

(19) After all, what gives us hope and joy, and what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand before our Lord Jesus when He returns? It is you! (20) Yes, you are our pride and joy.

- **Jesus** is going to **return** and they then will be Paul's **reward** and **crown**.

1 Thessalonians Chapter 2

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The Translation:

We have chosen the *New Living Translation* for this study. It is a thought-for-thought translation made by 90 translators.

Resources:

We have consulted and quoted from **William Barclay** (*Daily Study Bible*), **Albert Barnes** (*Barnes Notes on the Whole Bible*), **John Calvin** (*Calvin's Commentary on the Bible*) and **Wilbur Fields** (*Thinking Through Thessalonians*).

Paul had made a hasty exit from Thessalonica and eventually settled in Corinth, writing this letter back to the believers that he had left behind. The first chapter is largely a commendation of the way they accepted the message of Christ and, in turn, spread it throughout their province. The results were a church-planters dream. But then not everyone read the script the same way.

(1 Thessalonians 2:1) You yourselves know, dear brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not a failure.

- Paul had critics. They must have charged that Paul's time at Thessalonica as a total **failure**. **Wilbur Fields** writes: “The fact that Paul left a flourishing church there was proof that his visit was not in vain. The Thessalonians themselves could vouch for that fact.”

(2) You know how badly we had been treated at Philippi just before we came to you and how much we suffered

there. Yet our God gave us the courage to declare His Good News to you boldly, in spite of great opposition.

- The story of Paul's treatment at Philippi was well known by the church. He had suffered at the hands of the owners of the slave girl that Paul had released from the devil. He and Barnabas had been beaten and imprisoned. Even after he was released, the city officials wanted him gone from their town. Indeed he had **suffered** in Philippi.
- The story was being twisted. **Barclay** observes: "There were, no doubt, those in Thessalonica who said that this man Paul had a police record, that he was nothing less than a criminal on the run from justice and that obviously no one should listen to a man like that. A really malignant mind will twist anything into a slander."
- **Wilbur Fields** says: "If a person has already endured opposition in other places, the **boldness** is doubly tested, because of fears created by past difficulties."

(3) So you can see we were not preaching with any deceit or impure motives or trickery.

- What kind of **impure motives** would have compelled him to go right back to preaching when he got to Thessalonica? None can be brought forward.

(4) For we speak as messengers approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to please God, not people. He alone examines the motives of our hearts.

- The team of Paul, Silas and Timothy were approved and entrusted with the Good News. Paul's calling had been particularly dramatic. The Lord had appeared and said to him:

Now get to your feet! For I have appeared to you to appoint you as My servant and witness. You

Good News of salvation to the Gentiles. By doing this, they continue to pile up their sins. But the anger of God has caught up with them at last.

- Elaborating further, some Jews had killed the prophets, killed Jesus and persecuted Paul. They worshiped God, but fail to please God, a key to peace with God. They especially fought against preaching to Gentiles like these new brothers and sisters at Thessalonica. By doing this, they were piling their sins higher and higher.
- **Wilbur Fields** has this to say about the final sentence: "God's wrath against the Jews was particularly demonstrated at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Already at the time when Paul wrote this epistle, the great rebellion of the Jews against the Romans was taking form. When the rebellion finally came in 66 A.D., it led to a bloody war, in which the walls, temple, and much of the rest of Jerusalem were demolished and burned down. 97,000 people were carried away captive into slavery, and eleven hundred thousand (1,100,000) perished, many by starvation and killing one another. *Josephus*, the Jewish historian, tells us about this in *Wars of the Jews*, VI, ix, 4. Paul was certainly correct when he said that wrath was come upon them to the uttermost.

FRUSTRATED BUT VICTORIOUS

(17) Dear brothers and sisters, after we were separated from you for a little while (though our hearts never left you), we tried very hard to come back because of our intense longing to see you again.

- Instead of viewing his departure from Thessalonica as moving on to the next project, he spoke of it as a **separation** from them. Even then his heart was still with them.

(18) We wanted very much to come to you, and I, Paul, tried again and again, but Satan prevented us.

- He wanted to return, but Satan was in the way.

said as the very word of God — which, of course, it is. And this word continues to work in you who believe.

- Paul was repeatedly thankful that his **message** was accepted by them as inspired from **God** who communicates His will through words that are spoken or written by inspired men. That message was still working within them. Being a follower of Christ is not just an event, but a process.
- About 10 years later, the lead apostle, Peter, endorsed Paul very specifically as speaking for God:

And remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved. This is what our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him — speaking of these things in all of his letters. Some of his comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters to mean something quite different, just as they do with other parts of Scripture. And this will result in their destruction. 2 Peter 3:15-16 NLT

(14) And then, dear brothers and sisters, you suffered persecution from your own countrymen. In this way, you imitated the believers in God's churches in Judea who, because of their belief in Christ Jesus, suffered from their own people, the Jews.

- The majority of the new church must have been won from the pagan world because Paul finds a parallel in history: the rejection of Christ by the Jews and the suffering that came about for those who believed in Jesus.

(15) For some of the Jews killed the prophets, and some even killed the Lord Jesus. Now they have persecuted us, too. They fail to please God and work against all humanity (16) as they try to keep us from preaching the

are to tell the world what you have seen and what I will show you in the future. And I will rescue you from both your own people and the Gentiles. Yes, I am sending you to the Gentiles to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by faith in Me. Acts 26:16-18 NLT

Truly, no finer credentials for preaching the Good News of Christ can exist.

(5) Never once did we try to win you with flattery, as you well know. And God is our witness that we were not pretending to be your friends just to get your money!

- Paul had not told them how good they were, but told them about the reality of being lost. This truth is often missing from present-day preaching. Furthermore, Paul did not pretend to be their friends so he could get their money for preaching his message. **Wilbur Fields** reminds us of the power of flattery. “Flattering words are often very powerful, and can bring about some spectacular results. Such words will win the favor of the majority of people. Absalom stole the hearts of the people of Israel by flattery. 2 Samuel 15:2-6.” Paul did not use this trick.
- **Wilbur Fields** taught in *Ozark Bible College* for most of his career. He says about **money**: “Preachers must be supported, according to God’s command, but if money becomes their motive, they have missed the path altogether.”

(6) As for human praise, we have never sought it from you or anyone else.

- A preacher might be motivated by their personal need for praise, but Paul did not seek accolades — from anyone.

(7) As apostles of Christ we certainly had a right to make some demands of you, but instead we were like children among you. Or we were like a mother feeding and caring for her own children.

- Now Paul makes reference to his authority as an **apostle of Christ**. He could have **demande**d, but instead he was childlike among them. Or he was like a nursing **mother** caring for her **children**. He did not brandish the authority that he actually had.

(8) We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God's Good News but our own lives, too.

- Paul was not driven by a need for acceptance or money from them, but he was driven by his love for them. He went beyond simply delivering a message, he risked his life to get the job done.

(9) Don't you remember, dear brothers and sisters, how hard we worked among you? Night and day we toiled to earn a living so that we would not be a burden to any of you as we preached God's Good News to you.

- He asked his **brothers and sisters** to recall his hours of labor at his trade. There was no 40 hour week for this ultra-dedicated gospel preacher. He **work**ed to tiredness. Then, instead of resting, he **preach**ed the **Good News** to anyone who would listen.

(10) You yourselves are our witnesses — and so is God — that we were devout and honest and faultless toward all of you believers.

- Paul calls the converted to witness, along with God, that he could not be charged with any wrongdoing.

(11) And you know that we treated each of you as a father treats his own children.

- This time, instead of the nursing mother figure that he had used in verse 7, he takes the role of a **father** towards them. **Barclay** adds: “His gentleness was that of a wise father. His was the love which knew how to be firm. To him Christian love was no easy sentimental thing; he knew that men needed discipline, not for their punishment but for the good of their souls.”
- Contrast the Paul at this time with the angry Saul/Paul of a few years back:

But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison. Act 8:3

He had been radically changed by Jesus.

(12) We pleaded with you, encouraged you, and urged you to live your lives in a way that God would consider worthy. For He called you to share in His Kingdom and glory.

- Paul uses three emotion-laden words to describe his work among them: **pleaded**, **encouraged** and **urged**. He was not a take-it-or-leave-it preacher working for a paycheck, but a dad using every approach available to get these brothers and sisters to change their lives and live to please God. After all, God has called them to **share in His Kingdom** and then in **His glory**.

(13) Therefore, we never stop thanking God that when you received His message from us, you didn't think of our words as mere human ideas. You accepted what we