



Chapter Two

Paul's prolonged absence (2:17-18) from the Thessalonians may have prompted some of them to believe that he no longer cared for their well-being. Timothy's report prompted Paul to remind them of how they ministered to the Thessalonians in the short time they were among them.

Paul described his ministry among the Thessalonians with strong family overtones. He said his affections toward them were like a nursing mother (2:7), a father (2:11), and as a brother (2:9). These family overtones give us a framework for understanding how deeply he loved the believers in Thessalonica. However, Paul's primary motivation for boldly declaring the Gospel to them was rooted in pleasing God first, not people (2:4). It was in his desire to please God that the Gospel was declared and the family bonds he described were formed.

1 For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. 2 But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. 3 For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

Paul shifts his thoughts from chapter one. In chapter one he was praising the believers in Thessalonica for their faithfulness in persecution. Here he turns to defending his ministry (which he seems to do in most of his letters). It seems that Timothy's findings (3:6) included a report that some of the believers questioned Paul's sincerity since he had not paid them a follow-up visit. Paul's departure when he planted the church was quick due to the circumstances in the city (Acts 17:5; 1 Thess 2:17). Here he began his response to those concerns.

Q: How does Paul's suffering demonstrate his love and affection for the believers in the Thessalonian church? (See also *John 10:12*)

5 For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. 6 Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.

When the LORD is leading and directing your ministry, flattering others, greedy motives, and glory from people aren't necessary. In fact, Paul warned the Colossians to beware of people who are "puffed





up without reason” about themselves and their experiences (Col. 2:18). When the Gospel is clearly taught and takes root, flattery falls flat, all glory goes to God, and greedy motives get put to death.

Q: Why is it important that we do as Paul did and refrain from flattering words, greed, and seeking the approval of others? (See also 1 Corinthians 2:5)

7 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. 9 For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. 11 For you know how, like a father with his children, 12 we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

In these six verses, Paul compared his ministry in the Thessalonian church to a nursing mother (2:7), a father (2:11), and in the middle called them his brothers (2:9). Like a nursing mother, Paul has affectionate desires for them. As a brother, he worked night and day so that he wouldn’t become a burden to them. As a father, he exhorted, encouraged, and charged (strongly instructed) them. As we minister to one another, man or woman, we should have the same heart: affection, hard work, exhortation, encouragement, and strong instruction.

Q: How does the Gospel unify all believers as a family? (See also Romans 8:14-17)

13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

The Thessalonians received the things that Paul taught them as *the word of God*, and not just cleverly crafted teachings of men. Paul has already been clear in this letter that he brought the Gospel message, without flattery, without the praise of other men, and in a way that he and his companions presented no burdens to the Thessalonian believers. Paul was also clear in chapter one that his message was accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit (1:5).





Q: How can we spread the Gospel in this manner? (See also *Romans 15:18-19*; *2 Corinthians 6:1-10*; *2 Timothy 1:7-8*)

14 For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind 16 by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last!

Every time Paul calls us brothers, it should remind us of our family bond in Jesus Christ. These Thessalonian brothers followed Paul, Silas, and Timothy in their example of love, faith and practice. However, Paul's comparison is that they suffered the same way as the brothers in Judea. The Judean believers were persecuted for their faith, and so were the Thessalonians, each by their own countrymen. By following Jesus and mimicking other faithful believers in their faith, love, and practice, we will suffer. It's a signpost that we are following the LORD. Paul also minces no words. Our persecutors remain under God's wrath!

Q: Suffering for the Gospel is something we should expect. Why are we taken by surprise when suffering actually comes? (See also *John 15:20*; *James 1:2*)

17 But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, 18 because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us. 19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? 20 For you are our glory and joy.

It may come as a surprise to some, but even when we walk in the light as He, Jesus, is in the light (1 John 1:7), Satan can still hinder us. Paul clearly blames the work of Satan for his delay in returning to Thessalonica. While it's not wise to blame Satan for every flat tire, we should be wise and remember that we are always engaged in an active spiritual conflict with active spiritual opponents.

Q: Satan is always trying to steal, kill, and destroy God's family. Knowing this, how should our responses to one another change when conflict happens? (See also *John 10:10*; *2 Corinthians 10:3-5*; *Ephesians 6:12*)





Notes

A large rectangular area filled with a grid of small dots, intended for taking notes.

