**Lesson 3**

1 Thessalonians 2

**Verses 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.

1. **There journey was not in vain because the Thessalonians had received the word (the gospel).**
2. **Paul and Silas were beaten and jailed in Philippi before coming to Thessalonica (Acts 16-17), and they continued to receive intense opposition in Thessalonica.** Even so, they had boldness in God to preach the word (the gospel) to them.

**Verse 3**

For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;

1. Paul defends the motivations for his teaching.
   1. **Error**, Gr Planay objectively *fraudulence*; subjectively a *straying* from orthodoxy or piety: - deceit, to deceive, delusion, error.
   2. **Impurity**, Gr. Akatharsia, *impurity* (the quality), physically or morally: - uncleanness.
   3. **Deceit** Gr. Dolos, probably meaning to *decoy*; compare G1185); a *trick* (*bait*), that is, (figuratively) *wile:* - craft, deceit, guile, subtilty.
   4. **So Paul’s ministry to them was the true pure gospel without error, presented by Paul and his associates form a pure morally upright lifestyle, without trickery or manipulation.**

**Verse 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.

1. a. What gets tested or approved is our “faith”, what we believe.

*Approved, Gr. Dokimadzo, to test (literally or figuratively); by implication to approve: - allow, discern, examine, like, (ap-) prove, try. Strongs*

1. This same word is used in the Septuagint (to which Paul is probably referring), in Zechariah 13:9.

*“And I will bring the third part through the fire,  
Refine them as silver is refined,  
And test them as gold is tested.  
They will call on My name,  
And I will answer them;  
I will say, ‘They are My people,’  
And they will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’”*

*Perfect passive indicative of dokimazō, old verb to put to the test, but here the tense for completed state means tested and proved and so approved by God.-Robertson’s Word Pictures*

*1 Peter 1:6-8 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof (dokimadzo) of your faith, being more precious than gold which  praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

*Verse 4: As we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.*

*Entrusted, pisteuo, to have faith (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), that is, credit; by implication to entrust.-Strongs*

1. Therefore, because Paul was approved/refined to teach the pure gospel, God said “I believe” in you, Paul, to minister this gospel.

When Paul spoke the pure gospel, it pleased God.

When Paul says “but God who examines our hearts.” The word examine is “dokimadzo” again. What is God looking for in ministers’ hearts?

***Galatians 1:1, 10***

*Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), 2 and all the brethren who are with me…10 For do I now persuade men, or God?* ***Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ****.*

1. 1. Seeking to be pleasing to people, 2. Using the gospel for greed, 3. Seeking glory from man. These are discussed in verses 5 and 6.

**Verses 5-6**

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.

1. **Paul is saying that even though he may be accused by others to have impure motives, God had tested his heart, and now God was witnessing to the fact of Paul’s truthfulness.**

*First, God had approved him. Dokimazō can mean both to ‘put to the test, examine’ and especially, as a result of the examination, to ‘accept as proved’ or ‘approve’ (BAGD). More simply still, it means to test and find genuine, and was used of both coins and people. Milligan refers to its technical use to describe ‘the passing (of somebody) as fit for election to a public office’.6 Just so, God had tested Paul and found him fit. Secondly, as a result of the successful test, God had entrusted him with the gospel, making him a steward of it.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

*To be accountable to him is to be delivered from the tyranny of human criticism.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

*The accusation apparently was threefold: (a) what Paul teaches is full of error; (b) he himself is less than honest (full of guile, flattery, impure motives); (c) the reason for which is greed. Paul then responds to these matters in reverse order: (c) in verse 8, he and his companions toiled with their own hands so as not to burden you; (b) in verses 10-11, their conduct was holy and righteous; (a) in verse 13, their gospel is the very word of God. Fee*

*Hence the emphasis throughout is simultaneously on the truthfulness of the message and the integrity of the messenger. In this case these two concerns are inextricably intertwined. Fee*

*Verse 5: you know we never used flattery, a word (kolakia) which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament and which expresses ‘the tortuous methods by which one man seeks to gain influence over another, generally for selfish ends’.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

*Nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness, pretending to serve while in reality wishing to be served. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else (6). All three evils (the flattery, the mask and the hunger for compliments) are illicit ways of using others to build up ourselves.[[4]](#footnote-4)*

1. **Could it be possible that “ministers of the gospel” would use flattering speech in order to gain financially? Does anyone seek glory from men? Do “ministers” assert their authority? Are there men-pleasers among those who preach? Sadly, yes. Is it true of all who preach? No. The important thing to consider is that just because someone is a “minister” does not automatically mean that this person preaches a pure message with pure motives.**

*It should also be noted that this is the first appearance of the word “apostle” in the New Testament, and while it may be moot as to whether it also includes Timothy in this case, there can be little question that the plural intentionally includes Silas. Fee*

**Verses 7-8**

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.

1. **What a tender image of the tender loving care demonstrated to the Thessalonians by Paul and those who worked among them.**

[*Verse 7*](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Th+2%3A7)*. we were—Greek, "we were made" by God's grace. JFB*

*Gentle—Greek, "mild in bearing with the faults of others" [Tittmann]; one, too, who is gentle (though firm) in reproving the erroneous opinions of others (*[*2Ti 2:24*](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Ti+2%3A24)*). JFB*

1. **Verse 8 is an amplification of verse 7 or one could say an explanation.** Imparting the gospel of God can be seen as a mother nursing her child. They not only fed them the word of God but gave of themselves. The Thessalonians were dear to their teachers. This gives a very different view of discipleship than is commonly seen in the church today.

*Being affectionately desirous—The oldest reading in the Greek implies, literally, to connect one's self with another; to be closely attached to another. JFB*

*"We would gladly have imparted," as we showed in the sufferings we endured in giving you the Gospel (*[*Ac 17:1-34*](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+17%3A1-34)*).JFB*

*On the other hand, the “nursing mother” metaphor makes perfectly good sense contextually, since Paul has just used the “infants” metaphor, whose point in context emphasizes the total innocence of the itinerant missionaries with regard to all that has been suggested about them. Fee*

*Note especially the “not’s,” which dominate the first half of this passage: error, impure motive, trickery, people-pleaser, flattery, greed, and human praise. Unfortunately these are not limited to the first century. Paul’s goal, on the other hand, is to be “approved by God” and thus a “God-pleaser.” Fee*

*In the end it is this personal dimension of his relationship with the Thessalonians that separates him so thoroughly from the charlatans, who cared nothing for their hearers as people. Fee*

**Verses 9-12**

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; 11 just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, 12 so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

1. **Verse 9 also speaks of how a parent cares for his/her children, providing for their own needs and also for the needs of their children.** How did they do this? They proclaimed the gospel of God. Paul’s labor and lifestyle proclaimed the gospel in the true sense, just as Peter’s lifestyle/actions preached another gospel in Gal. 2.

*That Paul should do so is probably at the same time a reflection of his rabbinic training, since, according to Aboth 2:2, “Rabban Gamaliel, the Son of R. Judah the Patriarch, says: ‘Fitting is learning in Torah along with a craft, for the labor put into the two of them makes one forget sin. And all learning of Torah that is not joined with labor is destined to be null and cause sin.” The present passage bears witness to Paul’s own adherence to this kind of rabbinic tradition, in which he had been schooled. Fee*

1. **With God and the Thessalonians as their witness, their behavior was without blame toward the believers.**

[*Verse 10*](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Th+2%3A10)*. Ye are witnesses—as to our outward conduct. JFB*

*God—as to our inner motives. holily—towards God. justly—towards men. unblamably—in relation to ourselves JFB*

*Although we should not attempt to distinguish too neatly between these three words, yet ‘holy’ (hosios) seems to refer to our being ‘devout, pious, pleasing to God’ (BAGD), ‘righteous’ to our dealings with our neighbour, and ‘blameless’ to our public reputation. [[5]](#footnote-5)*

*Even in the former term, "exhorted," the Greek includes the additional idea of comforting and advocating one's cause: "encouragingly exhorted." Appropriate in this case, as the Thessalonians were in sorrow, both through persecutions, and also through deaths of friends (*[*1Th 4:13*](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Th+4%3A13)*). JFB*

*Paul calls on God to join the Thessalonians in bearing such witness as to his exemplary character while in Thessalonica. After all, he has called on God throughout the present narrative. When in Thessalonica he took courage “in God,” whose “good news” he preached (v. 2); he was thus approved by God, who tests the hearts and whom alone Paul is aiming to please (v. 4). Fee*

1. **Again, Paul gives a lovely image, this time of a father encouraging and imploring his own children.**
2. **What did Paul encourage and implore them to do? It was to walk in a manner worth of the God who called them to His own Kingdom and glory.**
   1. Usually, in a typical sermon, a very long list will begin written to answer the question, “What does it mean to ‘walk worthy’?” Keep in mind that the answer to this question is to believe in Jesus and love each other as He loved us.

***1 John 3:23***

*And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.*

*The Greek article is emphatical, "Worthy of the God who is calling you." JFB*

*Glory—that ye may share His glory (*[*John 17:22*](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+17%3A22)*;* [*Col 3:4*](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Col+3%3A4)*). JFB*

*What Paul recognizes clearly — and quite in contrast to many of the religious charlatans of his day — is that the connection between the content of the gospel and the conduct of those who preach/teach/confess it must be held closely together for the former to have integrity at all. Fee*

**Verse 13**

For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

1. **Paul was thankful that they received the gospel that they taught as being from God, not from Paul. This word of God, the gospel of God, was at work in the Thessalonians.**

*This is an umambiguous assertion by Paul that the gospel he preached was the word of God. We are familiar with the claims of the Old Testament prophets that they were bearers of the word of God, for they introduced their oracles with formulas like ‘the word of the Lord came to me’, ‘listen to the word of the Lord’, and ‘thus says the Lord’. But here in verse 13 is a comparable claim by a New Testament apostle.[[6]](#footnote-6)*

*Paul’s double emphasis seems clear enough: the message of the gospel that they received, conveyed to them through the agency of the apostles, came ultimately from God. Fee*

*Hence the entire range of English translations correctly recognize that it is “the word” that is active in/among them. Fee*

*In sum, Paul’s concern in this second thanksgiving is to remind them that their response to his preaching was in fact a response to a message about Christ, which had been proclaimed by Paul and his colleagues when they were present in Thessalonica; indeed, it had rightfully been received by them as God’s message, a message that is still actively at work among them. Fee*

*Energeo “Performs it’s work”*

*From G1756; to be active, efficient: - do, (be) effectual (fervent), be mighty in, shew forth self, work (effectually in).*

*Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working (energeo) through love.*

*Ephesians 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works (energeo) within us,*

*Paul says that the Word of God, the Gospel performs it’s work in us, is energized, mighty, as we believe it. The Gospel’s power/dunamis, is activated in us as we believe in Him and His love for us.*

*Amplified Bible*

*And we also [especially] thank God continually for this, that when you received the message of God [which you heard] from us, you welcomed it not as the word of [mere] men, but as it truly is, the Word of God, which is effectually at work in you who believe [exercising its superhuman power in those who adhere to and trust in and rely on it].*

**Verses 14-16**

For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, 15 who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, 16 hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.

1. **They endured persecution at the hands of those in Thessalonica. In this way they imitated the church in Judea who was persecuted by the Jews.**

*Paul had in mind people like Stephen and James, viewing them as true Christian prophets. Fee*

1. **& 16** **Here Paul gives an account of the Jews who were persecuting the Christians in Judea:**
   1. They killed the Lord Jesus.
   2. They killed the prophets.
   3. They drove out the apostles.
   4. They are not pleasing to God.
   5. They are hostile to all men.
   6. They hindered the apostles from speaking to the Gentiles because they didn’t want them to get saved.
   7. They were continually filling up the measure of their sins.
   8. Wrath was coming upon them.

*Paul refers to them as simultaneously “not pleasing to God” and thus as “hostile to all people.” That is, on the one hand what they have been about and are still doing is diametrically opposed to what God is doing in the world, while on the other hand their displeasing God finds its ultimate expression in their hostility to humanity. Fee*

*How those responsible for killing both the Lord Jesus and the prophets have also “persecuted us” is by “[their effort] to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles” with their eternal salvation in view. Fee*

[*Verse 15*](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Th+2%3A15)*. the Lord Jesus—rather as Greek, "Jesus the Lord." JFB*

*“They fill to the full” their sins “always.” Fee*

The other translation seems to me more likely, however*, namely that ‘the wrath of God is over their heads’ (jbp), though it has not yet engulfed them. The destruction of Jerusalem in ad 70 was still twenty years away. But the reference in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 to Antichrist setting himself up in God’s temple strongly suggests that Paul was familiar with at least some of the apocalyptic warnings of Jesus.[[7]](#footnote-7)*

*The most likely suggestion is that we are here dealing with a prophetic word on the part of the apostle. Thus, Paul is so certain of God’s soon-coming judgment on his ancient people that he speaks of it — future though it still is — as an event that has already taken place. Fee*

*Paul is simply stating bald facts. Many of his Jewish contemporaries were rejecting Christ, opposing the gospel and hindering Gentiles from being saved. In consequence, God’s wrath had come upon them, as Jesus himself had warned.[[8]](#footnote-8)*

*Nonetheless, it needs to be heard on its own terms, regarding opposition on the part of “religious” people, who think that any deviation from their own orthodoxy should be fair game for public abuse of some kind. Fee*

**Verses 17-18**

But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. 18 For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan hindered us.

1. **Paul and his companions had to leave Thessalonica for a short while, though their hearts were still with them. They felt they had been “orphaned” from their children.**

*It had given Paul no pleasure to leave the city. He had not gone voluntarily. On the contrary, we were torn away from you, he writes. The Greek verb is aporphanizomai, whose only New Testament occurrence is in this verse.[[9]](#footnote-9) (The word “taken away”, is the Greek word for orphan.)*

*Returning to the first metaphor, he thinks of himself and Silas as “orphans.” Although this word in English refers to children who have been bereft of their parents, in Greek it was also used, as here, to refer to parents bereft of their children. Fee*

*Nonetheless, in terms of actual time he and Silas had been away from them for only a relatively short time (probably not yet a year); but at a time in history when communication between distances was slow and irregular, no news was not necessarily good news. Fee*

1. **They desired to return more than once, but Satan hindered them. (This was likely in the form of human beings working against their return.)**

*The emphasis is on an unnatural separation, both forcible and painful. At the same time, Paul felt sure that it was only temporary (for a short time), and he assured them that it was in person not in thought, which Bicknell neatly renders ‘out of sight but never out of mind’.[[10]](#footnote-10)*

*William Ramsay suggested that the satanic hindrance was the legal ban which the plutarchs of Thessalonica had put on Jason. They ‘took security from Jason and the others before letting them go’, with severe penalties if Paul were to return. ‘This ingenious device put an impassable chasm between Paul and the Thessalonians’. [[11]](#footnote-11)*

**Verses 19-20**

For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy.

1. **Paul’s hope, joy and crown of rejoicing would be to see the Thessalonians again in the presence of Jesus at His coming.**

*The emphasis here is twofold: first, on the Thessalonians themselves as being present at the Lord’s coming, emphasized especially by means of the parenthetical, “Is it not you?” and second, on their actually being in our Lord Jesus’ presence at his coming. Fee*

*This anticipation of their presence with Paul at Christ’s coming is first of all “our hope.” Over against the watered-down sense that the word “hope” has for most people in English, this word is Paul’s primary way of speaking about the certainty of the future. Fee*

*Whatever else, for Paul “hope abides” (1 Cor 13:13), in the sense that one lives in absolute confidence of a sure future that has been guaranteed by Christ’s own resurrection from the dead. Fee*

*Their being present with Paul at the coming of Christ is his desire, to be sure, and undoubtedly his expectation as well. Fee*

*Rather, for Paul “joy” is not about feelings but about verbalizing, since the word finds its true meaning in its corresponding verb, “rejoice.” It is less about how one “feels” and more about what one does in the presence of God; one “rejoices in the Lord” — which would be the way the Thessalonians would be Paul’s “glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes.” Fee*

*On the contrary, the “crown” Paul expects to receive at the coming of Christ has nothing at all to do with royalty; rather, its primary referent is the (usually laurel) wreath bestowed on the victor in one of the contests in the games, the winner’s ultimate prize, as it were. Thus it is not the symbol of royalty, but of victory, or achievement. Fee*

*Likewise here, with imagery from the games Paul is picturing himself as standing in the Lord’s own presence at his coming, wearing the victor’s wreath. But the “wreath” in this case is none other than the Thessalonian believers themselves, in whom he will glory because they are there with him in the Lord’s presence at his Parousia. Fee*

*First, the Greek word parousia had a long history in the Greek-speaking world as “the official term for a visit of a person of high rank, especially] of kings and emperors visiting a province” (BDAG 2bα). Fee*

*This frequent identification of Jesus as “the Lord” is most likely related to the fact that he is writing to believers in a city that especially enjoyed Roman privileges, for whom the “coming” of the “Lord Caesar” would have been seen as Thessalonica’s highest honor. These words, “the Lord, Jesus, at his coming,” are almost certainly intended to encourage the beleaguered believers in Thessalonica, that the coming of “the (real) Lord” lies in their own future. Fee*

1. **Paul calls them his glory and joy. What tenderness**. Since Paul has given reference to feeling as both a mother and a father toward them, we can relate to these thoughts when our own children bring us pride and joy. It fills our heart with rejoicing when they do what they make good choices and are successful.

*They are so in much the same way that new parents beam with delight over a newborn; and one cannot long be around such parents without experiencing their joy as well. Fee*

1. Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Thessalonians: the gospel & the end of time* (p. 50). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Thessalonians: the gospel & the end of time* (p. 51). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Thessalonians: the gospel & the end of time* (p. 51). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Thessalonians: the gospel & the end of time* (p. 51). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Thessalonians: the gospel & the end of time* (p. 53). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Thessalonians: the gospel & the end of time* (p. 54). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Thessalonians: the gospel & the end of time* (p. 57). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Thessalonians: the gospel & the end of time* (p. 59). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Thessalonians: the gospel & the end of time* (p. 61). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Thessalonians: the gospel & the end of time* (pp. 61–62). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Thessalonians: the gospel & the end of time* (p. 62). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)