



Women's R&R Bible Study 2024-2025

"YOUR WORDS WERE FOUND, AND I ATE THEM, AND YOUR WORD WAS TO ME THE JOY AND REJOICING OF MY HEART."

JEREMIAH 15:16

LIVING IN HOPE

LESSON 2

In chapter one of 1 Thessalonians, Paul commended the believers for their spiritual growth that was evident to all. Here in chapter two, Paul opens his heart to them by explaining the motives for his mission and ministry in Thessalonica. Paul seems to be defending himself against some personal criticism and accusations from his enemies. The wording Paul uses seems to imply that he was charged with having selfish motives for his work in Thessalonica. Notice that in chapter one Paul mainly talks about the Thessalonians, and the main person discussed in chapter two is Paul himself.

As you read through this chapter, remember to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the motives of your own heart as you minister to others. If we are accused of selfishness and greed, would we be blameless?

Memory Verse of the Week: "... that you would have a walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." 1 Thessalonians 2:12

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-20 and observe the chapter as a whole. List any repeated words, phrases, or interesting facts.
2. What would you say is the main thought of this chapter? The key verse? (Remember to keep in mind the main purpose of the letter.)

3. What kind of opposition did Paul come against?

Chapter two is said to be a great manual for pastors. It is a rich description of what Christian ministry is supposed to be all about.

4. Why did Paul say that his work in Thessalonica was not in vain?

(1 Thess. 1:4-10) Vain means “empty, void of reality and power,” or “not a failure.”

5. How was Paul treated in Philippi? Review Acts 16:12-40 and briefly describe his experience there. What kind of opposition did he encounter?

The word “conflict” or “contention” in verse 2 comes from the Greek word “agon” which was used to describe the rigors of athletic contests in the sports arenas. It is also translated as fight (1 Timothy 6:12 and 2 Timothy 4:7), and race (Hebrews 12:1). The English word “agony” is derived from this word. This description paints a good picture of the intensity of the persecution that Paul faced in Philippi.

Paul said that they “waxed bold in our God” as they spoke the Gospel. Paul was not being vain or prideful. Paul lets us know that his source of courage was “in God.” That boldness is proof of God’s grace.

6. What accusations does Paul seem to be answering?**7. How did Paul defend his motives for preaching?**

Paul is basically calling the Thessalonian believers witnesses of his innocence. They knew him. They knew his heart. Paul felt that the facts of his life were common knowledge. He was not one of the typical traveling preachers of the time, who often was out to take advantage of the people and steal their money. His actions and lifestyle proved his innocence. There was no evidence for any of their accusations.

Paul had an unselfish love for God and the Thessalonians. His love was free from flattering words, self-glory, and covetousness.

Flattering words are a description of slick eloquence. It is the use of acceptable speech with the **purpose** of lulling someone into a sense of security so that one may obtain one's own ends. It is like our word *cajolery*.

8. Are you ever guilty of using flattering words (according to the definition above) as you minister or serve others? Do you ever have an agenda for what you're doing? What about at home?

A “cloak of covetousness” refers to the wearing of a mask to cover greed. It means to hide one’s motives to secure personal profit. It doesn’t only mean seeking money but seeking to have more of anything.

9. Check your heart on this one too. Do you ever wear a cloak of covetousness? Do you hide your true motives when you want something? Give examples of how it is possible to do this today.

I think we all know what it means to seek glory for yourself. It’s looking for satisfaction and praise from people for your accomplishments. Paul was accused of trying to seek glory for himself and from men.

10. Why do you think Paul was accused of this? How could preaching the Gospel bring glory to him?

11. When you “do” things, whom are you trying to please? Why is it so wrong to try to please men rather than God? (Read Galatians 1:10.)

Paul said that he was “approved by God” and “entrusted with the Gospel.” He did not choose this ministry, it had been “given” to him. He speaks of it as a “stewardship entrusted” to him in 1 Corinthians 9:17, 1 Timothy 1:11, and Titus 1:3. The verb “approved” means first to test and then to approve, as a result of that test. The tense that the word is used in also implies that the approval continues. Paul sees himself as being tried out by God and then trusted for service! (Tyndale) In verse 4, Paul says that God tests our hearts. Here he is saying that our motives must be completely sincere, because it is God who knows and sees all. In verse 5, Paul calls God Himself to the witness stand in his defense, because God did know the sincerity of his heart.

12. If you know the Lord, you also have been “entrusted” with the Gospel. Are you faithful to it? Are you trustworthy and honest? Are you committed to sharing it with others?

Paul knew that his labor was not in vain. His work did not fail. He saw a change in the Thessalonians, which assured him that his ministry had not been an aimless pursuit. We looked at what Paul’s motives were **not**. Now let’s take a look at what his motives **were**. How did he treat the Thessalonians?

13. In verses 7-12, how does Paul describe his ministry to them? What metaphors did he use?

14. How does a nursing mother cherish her young? What point was Paul trying to make?

The word “cherish” means to “warm.” This word is used to describe a bird that covers her young with her feathers (Deuteronomy 22:6). It is only used one other time in The New Testament, when describing the love that the Lord has for His church (Ephesians 5:29).

15. What do you think Paul meant when he said they imparted “their own life” in verse 8? Read 2 Corinthians 12:15, Philippians 2:17, Colossians 1:24-25, and 2 Timothy 2:10.

16. What can we learn from Paul’s example of giving himself for others?

17. Paul had every right to receive an offering of money for his labor in the Gospel, but he did not. (Luke 10:7, 1 Timothy 5:18) Why didn’t he?

18. How does Paul describe their behavior while in Thessalonica? What was their purpose there?

19. What do you think it means to have a walk “worthy of God”? Use other Scriptures to answer, if possible. (This verse implies a continual walk.)

The Kingdom in verse 12 can refer to a present aspect of the Kingdom (Romans 14:17, 1 Corinthians 4:20, Colossians 1:13), as well as a future aspect of the Kingdom (Matthew 25:34, Acts 14:22). Because Paul links “kingdom” and “glory” together here, he probably is referring to the future aspect of the Kingdom of God. F.F. Bruce said, “by faith, the Thessalonians had already entered the Kingdom of God, but the revelation of its full glory belonged to a day yet future; they were, however, heirs of that glory, and must live accordingly.”

20. Are you walking worthy? Have you been walking devoutly, justly, and blamelessly? Are there any changes that need to be made?

21. What was the Thessalonians’ reaction to the Gospel message?

Paul uses two different words for receive in verse 13. The first means to “hear with the ear” while the second means to “hear with the heart.” The Thessalonians welcomed the word so readily because it WAS the Word of God! They didn’t just hear it, they received it by faith and were ready to apply it to their lives. Paul commends them for responding to their faith with obedience. They became doers of the word, and not hearers only (James 1:19-25).

In verses 14-16, Paul encourages them that they had become “fellow sufferers” with other believers. They had imitated the churches in Judea in the sense that they had shared in similar suffering and showed the same courage and patience. To what extent the churches in Judea or Thessalonica suffered, we are not sure. In Acts 17:5, the Jews had stirred up even the Gentiles to attack Paul and his team. **Tyndale** makes a good point: “The conduct of the Jews has always been consistent; they have been hostile to the purposes of God. Paul says that they killed the Lord Jesus. In an important sense, of course, it was the Romans who actually killed Jesus, but Paul’s point is that it was at the instigation of the Jews (John 18:18-31, 35, 19:10-15). Nor did this activity begin with Jesus, for

they also killed the prophets. Nor did it finish here, for they also drove them out. There is consistent opposition to God's way and God's people. Thus, they displease God and are hostile to all men, opposing the Gospel which would bring blessings to all."

22. What does the word "saved" mean in verse 16?

The Jews not only didn't receive the Gospel, but they also worked hard to keep it from being preached, especially to the Gentiles. They continued in stubborn unbelief like their forefathers. They continued to "fill up their sins." The inevitable consequence was God's future wrath. "To the uttermost" refers to the prophecy in Deuteronomy 28:15-68, although God will not make a full end of Israel (Jeremiah 30:4-11), though still heavier sorrows await the nation before final deliverance comes (Matthew 24:15-28). (W.E. Vine, 1 & 2 Thessalonians.)

23. Why didn't the Jews want the Gentiles to hear the Gospel and get saved?

It's amazing to think of how strong the Thessalonians were standing during their time of persecution, which was thought to be very heavy. I wonder how we would fair if we were living there at the time ...

24. How do you handle persecution? Do you panic? Doubt? Get angry? Can others still see God's Word working effectively in you as you go through trials? Are you in one right now?

Paul wanted to return to see his friends in Thessalonica, but he was not able to. He says he was "torn away" from them in verse 17, which literally means "having been orphaned." It is interesting that he uses this word after he uses the analogy of a mother and a father. He felt like he was being "torn away" from them.

25. According to verses 17-20, who else opposed and hindered Paul's work? How do you think he did it? Do we know exactly?

The word "hindered" means literally "cut into" and was used by the Greeks to refer to a road that was cut up in order to make it impassable. The enemy somehow made the road to Thessalonica impassable to Paul. Although satan seems to have blocked Paul's plans, we know who was really victorious!

Although Paul was no longer with them physically, his heart was certainly there. The crown that Paul refers to in verse 19 is the laurel wreath, or the festive garland given to the winner at the games. Paul is expressing the confidence he has in them by calling them his "hope." Paul was expressing outwardly the joy that he was feeling inwardly. The Thessalonians were Paul's pride and joy, if you will. They are his glory (verse 20) because he was able to honor them before other people, and joy because he experienced such delight in them. They would be his "victory crown" at the Second Coming.

26. They wouldn't be ashamed at the coming of the Lord. How should the reality of His coming motivate us to "walk worthy"?

(Read Romans 14:10-12, 1 Corinthians 4:1-5, 2 Corinthians 5:9-10.)

27. We began this chapter with Paul saying that his labor was not in vain. Read 1 Corinthians 15:58. How does this verse encourage you as you serve Him?

28. What spoke to your heart the most from this chapter?