

DELIVERING THE GOSPEL

Thursday, October 16

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

1 Thessalonians 2:10 *You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. 11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, 12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His kingdom and glory.*

There were many wandering teachers in the Roman Empire. They would go from town to town peddling their religious or philosophical ideas for profit. Paul wanted to make clear that his motives for delivering the gospel were pure.

He Didn't Change the Message (2:2). After his experiences in Philippi, Paul could have easily stopped preaching the gospel or at least "watered it down" so as not to cause controversy. Instead, Paul boldly preached the same message that had gotten him in trouble before. This power to deliver the gospel in the midst of conflict came from God.

He Didn't Have Ulterior Motives (2:3-4a). Many teachers of the day took advantage of their listeners and led them down the wrong path ("error"). They used tricks to manipulate people to get what they wanted. In contrast, Paul's message was not his own. It was "approved by God" and "entrusted" to him.

He Didn't Try to Please People (2:4b-6). Unlike the other traveling teachers, Paul did not "play to the audience." He did not tell them only what they wanted to hear. He did not use flattery to get people to like him nor was he in it for the money. Paul knew that the only opinion that truly mattered was God's! He was living to please Him.

Paul uses three images to express his motives and conduct (2:7-12).

(1) A Nursing Mother – This is a picture of a loving mother holding her child close. Paul was not a babysitter. He saw these believers as his children for whom he wanted only the best. Paul had shared not only the gospel but his very life as well. These believers were in Paul's heart.

(2) A Working Brother – Though he was an apostle, Paul did not take advantage of his position. They had seen how he had sacrificed "in order not to be a burden to anyone." No one could accuse Paul of selfish motives or a superior attitude.

(3) An Encouraging Father – A good father trains, encourages, and raises his children in the Lord. The phrase "every one of you" implies that Paul not only ministered to them as a congregation, but also one-on-one. The word "encouraging" is the same Greek word used by Jesus of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16; 15:26 – *parakaleo* = to call alongside). Paul had come alongside these believers to support and direct them in the ways of God. Paul not only comforted them in their troubles but warned them of the dangers of forsaking their faith.

Paul's purpose in delivering the gospel to the Thessalonians was not to promote himself or merely make speeches. It was so they would believe and live lives worthy of God. The outcome of their faith was to share in God's glory and enter into His kingdom.

Just as in Paul's day, there are many 'preachers' today whose motives are their own fame and fortune instead of the glory of God. All Christians can fall into the trap of doing good works for that 'pat on the back' or for what we can get out of it. What are your motives for serving the Lord? Is it for His glory or your own?