

Serving with God's Approval: The Definitive Standard 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12

WHAT IS TRUE? The Roman Empire was full of roving religious quacks and charlatans who were out for self-glory and material gain. Paul and Silas set themselves apart from such people. They communicated the gospel with success because God, who tests their hearts, approved them, and worked through them despite opposition. If the Thessalonians follow this model, they, too, will have God's approval. Thus, In Thessalonica ...¹

1.) Paul's preaching had not been that of a religious pretender (v. 2:1–6)

- A. Paul's visit to Thessalonica yielded results. God provided the courage to preach the truth despite suffering and great opposition (v.2:1)
- B. Paul did not preach cautiously (v. 2:2)
- C. Paul did not preach out of error, impurity, or intent to deceive (v. 2:3)
- D. Paul did not preach to please people (v. 2:4)
- E. Paul did not preach with flattery or greedy aims (v. 2:5)
- F. Paul did not preach seeking glory/praise from people (v. 2:6)

2.) Paul's conduct had not been that of a religious pretender (v. 2:7-12)

- A. Paul acted with care as a nursing mother at Thessalonica (v. 2:7–9)
 - a) Paul acted from love and shared both his life and the Gospel of God
- B. Paul acted as a model Christian (v. 2:10)
- C. Paul acted as a concerned father and taught them (v. 2:11–12)
 - a) By encouraging them ...
 - b) By comforting them ...
 - c) By exhorting/imploring themTo walk (live life) in a way that God would consider worthy

WHAT TO DO (APPLICATION)? ²

- ✓ Paul had been tested, approved, and trusted by God, and his goal was to please God. Christians may be tempted to alter their to make their message more palatable. **Paul never changed his message to make it more**

acceptable, but he did tailor his methods to each audience. Although the presentation should be altered to be appropriate to the situation, the truth of the gospel must never be compromised. And are you seeking to please God? The vital ingredient of all successful ministry is the ability of the servant to put God directly at the center.

- ✓ **Paul avoided all forms of manipulation, especially flattery.** Flattery is phony and a cover-up for a person's real intentions. Christians should not be flatterers. Those who proclaim God's truth have a special responsibility to be honest. Are you honest and straightforward in your words and actions? Or do you tell people what they want to hear to get what you want?
- ✓ **Paul did not seek the praise of the Thessalonians and avoided becoming a burden to them. Paul and Silas focused their efforts completely on presenting God's message of salvation.** The Thessalonian believers' lives were changed by God, not Paul; they believed in Christ's message, not Paul's. When witnessing for Christ, our focus should not be on making a good impression. True ministers of Christ should point to him, not to themselves.
- ✓ **Paul was caring as he ministered** to the Thessalonian believers. Gentleness is often overlooked as a personal trait in our society. Power and assertiveness gain more respect, even though no one likes to be bullied. Gentleness means love in action—serving, being considerate, meeting the needs of others, allowing time for the other person to talk, and being willing to learn. It is an essential trait for both men and women. Maintain a gentle attitude in your relationships.
- ✓ **Paul not only shared the gospel, but he also shared his life.** This involved sacrifice, looking out for others' interests and not just his own (Philippians 2:17), and close personal involvement, not impersonal clinical detachment. He loved them, entering into their lives, their joys, and their struggles. When a person feels cared for, he or she will be more open to listening to us.
- ✓ **Paul acted as a loving Father. No loving father would neglect the safety of his children, allowing them to walk into circumstances that might be harmful or fatal.** In the same way, we must take new believers under our wing until they are mature enough to stand firm in their faith. We must help new Christians become strong enough to influence others for the sake of the gospel. We can do this by helpful instruction and supporting encouragement. We must also warn them of the pitfalls and temptations that they will face. Quite often, they will need correction and rebuke.

¹ Gingrich, Roy E. The Book of First Thessalonians. Memphis, TN: Riverside Printing, 2002.

² Bruce B. Barton and Grant R. Osborne, 1 & 2 Thessalonians: Life Application Commentary, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), 36.