

LIVING THE CHRISTLIFE
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1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Principles of Ministry

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.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.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.

—1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 (ESV)

Paul is responding to criticism, leveled in his absence, which, by seeking to hurt his credibility and that of the other apostles, ever threatened to undermine and destroy what had been established in the church.

Background on Thessalonica

The second stop on Paul's Second Missionary Journey, after being violently and illegally treated in Philippi.

Acts 17:1-10—"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.² And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,³ explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."⁴ And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.⁵ But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.⁶ And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also,⁷ and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."⁸ And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things.⁹ And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.¹⁰ The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue."

These Jewish leaders became so obsessed with Paul and his team that when they learned they were in Berea, followed them there are stirred up trouble in Berea—where Paul was aided in an escape by sea.

- v 1 – “our coming to you was not in vain”
 more lit: our coming to you *has not been* in vain
 Calling upon the Thessalonians to reflect upon how their lives continue to be blessed by the gospel
- v 2 – “though we had already suffered...at Philippi”
 Paul’s experience at Philippi (Acts 16:11-40)
 “boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict”
 Ministry Principle: Boldness in the midst of conflict, especially in missions/evangelism
- v 3 – “For our appeal...”
 for our *paraklésis* – a call, encouragement, comforting from one who is close beside you, urging on your behalf
 lit. - is not of error, nor of impurity, nor in trickery
 doctrinal integrity, moral integrity, intentional integrity
 Ministry Principle: Complete integrity
- vv 4-5 – “But just as we have been approved...”
 more lit. – Just as we have been proven [*dokimazo*] by God, just as we have been tested and approved by God
- to be entrusted with the gospel
 After being proven, step at a time
 Ministry Principle: God prepares us and proves us for his calling and tasks
- “so” – in the same way
- “we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, the One proving [*dokimazo*] our hearts”
 God’s work of shaping us continues as we choose to serve him and not give in to the fear of man or a desire to please man.
 Ministry Principle: Our hearts—our loyalty—must belong to God
- v 6-7a¹ - Paul reinforces this all of this:
 For never, at any time, were we there with words of flattery—just as you know,
 nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness,
 nor seeking glory from men
 nor from you, nor from others [did we take anything], though having authority to make demands as Christ’s apostles, but we were infants [*népios*]² in the midst of you.
 Ministry Principle: Servant Leadership

¹ My reading of vv 5-7 is:

For never, at any time, were we there with words of flattery—just as you know; nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness; nor seeking glory from men. Nor from you, nor from others [did we take anything], though having authority to make demands as Christ’s apostles, but we were infants in the midst of you.

As a nursing mother would cherish her own children...

The theology of the passage is the same, of course, but this seems to me to make more syntactical sense.

² This word could also mean a simple-minded person. I think Paul’s meaning is that while the apostles could have claimed leadership and authority, they instead interacted as people who had no position or authority whatsoever, like an infant, or a simple-minded person.

v 7b-8 – As a nursing mother would cherish her own children...

Ministry Principle: Affectionate love

v 9 – “our labor and toil”

Ministry Principle: Work ethic

v 10 – “You are witnesses and God also...”

lit. – “how holily and righteously and blamelessly we were toward you who are believing”

Ministry Principle: Christlike treatment of others

v 11 – “For you know how, like a father...”

Exhorted, encouraged, and charged you to walk...worthy

Ministry Principle: Exhortation and encouragement

Who calls you into his own kingdom and glory

Ministry Principle: Keep the end in view—God’s kingdom and glory