to 11:35

- Next, Paul goes even further with his explanation of their ministry to the Thessalonians in verses 5 to 8. He now appeals to the example of their approach to ministering among them; providing another contrast. This second contrast illustrates what their approach was not. And then provides a reminder of what it was. In this passage, Paul seems to draw upon the premise that the Thessalonians were aware of the many false teachers and those seeking to take advantage of new believers.
- **What is the first motivation that Paul and his companions avoided?** Greed and personal gain.
- **What approach did those who desired personal gain use?** Flattery.
- **Have you ever felt someone was trying to butter you up in order to get something they wanted? Have you ever figured it out after the person was gone?**
- **What are some forms that flattery can take?** False praise, gifts, inclusion into exclusive circles...
- **What are some ways we see this kind of influence on and in the church today?**
- **What does it seem like Paul was concerned about for the Thessalonian church?** Someone trying to gain their favor, monetary gifts or support, or trying to get power or influence.

- **What is the second motivation that Paul and his companions avoided?** The praise and honor of others.
- **What might this have looked like if they had wanted it?** Financial support, personal praise, fame, special treatment...
- Keep in mind that orators or speakers at that time were like the rock stars of **Greek** society. Many of these were motivated not just by greed but also by receiving public honor and establishing a renowned reputation.
- **What does it say about Paul and his companions that they could have made demands for honor as Apostles?** Humility, made the Gospel a priority, wanted the glory to go to God. The purity of their motivation and desires to proclaim the Gospel.
- In verse 7, Paul moves to the other side of the contrast in what their approach was.
- **What is the first characteristic?** That they were like a mother caring for her newborn child. A few points to note here.
 - First the word “gentle” in the ESV is probably better translated “infants”. The idea is connected to the previous verse. Paul and his companions could have thrown their Apostolic weight around. But instead, they ministered in the church as lower in status than all others. They were as babes, from the sense of claiming honor and praise for themselves.
 - Second, not only did **they take** advantage of their position, they cared for the Thessalonians as a nursing mother. The imagery here is that of a mother who nurtures and cares for a newborn child. **Additionally**, it conveys the bonding and tenderness of the very special relationship that develops between a mother and nursing child.
 - Third, the use of the phrase “own child” speaks to difference in care between the natural mother and a hired nurse or “wet nurse” often brought in to care for a child in those times. While a hired nurse may be able to care for the child, they will never match the love and bond of a mother and her own child. Paul is speaking of those who might come in behind him for their own personal gain or glory.
- **What is the second characteristic of Paul’s ministry approach to the Thessalonians?** They had a deep and genuine affection for the Thessalonians.
 - This is seen in two ways. First, the depth of their love was demonstrated in their desire and willingness to share the Gospel with them. Unlike some who would blow into a synagogue or church to gain praise and money for themselves, Paul and his companions shared that which they valued the most; the Gospel.
 - Second, Paul notes that that the depth of their love was also evident in that they also shared their lives. The sense here is that they lived life and ministered together in the church. In doing so, they became close or as Paul puts it, “beloved and dear”. This speaks to the special nature of the community of believers found in the Church. Our gathering and serving together draws us not only closer to God, but to one another. Gathering is not just for us individually. Participation in ministry, in our gatherings, in flock, and in doing life, draws us

together and deepens our affections for one another. Yes, it strengthens us spiritually. But being together and sharing our lives together has the effect of building and deepening our community and fellowship.

Their Practice (v. 9-12)

- Not a burden (v. 9)
- Pure in conduct (v. 10)
- As a father (v. 11-12)



10 minutes – 11:35 to 11:45

- As further examples of how they shared of themselves and their lives with the Thessalonians, Paul reminds them of their practice of their ministry in verse 9 through 12. There are three specific examples here in these verses. Note how these three ideas start.
 - Verse 9, “For you remember...”
 - Verse 10, “You are witnesses...”
 - Verse 11, “For you know...”
- The first of these is that Paul did not want their ministry to them to be a financial burden. To that end, Paul and his companions worked hard and long to have the funds they needed and take nothing from the Thessalonians. We know from other letters that Paul was often supported by gifts from other churches. But is unlikely that those gifts were sufficient to support **the ministry**. And so they worked and labored even as they served and ministered the Gospel. It also unlikely from the description of their work that Paul and his companions had desk jobs or executive positions. The idea of toil and long hours (day and night) indicates they worked with their hands. The model here is that of bi-vocational Elders who work hard to support themselves and their families and then give of their time and energy to

minister in the church.

- **Why do you think Paul did not ask the local church to support him?**
 - Not to create any hardship on the Thessalonians
 - Humility
 - Not to be paid to share the Gospel (Keith Green)
 - To avoid the model of “patron” common in Greek culture (professionals that toured to gain financial support)
 - To give credibility to their ministry and message
- The second characteristic of their practice was their purity of conduct. Verse 10 continues the remembering of their practice that they were not only laborers among them, but that they were witnesses of the integrity their conduct. Paul uses three words to describe the purity of their conduct. He explains it as holy, righteous, and blameless. Perhaps Paul is invoking the multiple witnesses required to establish truth or a fact in a Jewish court. The fact was that their conduct was holy, set apart for the glory of God. It was righteous, in living out the commands and moral will of God. And it was blameless, they were faithful in consistently living out what they believed.
- **Who was a witness to their conduct?** It was before the Thessalonians and God as well. Paul’s practice was marked by an integrity and purity of purpose that was evident not only to the Thessalonians externally, but even inwardly in the places where only God can see. Their practice bore the message of the Gospel with clarity and the absence of any corruption. Everything they did was conformed and shaped by their gospel ministry so that their practice and conduct took nothing away or diminished their message.
- **Why is this important?** Because our practice can undermine the message. Our lives much match and affirm the message we are sharing.
- Paul’s third and last reminder of their practice was the way the ministered as a father. Similar to the imagery of a mother in the previous section, Paul reminds of the dealt with them as a Father would with his children. I believe the idea here is of authority and instruction.
- **What three words does Paul use to describe their ministering to the Thessalonians as a Father?**
 - Exhorted; idea here is to make an appeal or plead with
 - Encouraged; to offer comfort or to strengthen
 - Charged; to strongly urge or challenge
- **What was the purpose of ministering to the Thessalonians in this way?**
 - To walk in a manner worthy of God.
 - **What does that mean?** To live in obedience by faith and holding to God’s truth. To hold ourselves to a standard that brings God glory.

Their Reward (v. 13-16)

- Their believing response (v. 13)
- Their faithful endurance (v. 14-16)



10 minutes – 11:45 to 11:55

- As Paul has recounted their ministry of the Gospel to the Thessalonians, he once again breaks out in Thanksgiving.
- In verse 13, we see a shift from a description of the nature of the ministry to the reward and results of their ministry. Paul and his companions are constantly thankful for the believe response of the Thessalonian believers. The word “constantly” in the ESV means to never cease. Even after leaving them, Paul’s gratitude had continued on without waning. The sense here is not that he remembered them in every moment, but that he was consistently and deeply grateful to God for their faith. He never stopped being grateful.
- **What was it that we see Paul was grateful for in verse 13?**
 - They **received** the Word (they heard the Gospel)
 - They **accepted it** as the Word of God (they recognized its truth and authority – the believed the message was not just from mere men)
 - It was **at work in them** (active in bearing fruit in their lives)
 - There is an interesting progression here of how the Gospel works in true believers. It is heard. It is believed. It produces fruit.
- In verse 14 Paul presents one of the primary indicators of their belief. They were

imitators not only of Paul, but of the churches in Judea. Paul compares the Thessalonians faithful endurance as following and sharing with the opposition from the Jews that the churches in Judea faced.

- **In what way were they similar in imitating the faith of these other churches?**
 - They also suffered for their faith at the hands of the countrymen (the idea here is that of those in their locality and community)
 - They were persecuted and driven out (isolation and hostility)
 - They faced those who displeased God (rebellion to God and his mission to bring salvation)
 - They impeded the spread the Gospel (opposition)
- **Why do think Paul shares this?**
 - To remind them that they are not alone in their suffering
 - Suffering is a part of following (imitating) Christ
- Paul concludes that the Jewish opposition to the Gospel message has a long history rooted in sin. The point here is that the trouble the Thessalonians are facing is the same pattern seen throughout redemptive history. Satan and the world will always resist God's divine initiative to save the world. We should not be surprised. It is the full measure, the natural conclusion of the world's sin. And having come to the full measure of that sin, surely God's judgement will eventually fall upon them. While its ultimate fulfillment has yet to be seen, the fullness or completeness of God's wrath upon those who have rebelled against Him as begun and is surely in the process of coming to its horrible conclusion. Woe to those who oppose and hinder the ministry of the Gospel. For they will face the terrible and final judgement of God.
- The unspoken contrast here is that we who believe and faithfully endure will find peace, not wrath. Christ has stood in our place and exchanged God's wrath upon us for God's love of the Son. We can then accept and embrace suffering as imitators of Christ and those believers who have come before us. We faithfully endure suffering as a testimony to others of the power of the Gospel in us and so that God will be glorified through us.



5 minutes – 11:55 to 12:00