

## “A Model Ministry” (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12)

What makes a model ministry? How can we be the church that God wants us to be? [Think about these questions for just a moment.] At EBF, we have four strategies: learn the Word, live the life, love the body, and lead the world.<sup>1</sup> We believe these four strategies are what God has called us to fulfill. We have come a long way in this endeavor but we still have even further to go. Interestingly, these strategies are addressed rather nicely in 1 Thess 2:1-12. In this passage, we will learn from Paul and his coworkers how to work toward a model ministry. We will see that a model ministry is dependent upon each and every individual doing his or her part. Paul tells us that this can happen when we serve Christ with pure and parental hearts. In these verses, Paul says, “*A little example can have a big influence.*”

**1. Serve Christ with a pure heart (2:1-6).** In this section, we will see that Christian ministry can be fruitful when it is carried out with a pure heart that desires to please God. In 2:1-2, Paul explains that God blessed his ministry because of his willingness to preach Christ amidst persecution. He writes, “**For<sup>2</sup> you yourselves<sup>3</sup> know,<sup>4</sup> brethren,<sup>5</sup> that our coming<sup>6</sup> to you was not in vain,<sup>7</sup> but after we had already suffered and been mistreated<sup>8</sup> in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness<sup>9</sup> in our God to speak to you the gospel of<sup>10</sup> God<sup>11</sup> amid much opposition.**” The word “for” that begins 2:1<sup>12</sup> indicates that the material in this chapter is the basis for the preceding material in chapter 1.<sup>13</sup> The main point of chapter 1 was Paul’s thanksgiving for the Thessalonians’ faith and dynamic witness. The ironic climax of 1:6-10 was that Paul and his coworkers did not need to preach Christ as much in the areas where the Thessalonians faith had spread (1:8).<sup>14</sup> Consequently, his visit was “not in vain.” On the contrary, it was quite fruitful! Verse 2, then, gives the reason (not a contrast)<sup>15</sup> for Paul’s claim in 2:1. Paul’s coworkers were fruitful because they proclaimed the gospel even in the face of persecution. In 2:2, Paul states that they had “suffered and been mistreated” in Philippi. That is a bit of an understatement. In Philippi Paul and Silas had been stripped, beaten, thrown into prison, and their feet fastened in stocks. It had not only been an extremely painful experience but humiliating as well, since they were flogged naked in public, without trial, and in spite of their Roman citizenship. After this, most of us would have taken a vacation or found an excuse not to minister ever again. But Paul and his coworkers headed to Thessalonica where they met up with more strong opposition.<sup>16</sup> Yet, they didn’t say, “We better pull the punch in our preaching so that we don’t offend anyone.” Instead, they preached the Word with no-holds-barred! These guys were animals! But before we get too excited about Paul and his men, we must note that Paul declares they had boldness “in our God.” It was not their own boldness—it was “in God.”<sup>17</sup> He gave them their boldness.

It is also worth noting that the term “opposition” is the Greek word *agon*—from which we derive our English word agony. *Agon* is an athletic term that suggests intense effort and strenuous exertion in the face of hostility and conflict.<sup>18</sup> This reminds us that ministry to others, the work of leading people to Christ and helping them grow in Christ, is a contest, a spiritual struggle.<sup>19</sup> It is not an easy job—it is physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually demanding and draining.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, it has been said, “The door of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition.”<sup>21</sup> So what are we to do in the face of opposition or indifference? **(1) Refuse to be intimidated.** One of the reasons Christianity is so ineffective in our culture is that we are easily intimidated. In other words, we are more scared of people than we are Jesus. Today, will you pray for “holy boldness?” Will you ask the Lord to help you to boldly proclaim at work or school this week? **(2) Rely on prayer.** Persevere in prayer despite discouraging circumstances. Will you write down two names this week—one unsaved and one saved—and then begin praying for these two people? **(3) Stay the course.** Don’t stop sharing Christ and living the Christian life because people reject you. Sometimes the best thing you can do is to keep on doing what you are already doing, whether anyone pays attention or not. If you keep serving with a pure heart long enough, sooner or later it will pay off. Our Christian lives and ministry are all about perseverance. *A little example can have a big influence.*

In 2:3-6, Paul details how to serve with a pure heart. Since Paul was being grouped in with religious charlatans and hucksters he responds to personal attacks against his own ministry. Interestingly, these attacks have continued to be levied against Christianity for the last 2,000 years....sometimes legitimately and other times illegitimately. He writes, **“For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit”** (2:3). In this verse, Paul debunks three accusations surrounding his ministry. First, Paul’s ministry did not come from error; rather, it was grounded in God’s Word. This is how you can judge a ministry: is it grounded in the truth of God’s Word? An effective ministry is not based upon preferences, opinions, or musings...it is based on God’s truth. The one great advantage that Christians have is that our holy book is accurate. Even though people attempt to find contradictions and errors in the Bible, their attempts are always foiled. In fact, many of Christianity’s greatest detractors have become believers during their quest to disprove Christ or His resurrection.

Second, Paul’s ministry did not come from impurity for he was a man of purity. In this context, the word “impurity” is broader than sexual immorality (cf. 4:7). The NIV is probably right to render the word “impure motives,” alluding to such evils as “ambition, pride, greed, and popularity.”<sup>22</sup> Paul is saying, “I am ‘above reproach’ in every area of my life and ministry.” We can measure the impact of God’s Word upon any group of people by the spiritual caliber of the spokesman. Water flows through pipes. If the pipe is rusty, the water may flow but there will be discoloration and sediment in the water. It will taste of the pipe. Often God’s Word will not taste right if the messenger is unclean.<sup>23</sup>

Third, Paul’s ministry did not come from deceit for he was an honest man. The word “deceit” was originally used of a fisherman who deceives a fish with a lure. Secular Greek literature also used “deceit” for a tavern keeper of the ancient world who would water down the wine of an inebriated person. There are those who also water down the Word.<sup>24</sup> Paul didn’t use trickery or slick salesmanship to sell the gospel, assuring people of things that the gospel never promises.<sup>25</sup> Sometimes, in an effort to get people to receive Christ, we tell them how Christ will solve all their problems, but we don’t tell them the hardships and cost of following Christ. So they come to Christ under false pretenses. When their problems don’t go away, or grow even worse, they grow bitter and fall away.<sup>26</sup>

Paul’s words in 2:4 mark a stark contrast: **“but<sup>27</sup> just as we have been approved<sup>28</sup> by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men,<sup>29</sup> but God who examines<sup>30</sup> our<sup>31</sup> hearts.”<sup>32</sup>** Paul and his coworkers have been “approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.” Therefore, they are responsible to proclaim Christ to anyone and everyone who will listen, regardless of what others think or say. The contrast Paul makes is between pleasing men and pleasing God, who examines the heart. In making this claim, Paul is not saying that he did not care how he lived in front of people or what they thought about his way of life, but that he just answered to God. Sometimes you hear men say, “I don’t have to answer to people; I just answer to God” as an excuse for not being accountable. That’s not what Paul meant. In fact, he repeatedly appeals to their knowledge of his blameless life.<sup>33</sup> He simply argues that the dominant goal in his life and preaching is pleasing God above all else.

Let’s suppose that you have been feeling sick lately. When you go to the doctor, he administers a test. The results are not good. The outlook is grim, but the disease is treatable if you get started now. What do you want the doctor to do? If he tells you truth, you’ll be devastated. If he doesn’t, you’ll be dead. Would you rather have him sugarcoat the truth or even lie to you? Or do you want to know the whole truth about your condition? I know the answer for me. When I go to the doctor I want to know the whole truth, even if it hurts. But what if he says, “I want to spare you pain?” I would tell him, “Doc, tell that to my wife and children at my funeral.” When life and death issues are at stake only the truth will do. When it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the stakes couldn’t be higher. Therefore, Christians must be people who hold to the highest possible standards of truth and integrity.<sup>34</sup> *A little example can have a big influence.* When you and I live for Christ with our lives and our lips, the world can be changed.

In 2:5, Paul continues to detail how to serve with a pure heart. He writes, **“For we never came with flattering<sup>35</sup> speech.”** Dale Carnegie once said, “Flattery is telling the other person precisely what he thinks about himself.”<sup>36</sup> In preaching and ministry many leaders want to tell people what they want to hear. It is easy to say, “You’re a victor, a child of the king, and God wants you healthy, wealthy, and wise.” That’s a popular message and one that many people want to hear. But it is flattery and it is not the gospel. Recently, I was talking to a nurse at St. Pete’s Hospital and noticed that she had a gorgeous 2-carat wedding ring. I complimented her on her beautiful ring. I then had the audacity to ask her if it was real. She acknowledged that it wasn’t. It was a cubic zirconium. Cubic zirconium is a mineral that is hard, optically flawless, and cheap. It resembles a diamond so closely that sometimes only a trained eye can tell the difference. But it isn’t a diamond—and that’s the point. A similar comparison exists between true compliments and flattering words. They may look alike, but one is sincere and precious; the other is insincere and cheap. We must ensure that we tell the truth when we minister in God’s name.

Paul also says in 2:5 that he never came with **“pretext for greed—God is witness.”** Always remember, if the apostle Paul was accused of greed we must expect that we will be as well. When I was working at Target as an 18-year-old, I boldly shared my faith with my coworkers. As a result, they accused me of being like Jimmy Swaggart or Jim Bakker, which was bizarre because I was not dating anyone and was living with my parents and making \$4.25 an hour. These words were spoken to shut me up, but they only riled me up. I don’t want a couple of fallen pastors representing my faith.

Paul concludes this section in 2:6 with these powerful words: **“nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles<sup>37</sup> of Christ we might have asserted our authority.”** For the second time in three verses, Paul brings up pleasing men. Here he says we did not “seek glory from men.” Recently, I was really tested in this area. In May, I was asked to preach at my alma mater’s (Multnomah Bible College) graduation banquet. Lori and I were seated next to the president at his table. We were greeted by the vice president and assistant academic dean. And then, fear of all fears, my Greek professor approached me. Honestly, I was nervous. I also felt incredible pressure to impress the faculty and administration and the 300 people I didn’t know. I haven’t felt that nervous in a long time. This forced me to ask myself the question, “Keith, who are you preaching for? Are you preaching to impress others and please yourself? Or are you preaching for God’s glory and pleasure?” Our aim must always be to glorify God and please Him. If people are pleased in this process, praise God! But this is not a criterion by which we are to judge our ministry (cf. Gal 1:10).

[Paul’s exhortation has been serving Christ with a pure heart. Why is this so important? Because only when we please God will we see lasting results.]

**2. Serve Christ with a parental heart (2:7-12).** In this second section Paul explains what an effective ministry is. To draw this out, he uses paternal metaphors. This is important because some believers have lost family relationships for believing in Christ.<sup>38</sup> In this light, Paul’s extensive use of parental and family images is significant. Through the use of such language he essentially portrays the congregation as a new family, whose relationships substitute for those that have been broken or lost. In 2:7, he compares his pastoral work to that of a nursing mother. Paul writes, **“But we proved to be gentle<sup>39</sup> among you, as a nursing mother<sup>40</sup> tenderly cares<sup>41</sup> for her own children.”<sup>42</sup>** One of the distinguishing characteristics of mothers is that they are gentle. This is a lovely image that goes against the grain of our mental picture of the apostle Paul. Of all the words we might use to describe him, somehow the word “gentle” doesn’t come to mind. Strong, determined, zealous, and impassioned—yes. But gentle? Nonetheless, there it is. Gentleness is not a quality often respected today. We tend to value tough, strong, assertive leaders. But none of us likes to be bullied; we’d all rather be loved.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Paul illustrates his relationship with the Thessalonians by describing the bond between a nursing mother and her child. Just as a mother nourishes her child through her own body, so Paul as a spiritual parent nourishes his children in the faith with the Word of God.

In 2:8 Paul writes, **“Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased<sup>44</sup> to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives,<sup>45</sup> because you had become very dear<sup>46</sup> to us.”** The word “affection” (*homeiromai*) is only used here in the NT; however, in Greek literature it was a strong term of affection related to parents longing for children who have passed away.<sup>47</sup> We need to have a heart of compassion and tenderness for others. It takes the gospel, plus us. People will listen to our message when they know we care about them. In my pastoral experience, I have discovered that most people will not respond to a pastor’s public invitation. For most people to believe in Christ for the first time, the personal touch is required. This means that we have folks into our home or take them out to a meal or talk to them in the foyer about a faith relationship with Jesus Christ. I can recall several times when people have told me that one of our regular attendees has believed the gospel. Consequently, I have been asked why this person didn’t believe in Christ through my gospel invitations. The answer is simple: Most people require a personal invitation in a one-on-one context. This is the responsibility of the church. We all bear the privilege and responsibility to share Christ with others. We then share a responsibility to share our lives with new Christians.<sup>48</sup>

In 2:9 Paul writes, **“For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship,<sup>49</sup> how working night and day so as not to be a burden<sup>50</sup> to any of you,<sup>51</sup> we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.”** If you read 1 Corinthians 9, Paul makes it clear in that passage that he doesn’t consider it wrong for a man to live off the preaching of the gospel. And in 1 Timothy 5 he says that an elder who both rules and teaches is worthy of “double honor,” which presumes that elders would in fact be paid for their work. But he himself apparently worked in secular jobs wherever he went so that he would be free of any accusations about his motives. His work ethic was exemplary. Tragically, many Christians give Christianity a black-eye because of their poor work performance. This is a crying shame, since work is an expression of worship and it also serves as a powerful witness. This week, will you go to your cubicle or your classroom or home and work as unto the Lord? As you work your daily grind for the glory of God the mundane and monotonous nature of your work can become extraordinary in its kingdom impact. *A little example can have a big influence.*

In 2:10 Paul writes, **“You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly<sup>52</sup> and uprightly<sup>53</sup> and blamelessly<sup>54</sup> we behaved toward you believers.”<sup>55</sup>** The word “devoutly” speaks of inward affections toward both God and man; the word “uprightly” refers to their outward behavior toward God and man; and the word “blamelessly” is the overarching result of being holy and righteous.<sup>56</sup> Paul means to say that no one could make an accusation against him and make it stick. No one could say, “Aha! I gotcha!” To be “blameless” means to live in such a way that no one can successfully make a serious charge against you. It means living in such a way that anyone who finds fault with you would have to tell a lie to do it!

Paul continues his train of thought in 2:11 where he writes, **“just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you<sup>57</sup> as a father<sup>58</sup> would his own children.”<sup>59</sup>** Paul says that he behaved with the Thessalonians as a father with his children. “Exhorting” speaks of pressing upon God’s people the need to live a life of godliness. Often, this takes the form of a rebuke. “Encouraging” points to progress where a spiritual father might say, “I see your growth. I am watching your steps of faith beyond your comfort zone. You are moving toward your potential. I believe in you. I am proud of you.” “Imploring” is the strongest of the three since it suggests the idea of insisting or requiring that a certain course of action be adopted.<sup>60</sup> This is where we challenge people to cross the line of faith or press on in the faith. We urge people to make a decision once they have been exhorted and encouraged.

Not long ago, I read an interesting statement about the difference between mothers and fathers. Mothers tend to worry about their children’s safety and security; fathers focus on their children’s success. A mother frets over things like tender loving care while fathers push their children hard because they know we live in a world where failure is easy and success difficult. Both are absolutely necessary—in raising children and in serving the Lord.<sup>61</sup>

The purpose of this entire section comes to a crescendo in 2:12b: “**so that you would walk<sup>62</sup> in a manner worthy of the God<sup>63</sup> who calls<sup>64</sup> you into His own kingdom and glory**”<sup>65</sup> (cf. 4:1). Paul exhorts the church to walk in a worthy manner. Spiritually speaking, this is putting one foot in front of the other and taking steps of forward progress. For this, Paul doesn’t give them a list of rules, rituals, and regulations. Instead, he urges them to become like Jesus in their character and conduct. This is simply responding to God’s call upon our lives. Paul refers to “His own kingdom.” We must temper and tune our lives to this calling. We adjust ourselves to God; He does not adapt Himself to us. We could accept a call to many kingdoms. Those kingdoms would compete for our commitment and these false allegiances will lure us away from our ultimate purpose. Many philosophies will pander to our baser motives. God designed us for the highest calling.<sup>66</sup> The chief end of Paul’s ministry is a church that is obeying God. Fascinatingly, the word translated “glory” (*doxa*) here is used in 2:6. In this way, the theme is repeated. If I know that it is God’s kingdom of glory I am being called into, then I will not be so worried about the praise of men. It is the eternal kingdom of the glory of God that I’m being called to, and therefore I want to live a life worthy of Him. This type of life is not a means of earning God’s favor. On the contrary, it is clearly a response to God who calls us to Himself.<sup>67</sup> Paul’s prayer is that we would express our gratitude to God for who He is and all He has done, in the form of a thank you card.

Spiritually, you may be nursing, crawling, walking, or running. The important thing is that you’re moving forward in your maturity. If you are growing, God is pleased. He wants the best for you. He yearns for you to be conformed to the image of Jesus. He will not stop until He accomplishes this in you. Today, will you respond to Him? Will you take small steps that will help you grow as a spouse, a parent, a worker, a church member? You can be used by God to make an eternal difference in your home, work, and church. *A little example can have a big influence.*

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### Scripture References

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12  
Acts 16:19-24  
Philippians 1:27-30  
Galatians 1:10  
John 5:41, 44  
2 Timothy 2:24-26  
1 Corinthians 9:1-27

### Study Questions

1. How would I have defined a fruitful ministry before studying this passage? In what ways has my understanding changed since working through this passage? What roles do boldness and perseverance play in my new understanding of a fruitful ministry? How can I see these qualities intensify and grow in my own life and ministry?
2. In his book, *Leading from Within*, Parker Palmer writes, “Leadership and spirituality are probably two of the vaguest words you can find in our language, and when you put them together you get something even more vague” (p. 201). Do I agree with this quote? Why or why not? How would I define the individual terms “leadership” and “spirituality?” How would I define the phrase “spiritual leadership?” To what degree do I live out my understanding of these definitions? Read Luke 22:24-27. How does this passage help me define these terms?
3. Are there any *legitimate* accusations that the world or church could bring against my character (2:3-4)? Am I a man or woman who is above reproach in every area of my life? How do I measure up to the character lists in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 2? What specific area(s) do I need the most work in? Is there someone I look up to as an example who can help me grow spiritually? Will I contact this person today?
4. Am I a God-pleaser or a man-pleaser? How would someone who knows me well characterize my life? What would be included in my obituary? In what areas do I find it most difficult to strive to please God? Why are these areas so difficult? What am I afraid of? Read Matthew 10:24-32 (especially 10:28) for encouragement. How should this passage change my thoughts and actions?
5. Am I a good father or mother (2:7, 11)? What would my children say? In what areas do I excel as a parent? How can I apply my paternal instincts and convictions in raising up mature believers? To what degree do I long to see my fellow believers grow in Christ (2:12)? Have I become busy and selfish with my time and energy? If so, how can I correct this trend? What will I do this week to help another believer grow in Christ?

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> For more information see <http://www.emmanuelbiblefellowship.com/aboutuslist.html#statement>.

<sup>2</sup> There is no clear or obvious structure to 1 Thess 2:1-12, except for the repeated use of “for” (*gar*) at the beginning of 2:1, 3, 5, and 9. Michael W. Holmes, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 60.

<sup>3</sup> The “you” (*autoi*) is emphatic and is thus translated by the NASB as “you yourselves.”

<sup>4</sup> Paul appeals to the Thessalonians experience so often that the phrase “you know” becomes characteristic of this book (see 1 Thess 1:5; 2:1, 2, 5, 11; cf. 2:9 “you recall” and 2:10 “you are witnesses”).

<sup>5</sup> The word *adelphoi* is more accurately translated “brothers and sisters.” See BDAG s.v. *adelphos* 1, where considerable nonbiblical evidence for the plural *adelphoi* meaning “brothers and sisters” is cited.

<sup>6</sup> Morris writes, “By repeating the term *eisodos* (“coming”) the thoughts here are linked back with 1:9. ‘You’ here corresponds to ‘they themselves’ in 1:9. There Paul cited outsiders as witnesses; here he says that the Thessalonians needed no one else to bear witness, for they themselves knew what had happened.” Leon Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. Tyndale New Testament Commentary series (London: Tyndale, 1984), 50.

<sup>7</sup> Paul uses the word *kenos* (“vain”) 12 times (1 Cor 15:10, 14 [2x], 58; 2 Cor 6:1; Gal 2:2; Eph 5:6; Phil 2:16 [2x]; Col 2:8; 1 Thess 2:1; 3:5), but his use in 1 Thess 3:5 seems to parallel his use of the word in 2:1. Green writes, “The theme of 2:1-12 is the character of the messengers’ mission and not the results of their labors. But while the primary emphasis seems to be on the apostolic mission, the missionary character was bound up with the results of the mission...Character and results could not be separated. Sound character produced credible results. Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*. Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 115. See also Michael Eaton, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*. Preaching Through the Bible (Kent, England: Sovereign World, 1997), 27. G.K. Beale, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 63. With this said, it should be noted that Paul could be using this word in reference to the content and character of their preaching and ministry. Since he dealt with the results in the lives of the Thessalonians in chapter 1, and in view of the context that follows here in chapter 2, he is using this word with regard to the essential character, earnestness, and sincerity of their entrance and coming to proclaim God’s truth to the Thessalonians. What follows will set forth Paul’s proof that their coming was full of authentic earnestness and substance. It was not empty and without power or prompted by vain methods, motives, and means.

<sup>8</sup> Gk. *hubrizo* is a strong word found five times in the NT (Matt 22:6; Luke 11:45; 18:32; Acts 14:5). Our English word hubris comes from this word.

<sup>9</sup> Morris writes, “It denotes a state of mind when the words flow freely, the attitude of feeling quite at home with no sense of stress or strain, an attitude that includes both boldness and confidence (in fact the corresponding noun is sometimes translated “boldness,” sometimes “confidence”). When it is used in the New Testament the verb always has to do with the proclamation of the gospel.” Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 51. In the NT this verb is always used with reference to proclaiming the gospel (Acts 9:27, 29; 13:46; 14:3). But because of the animosity that often comes with preaching the gospel, it came to mean “to have courage, venture boldly” but always, it seems, in connection with the word. There are many reasons Christians do not witness or share their faith, but no doubt, fear is the underlying issue—fear of failure, fear of ridicule, fear of hostility, and so on.

<sup>10</sup> The genitive in the phrase *to euaggelion tou theou* (“the gospel of God”) could be translated as either a subjective genitive (“the gospel which God brings”) or an objective genitive (“the gospel about God”). Either is grammatically possible. This is possibly an instance of a plenary genitive (see *ExSyn* 119–21; M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, §§36–39). If so, an interplay between the two concepts is intended: The gospel which God brings is in fact the gospel about himself. This same phrase occurs in 1:8 and 9 as well. See NET Study Notes.

<sup>11</sup> Paul refers to the “gospel” (*euaggelion*) four times (2:2, 4, 8, 9; cf. 1:5) and three of those times he refers to it as “the gospel of God.” The phrase underscores the fact that the gospel originates with God; Paul didn’t think it up himself. The gospel isn’t the best thinking of the religious minds of the day. It comes from God who revealed it to us by sending His Son as the sacrifice for our sins. If God had not revealed it, we would not have it.

<sup>12</sup> The word *gar* (“for”) is left untranslated in the NIV.

<sup>13</sup> Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*. New International Greek Testament Commentary series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Exeter, England: Paternoster, 1990), 92. Beale, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 63–64. Specifically, 1 Thess 2:1 is a striking parallel with 1:9 and gives the basis for 1:8.

<sup>14</sup> Beale provides the following paraphrase: “The reason that your witness was so effective and we apostles did not have to witness as much as we would have (1:8) is not only because those whom you witness to became witnesses (1:9) but also because our witness to you was not ineffective.” Beale, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 64.

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<sup>15</sup> In most contexts, the adversative *alla* (“but”) serves as a contrast; however in 1 Thess 2:2 it serves an explanatory function.

<sup>16</sup> In Thessalonica, the attacks were probably coming mostly from without. The Jews, who were jealous of Paul’s success and opposed to his message, stirred up a bunch of rabble rousers and the city authorities against Paul, so that he had to leave town. They even followed him to Berea, 50 miles away, to stir up opposition there. Acts 17:4 reports that a number of leading women in the city had believed after hearing Paul preach. Perhaps the husbands of these women were saying, “Paul is just another religious huckster like we see come through here all the time. How could you be so dumb as to fall for what he said? He’s just out to make a buck or to con women into sleeping with him. Don’t be so gullible!” To answer these charges, Paul asserts and defends his own integrity with the aim of defending the gospel and of urging the new Christians to walk worthy of God. Steven J. Cole, “Becoming Men of Integrity” (1 Thess 2:1-12): 3-4.

<sup>17</sup> Before coming to Thessalonica, Paul came to Corinth “in weakness and in fear and in much trembling” (1 Cor 2:3).

<sup>18</sup> The Greek world was familiar with athletic contests, and Paul often used this idea to illustrate spiritual truths (see 1 Cor 9:27; Phil 3:13-14; 2 Tim 4:7). Paul used this same word in Phil 1:30 where he pictured the Christian life as an athletic contest that demanded dedication and energy. It had not been easy to start a church in Philippi, and it was not easy to start one in Thessalonica. Cf. Col 1:29 where the verb (*agonizomai*) is used in much the same way.

<sup>19</sup> Morris writes, “The use of [this] ... word [*agon*] here reminds the Thessalonians that the opposition that Paul had met had been intense, and his preaching had not been easy. How, in the face of this, could it be urged that he preached only for what he could get out of it.” Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 52.

<sup>20</sup> Undoubtedly, by the use of this word, Paul has in mind both inward and outward conflict that believers often face in ministry if they are faithful to God’s calling and purpose. But there were also inward battles perhaps like the temptation to throw in the towel in the face of discouraging conditions. There were the spiritual battles with spiritual opposition, and there was his deep concern for the churches which he rated right alongside with his physical sufferings. Note in particular 1 Cor 2:3; 2 Cor 6:4-10; 7:5; 11:23-28. Hampton Keathley III, “An Example for Ministry” (1 Thess 2:1-12): *An Exegetical and Devotional Commentary on First Thessalonians* ([www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org)).

<sup>21</sup> This quote is attributed to Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. from Ray Pritchard, “Five Words on a Tombstone” (1 Thess 2:1-6): <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1996-08-18-Five-Words-on-a-Tombstone/>.

<sup>22</sup> Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*. Black’s New Testament Commentaries series, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Black, 1977), 94; John R.W. Stott, *The Gospel and the End of Time: The Message of 1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 48. It is possible to preach the right message with the wrong motives (Phil 1:14-19).

<sup>23</sup> Grant C. Richison, *1 Thessalonians* (<http://www.gracenotes.info/> 1997), 45. Richison, *1 Thessalonians*, 45.

<sup>24</sup> Richison, *1 Thessalonians*, 45.

<sup>25</sup> Getz comments, “Here’s where we are dealing with a delicate balance. Jesus stated that we are to be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matt 10:16). He also taught His followers how to be ‘fishers of men’ (Matt 4:19). But this in no way gives us license to be cunning, crafty, and tricky.” Gene A. Getz, *Standing Firm When You’d Rather Retreat: Based on 1 Thessalonians* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1986), 51.

<sup>26</sup> Cole, “Becoming Men of Integrity,” 6.

<sup>27</sup> The strong adversative *alla* (“but,” “on the contrary”) is used to make a sharp contrast between 2:3 and 2:4.

<sup>28</sup> The word *dedokimasmetha* (“approved”) is in the perfect tense, which suggests not only past approval but one that continues into the present—“we stand approved.”

<sup>29</sup> I like what Bill Cosby once said, “I don’t know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody.” See Preaching Today citation: [www.quotationspage.com](http://www.quotationspage.com).

<sup>30</sup> Mayhue suggests that Paul may be alluding to Jer 11:20 here: “But, O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously, Who tries the feelings and the heart, Let me see Your vengeance on them, for to You have I committed my cause.” Richard Mayhue, *First and Second Thessalonians*. Focus on the Bible (Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1999), 68.

<sup>31</sup> Morris writes, “Here the meaning is that God searches out the whole of our inner life. Nothing is hidden from him. In passing we might note that the plural, ‘our hearts,’ is unlikely to be an editorial plural. It associates Silas and Timothy closely with Paul in this great affirmation.” Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 54.

<sup>32</sup> See 2 Pet 2:14, 18-19: These false teachers have “eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children...For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom

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while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.” Cf. Jude 7-8, 16; Rev 2:14, 20.

<sup>33</sup> See “you know,” “knowing,” “you recall,” “you are witnesses” (1:5; 2:1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 11).

<sup>34</sup> Pritchard, “Five Words on a Tombstone.”

<sup>35</sup> The word *kolakia* (“flattery”) occurs only here in the NT. Morris writes, “We can use this English term of remarks that, although insincere, are directed to the pleasure of the person being flattered. The Greek term has rather the idea of using fair words as a means of gaining one’s own ends. It is a matter of using insincerity as an instrument of policy, as a means of persuading another to do one’s will.” Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 54.

<sup>36</sup> This idea came from David Jeremiah, “Cubic Zirconium,” *Today’s Turning Point*, 7/1/08.

<sup>37</sup> In this context, “apostles” is used in a rather general sense meaning “as Christ’s messengers” rather than in the more technical sense of the Twelve and of Paul due to the special revelation given to him. F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. Word Biblical Commentary series (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 31.

<sup>38</sup> See Matt 10:34-36; Mark 10:29; 13:12-13; Luke 12:51-53; and 1 Cor 7:12-15.

<sup>39</sup> The word “gentle” (*epios*) is only used here and in 2 Tim 2:24.

<sup>40</sup> Paul may have applied the maternal image of a nursing mother to himself because he represented the true God (1 Thess 1:9), whose relationship with Israel was sometimes portrayed as a mother caring for her young (Isa 49:15; 66:12-13; Hos 11:1, 3-4). Beale, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 73. Mayhue proposes that Paul’s imagery might have come from Moses’ leadership of Israel. The liberator of the Jews from Egypt pictures himself as a guardian carrying a nursing child (Num 11:2). It is the picture of one who unselfishly cherishes her own children just as a mother bird does for her young (Deut 22:6). Mayhue, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 72. Weima notes, “Instead of the common word for “mother” (*meter*), Paul employs a term with the specialized meaning of “wet nurse” (*trophos*), someone who suckles children. The use of wet nurses was widespread in the Greco-Roman world, and ancient writers typically portrayed the wet nurse as an important and beloved figure. Since the original text refers to this woman nursing her *own* children, Paul has in view here the natural mother rather than the hired wet nurse. Yet he uses the unusual term *trophos* because this metaphor of a nursing mother underscores his sincere love for the Thessalonian Christians. A hired nurse competently cares for the children in her charge, but she cherishes her own children even more.” Jeffrey A.D. Weima, “1 Thessalonians,” *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 414.

<sup>41</sup> The verb *thalpo* (“cherish, comfort”) is only used one other place in the NT: Eph 5:29 where it refers to a husband’s care for his wife.

<sup>42</sup> There is a textual variant here between *nepios* (“babes”) and *npios* (“gentle”). It is difficult to determine which of the two is the original reading. The UBS text favors *nepioi* but Metzger and Wikgren dissent, arguing that *npioi* alone suits the context.

<sup>43</sup> John Watson (1812-1872), a Scottish preacher wrote these words on the flyleaf of his Bible: “Be kind, you don’t know what battles people are fighting.” Quoted in Gordon, *Hope and Glory*, 76.

<sup>44</sup> The imperfect tense of “we were well pleased” (*eudokoumen*) expresses that this was the apostles’ habitual style.

<sup>45</sup> “Our own lives” – their whole being was given to the care of the Thessalonians (cf. 1 Cor 12:15; Phil 2:17).

<sup>46</sup> The Thessalonians are Paul’s *agapetoi* (“dear ones,” “beloved”). Cf. “beloved by God” in 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13.

<sup>47</sup> It is also used in the LXX (Job 3:21) of one who suffers and longs for death.

<sup>48</sup> Eaton writes, “Paul was not too shy or too proud to be an affectionate person. Although he had only recently got to know these Thessalonians he had taken them into his heart, and wanted them to know how much he loved them. They were foreigners to him. He was Jewish and they were Macedonians. But Paul did not let any kind of cultural differences bother him. He is a citizen of God’s worldwide church, and so are they. He loves them with the love of Jesus.” Eaton, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 34.

<sup>49</sup> These words are also found together in 2 Cor 11:27; 2 Thess 3:8.

<sup>50</sup> The verb *epibareo* (“burden”) is used only here and in 2 Thess 3:8 in the NT.

<sup>51</sup> Paul had received some help from friends at Philippi while he was at Thessalonica (Phil 4:16) but took nothing from those to whom he preached.

<sup>52</sup> The word *hosios* (“devoutly”) is only used here in the NT.

<sup>53</sup> The word *dikaios* (“uprightly”) is found elsewhere in the NT only in 1 Cor 15:3.

<sup>54</sup> The adverb *amemptos* (“blamelessly”) is also used in 1 Thess 5:23. Its adjectival form is used at 3:13 in the context of the return of Jesus; that is, no charge can be brought against him when he is examined by God.

<sup>55</sup> Bruce writes, “The Christian minister is expected to give practical instruction to his fellow Christians, but not by way of dictation. Since he cannot rule by decree if he is to be true to the spirit of Christ, he must guide by.” Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 39.

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<sup>56</sup> Mayhue, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 75. Some commentators see the word “devoutly” as referring to our attitudes and actions toward God and “uprightly” referring to our attitudes and actions toward man. However, it seems more likely that both of these terms are applicable to both God and man.

<sup>57</sup> Paul’s ministry among them was not marked by favoritism or partiality but by a fatherly care for “each one of you” (*hena hekaston humon*).

<sup>58</sup> For other Pauline fatherly metaphors see 1 Cor 4:14-16, 21; 2 Cor 6:11-13; Phil 2:22; Philem 10.

<sup>59</sup> The construction of the verse is difficult, lacking a main verb.

<sup>60</sup> Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 136. Cf. Eph 4:17; Gal 5:3.

<sup>61</sup> Ray Pritchard, “How to Turn the Word Upside Down (1 Thess 2:1-12):

<http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1994-09-25-How-to-Turn-the-World-Upside-Down/>.

<sup>62</sup> The verb “walk” (*peripateo*) is used to describe one’s life, either in a positive (1 Thess 4:1, 12) or a negative fashion (2 Thess 3:6, 11). Mayhue, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 75.

<sup>63</sup> The phrase “worthy of God” is used in Eph 4:1; Phil 1:27; Col 1:10.

<sup>64</sup> It is important to notice the present tense verb “calls.” The Thessalonians have been called to salvation. Now God is calling them to a life of obedience and holiness.

<sup>65</sup> Holmes notes, “Paul links “glory” closely with “kingdom” (they share a single preposition and article, and a single “his” governs both words). The two terms together indicate a believer’s ultimate goal: to live under the dominion and in the presence of God.” Holmes, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 68.

<sup>66</sup> Richison, *1 Thessalonians*, 58.

<sup>67</sup> Holmes, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 67.