



Finer Grounds Bible Study

1 & 2 Thessalonians

Lesson 3: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

I hope you are still taking time to read through the letter of 1 Thessalonians in its entirety before each lesson. This will greatly increase your love and understanding of this beautiful letter. As you study, continue to keep in mind the delicate situation in which Paul left these new Christians.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2

Throughout this section, Paul will take a considerable amount of time defending his message and motives. He is not telling the Thessalonians anything new; in fact, pay attention to how many times he uses the phrase “you know” or something similar.

Mark or make note of each time throughout the rest of this letter that Paul makes the statement “you know” or something similar. Take note of the things he reminds the Thessalonians.

Read Acts 16:16-24. What happened to Paul and his companions in Philippi?

Consider the situation the Thessalonians were in; why would it have been necessary for Paul to remind them of his motives?

Paul had gone directly from being beaten and imprisoned in Philippi to causing an uproar in Thessalonica. The suffering and hardship he was willing to endure continually for the cause of Christ and his love for his fellow Christian was ample evidence that he was not preaching for his own selfish gain. If that were the case, he could have spoken things that would have been more pleasing to men.

Not only were these men still willing to speak the truth, we see in these verses they spoke it with boldness! At times it must have been incredibly discouraging to experience what Paul did. He gave up everything to teach and bring people to Christ. While looking back now we can clearly see the unparalleled impact he had on the Christian world, I am sure there were days that the reality of his situation wore on him.

We all have a role to play in God’s kingdom. Some days things are going great and those jobs feel easy. However, there are many days when nothing seems to be going right, when no matter what we try to accomplish for good it seems to blow up in our face. There are seasons in our lives where it seems however hard we work, we don’t accomplish what we hoped. On days like this it is important to have the mindset of Paul. It isn’t about your success in how many people approve of what you are doing, it isn’t even about keeping tabs of the number of souls you are winning or lives you are touching. Paul measured success by one standard; am I seeking to honor God and



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advance his cause? Sometimes, our work for God will not have immediate or even visible results, but the important thing is to keep striving because God is the one we are serving, not men.

Have you ever found yourself in a situation while serving God where you have been discouraged because of lack of results or problems that arose?

What are some steps we can take to fight discouragement in these situations?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6

According to 1 Thessalonians 2:3, where does Paul's message NOT come from?

Where does his message come from?

Once again, Paul assures these Christians of things they already know. They had been first-hand witnesses to him bringing the gospel to their town. He states in 1 Thessalonians 2:3 that he did not come in deceit, this word literally means "to bait the hook." There were many philosophers going around teaching messages simply to gain glory and wealth. They would say what they needed to say in order to win the favor of the

people. Just like a fisherman, they would string up the most alluring bait they could find to attract people to their message. This was absolutely not the case with Paul. In fact, as we have seen earlier, the message Paul spoke did anything but bring him glory or wealth, it actually brought him pain and hardship.

Another interesting word choice is his use of "flattery" in 1 Thessalonians 2:5. This word is used slightly differently than we use it today. In the Greek, it was the practice of tailoring the truth to fit with popular opinion. Paul did not change aspects of the gospel to better fit into what he thought people wanted to hear. He did not wink at the common teachings of the day and shift his message to fit. He taught the unchanging, eternal truth of Jesus Christ.

In what ways have you seen people change the gospel message slightly to be appealing to a broader audience?

How can we guard against this?

One of my favorite things about Paul is his awareness of people and culture and the way that he reached out and taught people using illustrations and methods that they could understand (something that Jesus was a master at as well). One day he would quote from popular philosophers of the day (Acts 17:28, 1 Corinthians 15:33, Titus 1:12) and the next he would enter a pagan temple and engage in debate about the



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“unknown god” (Acts 17:22-24). Paul was an advocate of becoming “all things to all men” (1 Corinthians 9:22), but he never compromised the gospel message. This beautiful balance we see in Paul’s life is one for which we should continually strive.

What are some ways we can seek to be relevant to society around us while still maintaining the absolute truth of the gospel message?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9

How does Paul describe his relationship with the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8?

The imagery Paul uses here is beautiful. If you have ever had the experience of nursing your child, you know the overwhelming emotional bond felt. This is the way he describes his feelings towards these young Christians. In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul even suggests this bond is so strong that he and his companions would be willing to sacrifice their very lives for the sake of the Thessalonians. Paul understood that many of these Christians had given up so much, including family and friends; he wanted to assure them that they had a bond and support that would not be shaken.

The relationship that Paul shares with his converts should be our ultimate goal for our relationships with our fellow Christians. Too

often, it seems that the people in the pew next to us are simply acquaintances that we know very little about. Maybe they are even check marks on our prayer list or buddies we hang out with from time to time, but can we honestly speak about them the way Paul does about his fellow Christians? Do we have the same emotional ties to our brothers and sisters in Christ that we do to our own children?

What would it look like on a practical level if we all shared the same affection for our Christian brothers and sisters that Paul did?

What is one thing you can do this week to share your affection with someone in your congregation?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12

What analogy does Paul use in 1 Thessalonians 2:11 to describe his relationship with the Thessalonians?

According to 1 Thessalonians 2:11, what three things did Paul do?

Paul shifts his analogy at this point and compares himself to their father. These two



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examples of mother and father show the different roles that Paul plays in the lives of these Christians. The three terms he uses here perfectly describe this fatherly role Paul takes on. Exhort (PARAKALEO) literally means to “call to one’s side” or to plead with someone. Encourage (PARAMYTHEOMAI) means to comfort or to strengthen someone’s heart. Implore (MARTYROMAI) means to insist on something of great importance. This fatherly role was one of great persuasiveness. He wasn’t just there to show them affection; he was there to affect change in their lives.

According to 1 Thessalonians 2:12, what was the purpose of this change?

Scripture is clear that this balance between heart and truth is necessary and Paul always tempered his message with both. If Paul would have come to Thessalonica demanding change but never expressing his concern and care for the people, it would have hardly been effective. If he would have come like the false teachers, only in an attempt at making people feel good, his message would have been fruitless. The balance that Paul continually shows throughout his ministry is one we should take note of in our own evangelistic efforts.

How can simply teaching facts and demanding change without showing concern for people be damaging to the cause of Christ?

How can only showing our affection for people and never teaching things that will change behavior and challenge people be damaging?

What are some ways we can be careful to maintain the balance of the affectionate mother and the imploring father when we are teaching others?

One thing is abundantly clear throughout the passage we have been studying this week, Paul had a deep devotion and love for his fellow Christians. When you read and fully digest this section, you can almost hear the pages drip with his emotion and concern for the Thessalonians. As you go throughout your week, let this relationship be your model for the way you treat your brothers and sisters in Christ. Take every opportunity to show them love and remind them that you care for them deeply. Take time to learn about them and keep their concerns in your prayers. Your encouragement could be the very thing someone needs to stand firm as they face the sea of opposition in their world.