

Men's and Women's Fellowship 2014:

1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 Study Guide

Study by Pastor John Brackbill at The Bible Church of Port Washington

Preparatory Reading for this study:

- Review:
 - Acts 17:1-9 (the founding of the church at Thessalonica)
 - 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
- 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 (the focus of this study)

Discovering the structure

- As you read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 you should notice two distinctive sections. Can you identify the verses of each one of these sections? _____
- As you read the first section, do you notice an important connection word that might be helpful in understanding the passage? _____

Discovering the theme

- What word in 2:1 shows that chapter 2 is connected to chapter 1?

- Now that we know chapter 2 is connected to chapter 1, we need to identify how exactly it is connected. Read through chapter 2 and try to identify what it expands upon that chapter 1 introduced:

- The word "vain" in 2:1 means "empty." When Paul says that their (Paul, Silvanus [Silas] and Timothy) coming to the Thessalonians was not in "vain" or "empty" what does he mean? As you answer this question consider what 3:5 says and the reasons that Paul gave thanks to the Lord for them in 1:2-10:

Vain vs. Non-Vain Ministry

A major key to understanding this passage is recognizing what Paul identifies as vain vs. non-vain ministry. If you look at 2:1 carefully Paul does not explicitly explain what is and is not vain or non-vain ministry. However, the context does identify vain vs. non-vain ministry. First, in 3:5 Paul is clear that a vain ministry would have involved the Thessalonians not persevering in the faith. In other words, no lasting fruit. Second, both chapter 1:2-10 and chapter 2 (especially 2:13-16) give evidence of how the Thessalonians were persevering in the faith. So when Paul says "For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain" he is saying that they knew that God was truly at work in their lives as evidenced by their ongoing response to His Word. Though not explicitly stated, Paul is saying "You know that rather than our coming to you being without purpose, God was and is obviously at work." Rather than Paul explicitly stating what a non-vain ministry is, he goes on in verses 2-16 to describe two main characteristics of a non-vain ministry.

- According to verses 2-16 there were two very important groups of people who played a part as God was obviously at work and the apostolic ministry was not in vain in Thessalonica. Can you identify them?

○ Vs. 2-12:

○ Vs. 13-16:

- Paul to explain to the Thessalonians that God was at work among them, what that looked like, and that therefore the apostolic ministry was not in vain among them?

- What is the main evidence in verses 2-12 that God was at work and the apostolic ministry among the Thessalonians was not without purpose? Especially note the second half of verse 2 to formulate your answer.

- How do verses 3-12 relate to the main evidence in verse 2b that God was at work and the apostolic ministry among the Thessalonians was not without purpose?

- What is the main evidence in verses 13-16 that God was at work and the apostolic ministry among the Thessalonians was not without purpose?

- Based on your reading of this passage and the questions and discussions to this point, try to put the theme of 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 in one sentence: _____

- What suffering did the apostolic company experience in Philippi based on Acts 16:19-24?

Do you remember the opposition that the apostolic company faced in Thessalonica which is spoken of in 2:2?

“But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. ⁶ When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also; ⁷ and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” ⁸ They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. ⁹ And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them” (Acts 17:5-9).

- Based on 2:2 how would you or any other believer have boldness to speak the gospel to unbelievers in the middle of much opposition? _____
- What does “boldness in God” mean? _____
- Consider verses 3-4 in order to determine what gospel boldness will involve:

- Based on verses 3-4 how would you know if you or someone else was pleasing men rather than God?

- Look at verse 4 and try to identify what motivated Paul and the others to seek to please God rather than men in gospel ministry?

- Considering verses 5-8, summarize in one sentence the next characteristic of gospel boldness as the proclaimer seeks to please God rather than men: _____

- Considering verses 9-12, summarize in one sentence the next characteristic of gospel boldness as the proclaimer seeks to please God through genuine gentle affection: _____

- In order to not be a burden on the Thessalonians, Paul was willing to do what according to verse 9?
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- Remember, in 1:2-10 Paul already gave thanks to the Lord for the Thessalonians Christ-like character (3), their election (4-7), and their known and reported on testimony (8-10). What does Paul give thanks to the Lord for in relationship to the Thessalonians as recorded in 2:13?

Clarifying walking worthy

According to verses 11-12 Paul exhorted, encouraged and implored the Thessalonians to “walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” Notice verse 12 speaks of “walking worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” What is not being said is “to walk worthy before God so that you might be called in His own kingdom and glory.” Walking worthy of God is an exhortation to those that have been called unto God and who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ.

- What in verse 13 reveals that God’s Word is important for believers even after they have trusted in Christ?
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- According to verse 14 how had the Thessalonians become imitators of the churches in Judea?
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- According to verse 15 the Jewish people killed Jesus. Were they the only ones that killed Jesus?
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- Based on the context of this book, Acts 17 and the start of the church at Thessalonica, why does Paul highlight the responsibility of the Jewish people in the crucifixion of Jesus? _____
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- What was so wicked about the Jewish opposition to the apostle’s proclamation of the gospel (2:15b-16)?
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- 2:16 says “wrath has come upon them to the utmost.” In what sense could it be said by Paul then that “wrath has come” on them? _____

Discovering how this applies

- Consider the times when you are hesitant to speak of Christ to someone. In that moment, how are we tempted to please men rather than Christ?
- According to verses 3-12, if we are to imitate Paul’s bold gospel proclamation will we not be characterized by certain things and what will we be characterized by?
 - Not characterized by:
 - _____
 - _____

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

○ Characterized by:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- If “Boldness in God” in verse 2 refers to trust in God during proclamation of the gospel, what does it mean when we are not bold to speak the gospel to those around us? _____

- Paul was working to support himself, but he was also ministering the gospel (2:9). This has important implications for both those in vocational full-time ministry and those who are in non-vocational full-time ministry.

- For those in vocational full-time ministry, rather than money, what must be their focus?

- For those in non-vocational full-time ministry, what should their work not be an excuse for?

- Based on the fact that verses 11-12 reveal what characterizes bold gospel ministry that God uses to produce lasting fruit in God’s people, what should you be open to from spiritual leadership? _____

- How are/could you be like the Thessalonians who Paul said “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?”

- We are told in 2:13 that God’s Word “performs its work in you who believe.”

- What work does God’s Word perform in those who believe?

- If we were really convinced that God’s Word performs a work in those who believe what would change in our lives? _____

- According to 2:15b-16 the Jews hindered the apostles speaking to the Gentiles “so that they might be saved.” What important principles and truths should we glean from this dynamic?

- Is there a particular truth in this text that God really used to convict or encourage you that you would like to share with others?