

In our study of Thess, we are continuing to examine 2:1-16, which describes the apostolic team's gospel ministry in Thessalonica.

Outline 2:1-16 this way.

- In vv 1-2, Paul notes gospel ministry successful, in spite of strong opposition.
  
- In vv 3-12, Paul mounts a defense of their gospel ministry.
  - ▷ False accusations being made regarding the missionaries' credibility & conduct.
  
  - ▷ In vv 3-4, defends credibility of team.
    - Content, truth; motives, pure; & methods, honest, they set forth the truth plainly.
  
  - ▷ In vv 5-12, defends conduct.
    - In vv 5-6, notes what their behavior was not like.
      - Denied charges of flattery, greed, seeking human praise, & abusing their authority.
  
    - After explaining what their conduct was not like, he explains what their conduct was like, vv 7-12.
  
- Then in the closing vv of this section, vv 13-16, Paul once again expresses thanks for the Thessalonian believers. 1/11

Today, we'll begin to look @ what their conduct was like, vv 7-12.

- Specifically for this a.m., vv 7-9.   👉 Bulk of our time on vs 7.

1<sup>st</sup>, the apostolic team was gentle.

Vs 7, But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

- Many excellent manuscripts read "infants" (νήπιος), but "gentle" (ἤπιος) better suits the context here.

In the words 'but we were gentle', the Grk wd for 'but' is a strong word.

- It indicates an emphatic contrast to the charge that the apostolic team abused their authority.
- Instead of asserting their status as spokespersons for God in a harsh, overbearing manner, they dealt gently with the Thessalonians.
- They knew that to do the opposite would've been a misuse of their powerful position.

At the end of vs 7, Paul explains the character of his and his colleagues' gentleness.

- They were like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.
- Brand-new believers, like the Thess., are indeed like children.
  - ▷ Brand-new believers are in need of tender, loving care.

- The mother is the nourisher of the children.   2/11

➤ The vb rendered 'taking care' properly means 'to warm.'

▷ It was used of birds covering their young with their feathers to warm and protect them.

▷ It thus portrays the mother's protecting care & tender love for her children.

➤ This lovely picture is a demonstration of the unselfish conduct of the missionaries in dealing with their converts.

▷ It's also a lovely picture of our heavenly Father.

➤ Ps. 91:1-4 (NIV), Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

➤ The nursing mother cares for & protects her offspring, without seeking profit or honor for herself.

▷ Rather, she is intent upon bestowing benefits upon her children.

➤ So the missionaries cared for & wanted to protect their beloved converts, with no thought of selfish gain.

▷ Rather, they were intent upon bestowing spiritual benefits upon their spiritual children.

Team stands as a model of how to act toward & care for new believers.

➤ They need to be cared for and protected, spiritually speaking. 3/11

- The work is not done once we lead someone to the Lord.
- The great commission makes it quite clear that we are not to just make converts.

▷ Matt. 28:18-20, And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

▷ The verb **make disciples** commands a kind of evangelism that does not stop after someone makes a profession of faith.

▷ We must never think that after we've led someone to Christ our job is over.

▷ It is crucial to understand that the command is not to evangelize but to perform the broader and deeper task of discipling people.

➤ This involves inviting people to enter a relationship with Jesus, baptizing them, anchoring them in the faith, & helping them grow in the faith.

### Now let's consider this.

- Our heavenly Father is gentle with us.

▷ Already seen this in Ps. 91. [👉 Here let's elaborate on it a bit.](#)

- He himself is like a nursing mother.

- Notice how Isaiah describes him in [Is. 40:11 \(NIV\)](#).

▷ **He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.** [4/11](#)

➤ & I am convinced that our heavenly Father is intent on bestowing blessings upon his children.

▷ In Rom. 8:32, Paul asks, He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

➤ All things no doubt refers to spiritual blessings.

➤ If God did the greater, which he did, he gave his Son.

→ Will he not do the lesser and give us all that is necessary for life and godliness?

↳ Of course he will.

▷ Paul makes that clear in Eph. 1:3 (NLT).

➤ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.

▷ & Peter reinforces it.

➤ 2 Pet. 1:3-4a (NIV), His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises.

↳ But we were gentle among you, Paul says.

Gentleness is to be a mark of Christian character.

➤ Eph. 4:1-2, I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love. 5/11

▷Gentleness here refers to gentleness of attitude and behavior, in contrast with harshness in one's dealings with other believers.

▶We are to be gentle with sinning believers.

▷Gal. 6:1a (NET), Brothers and sisters, if a person is discovered in some sin, you who are spiritual restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness.

▷The importance of gentleness cannot be overstated.

→The purpose is to help & restore them, not to beat them down.

▶We are to be gentle in showing consideration to all people.

▷Titus 3:1-2, Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

▶& we are to be gentle in reasoning with unbelievers.

▷1 Pe 3:15b (NIV), Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

▶In defending the faith, we must have and display an attitude of humility.

▷We must guard against giving the impression of prideful superiority toward our questioners.

▷We must avoid a response that puts down or criticizes them.

▷We should speak in a calm, courteous, quiet, and careful way. 6/11

▷ And we should always keep in mind [Prov 15:1 \(NLT\)](#).

▷(NLT) *A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare.*

Ok, looking at Paul's explanation of how apostolic team did behave in Thessalonica.

Next, Paul says they shared their lives w/ the Thessalonians, vs 8 (NIV).

(NIV) *Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.*

➤ Just as a mother gives part of herself to every child she births & nurtures, so too the apostles cared for this church.

➤ To the point that they were willing to share their own lives with them.

➤ They did not pull into town, hold a few meetings, collect some new convert information cards, & then move on to the next place.

▷ Neither was their work carried out with detached professionalism.

➤ No, they became embedded into the community.

▷ They invested themselves in the lives of these new believers.

➤ & Paul proves this by recalling to their memory in vs 9 the way the apostles worked 'night and day' among them.

➤ Illustrates what Jesus means when he told us to make disciples. [7/11](#)

Paul, Silas, & Timothy cared for and nurtured these believers because they truly loved them.

- The team delighted to share both the gospel of God & their lives as well.
- They joined with the Thessalonians in the day-to-day struggles & joys of life & were deeply involved with the people.
  - ▷ & they did so because those people had become so dear to them.
- Such sharing showed the apostolic team's deep commitment to the gospel message & to the people with whom they shared it.
  - ▷ Such care for the people could not be faked.
  - ▷ The Thessalonian believers could attest to how much Paul, Silas, & Timothy loved them.
- A commitment to the gospel & to the people we share it with is what is needed in our evangelistic efforts.

Being embedded into the Thessalonians' lives surely involved self-sacrifice.

- It no doubt also involved close personal involvement, not impersonal clinical detachment.
- Plus, it undoubtedly encompassed looking out for others' interests & not just their own.
- Like the apostolic team, to be effective in reaching people, we must share ourselves person-to-person. 8/11



▷ We need to embed ourselves in people's lives.

▷ When a person feels cared for, he or she will no doubt be more open to listening to us share about our faith.

▷ People need to see & feel that they mean more to us than statistics.

Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, Paul says.

▶ The itinerant speakers of that day would take from and share little with the towns they visited.

▶ Paul's team took nothing.

▷ Rather, they gave of themselves totally to serve these people whom they loved so deeply.

Furthermore, Paul & his colleagues refused to lord their authority over these new converts.

▶ Instead, they determined to give of themselves totally.

▶ They were a model of what Jesus tells us.

▷ Mk. 10:42-45 (NIV), Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Ok, looking @ Paul's explanation of how apostolic team did behave in Thessalonica. 9/11

In vs 9 (NIV), we see that Paul, Silas, and Timothy did manual labor to support themselves.

(NIV) Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

- Paul notes they worked so that they would not be a financial burden on the Thessalonians.
- Elsewhere Paul vigorously defended his right as an apostle to receive financial support
  - ▷ However, he chose not to make use of this right during his initial ministry in a particular city.
  - ▷ E.g., during his initial visit to Thessalonica & Corinth, the team worked so that the new Christians there did not need to support them financially.

Paul explains the purpose for this practice of self-sufficient wk in 1 Cor. 9:12b.

- Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.
- The obstacle here was that his hearers may view him as just another itinerant lecturer whose coming was rooted in a motive for greed and not listen to what he had to say.
  - ▷ So Paul removed that obstacle so that the gospel would gain a hearing.
- Once a church had been established, however, and Paul left that congregation, he did accept financial support.
  - ▷ E.g., Philippi. ↪ Phil. 4:15-16.

➤ And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. 10/11

➤ But when the apostolic team evangelized an area, they were extremely careful not to do anything that would hinder anyone from listening to the gospel message.

▷ They made sure that there was nothing in their character or actions that would hinder anyone from listening to the gospel message.

▷ Paul reinforced this in [2 Cor. 6:3](#).

➤ *We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry.*

*We need to watch out for this in our evangelistic efforts.*

➤ We must not do anything to cause people to refuse us a hearing.

➤ The Grk wd for 'obstacle' has a basic idea of a 'cutting' of some sort.

▷ Such as that made in a road to hinder an enemy.

➤ We must provide clear road for the gospel to be presented.

➤ There must be nothing in our character or actions that would hinder anyone from listening to the gospel message when we present it.

*& we'll end on that thought today.* 11/11