

## Comments on 1 Thessalonians 2

This chapter continues the message from the previous chapter, of Paul's thankfulness for their acceptance of the Gospel. Here, Paul continues to build on the example with he set among them, how they received him, and now they are followers of Christ, unlike their neighbors who have rejected Christ.

The imagery Paul builds is that of an idealized family. He and the other missionaries were like a mother and father to them, and they are like little children to him. Paul's goal is to have the ecclesia reject worldly things (v. 3-6) and prepare for heavenly glory in their Father's kingdom (v. 10-12).

<sup>1</sup> For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: <sup>2</sup> But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

<sup>3</sup> For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: <sup>4</sup> But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. <sup>5</sup> For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness: <sup>6</sup> Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

<sup>7</sup> But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: <sup>8</sup> So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

v1-8 Paul's visiting them was not pointless (v. 1). Even after being treated badly at Philippi just before visiting them, they continued undeterred and continued preaching the Gospel in the face of considerable adversity there at Thessalonica (v. 2). The encouragement Paul gave was not false (v. 3). God entrusted Paul to preach the Gospel correctly (v. 4), without any evil motives (v. 5) or selfish purposes (v. 6). And Paul did so, treating them as a nursing mother (v. 7), giving his own life to them as he preached the Gospel (v. 8).

v2 "shamefully entreated...at Philippi", cf. Acts 16:19-24.

"speak unto you", cf. Acts 17:8-9.

"with much contention", a poor translation. A [better translation](#) would be something like "amid a great deal of

opposition". Paul wasn't the one being contentious, he was being persecuted.

v3-5 Note Paul uses two sets of triple repetitions to emphasize his point. The first set is "not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, not in guile" (v. 3) followed by "neither flattering words, nor a cloak of covetousness, nor of men sought we glory". Paul uses common human behaviors which are clearly indicative of malintent, to point out they didn't engage in any of this behavior. It is likely Paul is implying his opponents in Philippi and Thessalonica did engage in these behaviors, and he is pointing out he didn't do these things while his opponents did. Paul follows this up in v. 9-11 with a description of how he behaved while among them.

v6 "when we might have been burdensome", Paul follows this up in v. 9 saying he himself worked so they wouldn't be burdened with supporting him while he preached among them. There must have been some larger context of priestcraft, either accusation against Paul, or the Hellenist priests being popularly supported, which Paul rejected. Whatever the cause, it is clear Paul wanted to emphasize his preaching of the Gospel was not at their literal expense, as he covered his own expenses with his own labor.

v7 "a nurse cherisheth her children", i.e., a mother nursing her baby.

<sup>9</sup> For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

<sup>10</sup> Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: <sup>11</sup> As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, <sup>12</sup> That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

v9-12 Paul reminds them that he worked and suffered hardship among them, so they wouldn't be burdened by him, while he preached the Gospel to them (v. 9). They firsthand saw Paul's unquestionably good behavior while he was among them (v. 19), encouraging them to do the same, like a father would do with his own children (v. 11). Paul's intent was to get them ready to be worthy to be accepted into God's kingdom and receive His glory (v. 12).

v10-11 This description is in sharp contrast to that of v. 3-5. Worldly things (v. 3-5) are of no interest to Paul, as he wants to prepare them for heavenly things (v. 10-11).

<sup>13</sup> For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

<sup>14</sup> For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: <sup>15</sup> who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: <sup>16</sup> Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

v13-16 Paul is truly thankful that when they heard the gospel they accepted it as the word of God and believed (v. 13). They became part of the elect of God, being persecuted just like the believers among Judaea are persecuted (v. 14). Those among Judaea have a long history of rejecting the Lord's messengers to their condemnation (v. 15). They also were opposed to Paul preaching the Gospel to Gentiles. The Lord's anger is upon them (v. 16).

These verses echo 1:2-10. Paul is thankful for their faithfulness and strength of convictions (v. 2, 12), nothing how they followed his example and the example of the ecclesia in Judaea (v. 6-9, 14). But, while they have abandoned idols to worship the Lord, their opponents have killed Jesus and the prophets, and while they will be spared the Lord's anger, their opponents are and will face the entirety of the Lord's anger (v. 9-10, 15-16).

v14-15 Paul points out the persecution they are facing is universal to all of the believers regardless of where they are located. The implication is their persecutors engage in the negative behavior described in v. 3-6 and if they will kill the Messiah and the Lord's Prophets, then don't be surprised when they persecute you too. This is the way of the world, don't be part of it, but don't be surprised when they act this way.

<sup>17</sup> But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. <sup>18</sup> wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us. <sup>19</sup> For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye

in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? <sup>20</sup> For ye are our glory and joy.

v17-20 Paul addresses the ecclesia at Thessalonica and says that even though they have only been separated from each other for a relatively short time, he is eager to see them again (v. 17). He wanted to come and visit, but the adversary prevented him (v. 18). They are his reason for rejoicing, because they will be with him in the presence of the Lord at His return (v. 19). They are his glory and reason for rejoicing (v. 20).

Paul transitions from exhortation of the preceding verses, to the travelogue of ch. 3, with a theological explanation of why he hasn't returned to visit them again.

v18 "but Satan hindered us", while the [Greek term](#) can be used to refer generally to a human adversary, Paul consistently uses the term to refer to the specific supernatural individual. The same term is also used in 2 Thess. 2:9 and is clearly referring to the same specific individual.

What Paul means specifically is impossible to tell. It is probably a reference to the evil in the world combining against him in his missionary efforts. As if Paul were to say "adversity prevented it", but necessarily implying infernal support for that material adversity (i.e., violent evil people), and not just opposition one naturally faces in mortality (i.e., illness, poverty, bad weather).

v19 "at his coming", Paul alludes to the subject of the Day of the Lord, which he treats at length in ch. 5.

v20 Despite the adversity and persecution, Paul still has a reason to rejoice and be glad, because the ecclesia is doing well.

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