

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 | Real Ministry

The world in which the New Testament took place (and in which Paul and the Thessalonians lived) was one that was outright hostile to Christianity

- It didn't like its **exclusivity** (Jesus is Lord)
- It didn't like its **morality** (Holiness)

For both church planters and church plants there was much opposition

- Paul and his buddies arrived in **Thessalonica** after having been **severely beaten with rods, thrown in prison and shackled in stocks** in Philippi (Cf. Act 16)
- After preaching in **Thessalonica** for a while they were essentially **chased out of town**
 - Opposition came from normal citizens, Roman authorities, religious Jews
- So, for a young church like the one in **Thessalonica** there was a lot of societal pressure to abandon:
 - Its **exclusivity** (Jesus is Lord)
 - Its **morality** (Holiness)

This is why Paul is writing this letter to them (had to leave abruptly and wanted to **return**)

- To remind them that their faith in Jesus is real and that following Him is **right**—and **worth** it
 - They need to be reminded because trying to follow Jesus in a **contrary culture** is challenging
 - = **Whole Book**
 - This passage is part of that (their faith is real because its roots were real)
- So, to encourage them, he reminds them of the **beginning** of their faith journey
 - “Remember how this all started—it was not contrived—you were not duped—this is real!”

Verse 1

- Remember, Paul et al. were there a short time and then were chased out of town
- Bad press afterward (culture of false claims and phony charlatans)

Paul is now going to defend his ministry to the Thessalonians so that they can know they were not defrauded in any way (I.e. Ministerial Integrity)

Paul says about himself and his ministry team that, their:

- Motives were pure (verses 2-6)
- Methods were loving (verses 7-11)
- Message was honest (verse 12)

Their motives were pure

Verses 2-3

- What happened in Philippi: **severely beaten with rods, thrown in prison and shackled in stocks**
 - I.e. They were not in this for their health (**verse 3**)
 - They were in it for the **cause of the gospel**, the **glory of God** and the **good of people**
 - It was **self-less; self-sacrificing; inconvenient; costly; painful (and it was glorious)**
 - Most people are not willing to experience the first, so they never experience the latter
 - Most of us are concerned with **pleasing ourselves or other people**
 - The desire to **please self** can keep us **from a willingness to sacrifice**
 - The desire to **please others** can keep us **from a willingness to tell the truth**
 - Ministry with integrity (contrary culture) is sacrificial and God oriented

Verse 4

- This wasn't a popularity contest—it was a faithfulness issue
 - Which are you more concerned about???
 - We have to deal with our **opposite impulses** to **impress & please people or serve & honor God**
- We to have been **entrusted** with the gospel (your ministry—calling)
 - In the end we will give an answer
 - God deals with the issue of **motive** (looks on the heart) (cf. **verse 4b**)

Verses 5-6

- They were not political (**flattery**); they were not greedy (**money**); they were not glory hungry (**praise**)
- Close to home: We want to be **liked**; **affirmed** and to have **more stuff**
 - But what happens when **those values** come face to face with **Kingdom values**?
 - Sometimes, we have to be willing to abandon lesser values for greater values
 - **Galatians 1:10, NLT**
 - **... A person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people.** (Romans 2:29, NLT)
 - Sometimes we have to be willing **even** to give up some **rights (for a greater call)**

Verses 7a and 9

- Referring to the biblical principle of people who give their lives to the work of God being supported by God's people
 - **1 Corinthians 9:7-14, NLT**
- Because of the context Paul was in and the opposition to the message he chose to forgo that **right**
 - Rather than insisting on their rights they were:
 - **Gentle... like children** (7b)
 - **Selfless... like a mother** (7c)
 - Kind of a big deal—worked all day then ministered to others
 - That is what Paul felt compelled to do in his moment and place for the gospel to go forth without any barriers (**v. 9**)
 - **We have to ask ourselves what we are willing to do (do we even think in these terms?)**
 - That is hard... but it gets more crucial in the **context of a contrary culture**
- Paul and his team were willing to do hard things
 - **Loving people** can be hard

Verses 7b, 8 and 11**Their methods were loving**

- Obedience inspired Holy Spirit helped love
- All for the sake of the gospel
- Who do we need to do that with!

Their message was honest

- The message was the Gospel (**Good News**)
 - But he was clear and **honest** in calling them to the **implications** of it
 - **See verse 12**
 - Straightforward call: **Walk in a manner worthy of God's calling (share in His kingdom and glory)**
 - Pursuing holiness and sanctification
 - In a contrary culture
 - **Ephesians 5:1-16, NASB**
- **This call to holiness (walk in a manner worthy) was honest in its content and in Paul's example**
 - It was without hypocrisy
 - **See verse 10**

Lets think about our own lives

- Ask the Lord to examine our **motives** (for our yes's... and our no's)
 - Down to earth: Volunteers; missions; prayer; co-worker; community
 - Not convenient, hard, sacrifice, repentance, love
- And yet we are called!
 - What values do we hold that clash with the **Kingdom Values of sacrifice and service**?
- Where do we need to be willing to surrender to God's call?
- What rights may we need to forgo for the joy of seeing others receive new life?