1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 – For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, 2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. NASU

A. For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain – Paul now begins a discourse on the integrity of his ministry and message, and an explanation of how the Thessalonians themselves are living proof of the effectiveness of his ministry there. In this, Paul appeals to his calling by God as the Gospel minister, and in so doing points out that they were therefore not called by a mortal man but by God Himself. He further points to the stellar integrity and example that the Apostles were to the young church, and in this discourse shows us many keys to effective discipleship. In fact the section in verses 2:1-12 is one of the richest sections of Holy Writ regarding the character and nature of Christian Discipleship. Here are the blueprints for a healthy church leaders. Notice here the outline of such characteristics;

- v-1,2 – Powerful bold evangelism even in the face of opposition
- v - 3,4 – The divine origin of the message, from God and not men
- v - 5,6 – Pure motives of Christian leaders
- v - 7 – Gentle and nurturing care for young believers
- v - 8 – The loving sacrifice of Christian leaders
- v - 9 – The hard work of discipling
- v - 10 – The genuine and upright example of Christain leaders
- v - 11 – The firm discipline and guidance of Christian leaders
- v - 12 – The goal of Christian discipleship, a holy life that glorifies God

Paul begins his discourse by calling them to account of their own personal knowledge of Paul and his companions, and all that took place while they were there stating “for you yourselves know, brethren.” In this discourse Paul repeats these terms 6 times in v-1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, making there own testimony crystal clear. Whether there were naysayers and critics of Paul’s integrity is not known, but what was known was the Thessalonians own first hand testimony of Paul’s powerful and effective ministry and his personal integrity, as he explains that “our coming to you was not in vain.” They were all eyewitnesses of the meaningful and lasting changes that had been wrought upon these new Christians and how their lives had been powerfully changed by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. This Gospel ministry was not a “vain” and meaningless failure, but rather a display of God’s divine power and majesty, graciously saving and transforming hopeless sinners.

B. 2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition – A key element in Paul’s integrity was how he persevered through much “suffering” and opposition to come to them. Paul and Silas had been shamefully “mistreated in Philippi” in no small way, just prior to arriving in Thessalonica. The Greek word for “mistreated” means to be publically shamed. Acts 16:16-24 records the incident for us.

Acts 16:16-24 - 16 And it happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortunetelling. 17 Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation." 18 And she continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment. 19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, 20 and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, 21 and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans." 22 And the crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their...
robes off them, and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. 23 And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; 24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks. NASB

In spite of this painful and brutal persecution, Paul and Silas gathered much “boldness in our God” and were determined “to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.” This heroic and courageous act was one that came from men of pure motives and much confidence.

1 Thessalonians 2:3-4 – 3 For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. NASU

A. For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit – Paul proves the sincerity of his ministry to them because of his loving service to them in spite of much opposition. It certainly was not the work of charleton or a deciever, one who would seek to exploit people through false means. No false prophet would endure such a scourging to bring his deceiving lies to anyone. The Apostles were not seeking money so as to deceive their hearers with some “error.” Verse 9 tells us they worked to support themselves.

1 Thessalonians 2:9 - 9 For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

Nor were they after sexual favors so that they would be accused of “impurity.” These Apostles set forth the truth of the Gospel plainly so that people could be saved, and they did nothing “by way of deceit.” See here then the Apostles sincere and loving motive toward their ministry to Thessalonians.

B. but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts – Here Paul appeals to the highest authority. The Apostles had been “approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel” and this was the most compelling reason for him to preach in such circumstances. They were sent from the God of Truth, with the message of truth, how then could they deceive or be in error? They sought to please God and not men, because God had commissioned and sent them and God was the one “who examines their hearts.”

Galatians 1:10 - 10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. NASB

And “so we speak” says Paul, “not as pleasing men, but God.” Paul’s motive and aim was to carry out the Masters orders, not tickle people’s ears. Would that all Christian preachers would learn in this school and stop seeking to “please men” and get down to the business of setting forth the truth plainly so that people can be saved.

1 Thessalonians 2:5-6 – 5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed — God is witness — 6 nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. NASU

A. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed — God is witness — 6 nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority – Paul did not seek to flatter his hearers, but to warn them of impending judgment. To flatter here is to exploit or deceive others with insincere praise. There was nothing insincere about Paul’s speech and so he says, “we never came with flattering speech,” and to this they were witnesses so he writes “as you know.” Christians should be suspect of flattering preachers, by this they expose their insincerity. Paul did not seek to take their money because he was greedy, but instead to hand out the riches of God’s grace. And for this he was willing to risk his life again and again. To this he says. “God is
Paul knows that ultimately he will give an account to God and that is what matters when all is said and done. We did not “seek glory from men, either from you or from others” he asserts. Paul was not on a power trip looking for the akalaids and submission of men, “even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.” Paul knows that his charge is from God, his message is from God and his praise is to come from God at the judgment. Therefore, he gives his life in service to Christ, regardless of the responses of men. This characterized the life of Paul.

**Galatians 2:20-21** - I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. NASB

**Acts 20:22-25** - 22 "And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. 24 "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. NASB

**1 Thessalonians 2:7-8** – 7 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. 8 Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. NASU

A. But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children – Not only had they come to Thessalonica in the face of much opposition, with a message and commission from God, with intentions and motives of the purest form, he now describes that in so doing there was a great humility and loving care on their part. They had served the Thessalonians in such a humble and “gentle” way as to be compared to a “nursing mother.” And to this they were witnesses, even as the Apostles “proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother cares for her own children,” their gentleness was evident to all. Paul, the master disciple maker, was very gentle with the new believers, so much so that he employed a very caring and nurturing way of discipling that looked much like motherhood. This tender nurture and gentleness also characterized Paul’s ministry, as was evident in his instructions to those he trained. It is a dominant characteristic of biblical leadership.

**2 Timothy 2:24-25** - 24 And the Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, NASB

**Titus 3:1-2** - remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, 2 to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. NASB

He took great pains to see to it that these baby Christians had everything they needed for Christian life as effective and productive members of the church. And this goal he achieved, by the power and grace of God, who made no small display of His power in the Thessalonian church, and this God did through the diligent leadership of the Apostles. See here the glorious beauty of divine sovereignty and human responsibility working hand in hand to accomplish God’s eternal plan. God had chosen the Thessalonians from before the beginning of time (2 Thess 2:13) for salvation, and had decided that He should carry out a massive evangelical work through them in the Greco-Roman world (1 Thess 1:5-9). This was His sovereign will and His eternal decree. However, He carried it out by His wonderful providence through the hands of men and their diligent service, whom He called to the task, by the Word of the Gospel and the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. This example brings new meaning to Ephesians 2:10.

**Ephesians 2:10** - 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. NASB

B. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us - See here the Questions? **shaansloan@att.net**

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sincere and genuine love that motivated Paul’s work. He deeply loved the church and as he saw God call them out, he tenderly received them into the fold. In fact because he had “so fond and affection for you,” he was “well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives.” Being willing to preach the Gospel in spite of much hardship was proof enough of their love for the church, but that is not all they did. They had made a great sacrifice of time and resources to visit the Thessalonians as they poured their very lives into them day by day, for as long as they could. Paul’s ministry was not only one of many words but it was accompanied by a lifestyle of loving service and kind affection as he states, “because you had become very dear to us.” See here the love of God to be what characterizes Christian leadership which is also seasoned with fond affection for those whom it serves.

1 Thessalonians 2:9-10 – 9 For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; NASU

A. For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you – See here yet another characteristic of Paul’s ministry, one of selfless sacrifice and hard work. He says here that they worked “night and day” and this was “labor and hardship” most probably in Paul’s industry of tent-making. Acts 18:1-4 - 1 After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, 3 and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers. 4 And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. NASB

Paul describes the motive of his working night and day “so as not to be a burden to any of you.” See again the integrity and sincerity of their discipling efforts, and to this he calls them to account, being eyewitnesses of his labor, he says “for you recall brethren.” He wanted them to recount his example among them and how they could not be open to the charge of being idle, nor of seeking the wealth of others, but rather an example working hard, with their own hands to support themselves. He will use this example of his to call idle people in the church to account and to correct them in 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12.

B. we proclaimed to you the gospel of God – Here we see the origin of Paul’s Gospel. It is the “gospel of God,” not the Gospel of men. It is the good news of the Person of Jesus Christ and the Work that He has already accomplished to reconcile rebel sinners to the Holy God, and restore them to loving relations with Him. Concerning this statement Leon Morris comments, “In 1:5 it is “our gospel,” for the preachers were proclaiming something they knew for themselves and had made their very own. Here what is singled out for attention is that the Gospel is not of human origin. It is nothing less than God’s plan for man’s salvation. The Christian faith is not the accumulated wisdom of pious souls, nor the insight of men of religious genius, but the divine plan for dealing with our sin.” Consider that when a Christian shares the Gospel of God’s grace they share an eternal message that never changes, of an eternal God who has completed a finished work of reconciliation to man, to which nothing can be added. It is the proclamation that God has entered time and space in the Person of Jesus Christ, to sacrifice Himself in order to buy His people back from sin and death, and that this work was completed once, proved powerful by His resurrection from the dead, and that all that is left to is to receive the free gift of God’s grace by repentance and faith. Repentance and faith is to turn from sins daily to follow Christ, and to trust Him only for our righteousness before God the Father, to whom the believing sinner has been reconciled. And this we Christians do with much confidence knowing that He will accomplish what He desires with it for it is the “Gospel of God.”

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