

I. VINDICATION FOR PAUL’S PREACHING MINISTRY (2:1-12)

The following section indicates that Paul was experiencing or was at least expecting attacks upon his ministry. Paul moves to defend his ministry and points to his integrity and leadership principles as his defense.

The transition of thought from 1 Thessalonians 1 to 1 Thessalonians 2 is marked by the conjunction, “for.”¹ Here, a link is created from Paul’s coming to the Thessalonians with the gospel and the resultant faith from his preaching ministry (cf. 1:5, 9-10). This is to say that it was Paul’s preaching ministry that brought them the gospel that produced the fruits of repentance and hope. 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 becomes an elaboration of Paul’s reception by the Thessalonians.

The following chapter is now his defense for the gospel and ministry brought to the Thessalonian people. This defense of his preaching in this section of the epistle is described in three parts: (1) preaching with power; (2) preaching removed from untruth; and (3) preaching reinforced by godly concern.

A. Proven Ministry (2:1-2)

1. Powerful preaching is not in vain (v. 1)

Paul begins this section by pointing out that the very content of the following section is nothing new to his readers. He begins by emphatically calling them to remembrance, “**you yourselves know.**”²

The Thessalonians are reminded of facts that they are well aware of, “you yourselves know.” Paul’s call for them to remember is focused upon “their entrance.”³ Here, Paul not only highlights his initial arrival to Thessalonica, but the whole period he spent with them in ministry. This visit produced a personal face-to-face experience with the Thessalonians.

Paul draws the knowledge of the Thessalonians to their understanding that Paul did not come in vain. That which the Thessalonians had a first hand account with Paul was their witnesses to his entire ministry. They knew from personal experience that Paul did not come in “vain.”

Many have debated the meaning of “vain.” There are several possible interpretations for this particular word.

¹ Gk., γὰρ.

² Gk., Αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε, ἀδελφοί.

³ Gk., τὴν εἴσοδον ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς ὑμᾶς. The presence of the article with both the noun “entrance” and the prepositional phrase make the phrase definite. This places the prepositional phrase as the in the attribute relation with entrance (F.F. Bruce, “1 & 2 Thessalonians” *World Biblical Commentary* [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1982], 24).

- (1) The first view believes that the “vanity” is used to communicate the result of Paul’s ministry.⁴ This view states that Paul’s ministry did not render any satisfactory results or true fruit of Christian faith.

Many have argued this view by stating that the meaning of the term does not emphasis result, but characterizes the content. If Paul’s attackers wanted to emphasize the result of Paul’s ministry they could have used a different Greek word.⁵

- (2) A second view argues that the term refers to what the missionaries offered to the Thessalonians. In other words, Paul did not come with “empty hands” to the Thessalonians asking for handouts from the people. Rather, Paul came with filled hands, ready to impart unto the believers in the Thessalonians the spiritual riches he knew in the Gospel.
- (3) A third view states that Paul’s ministry came without any truth or reality.⁶ This view, like the previous, is an attack on the missionaries themselves rather than upon their ministry.
- (4) A fourth view states that the vanity is a reference to the character of the entire ministry visit of Paul. Here, the object of concern is not Paul’s personal character, but rather on the style of ministry performed by Paul and the missionary team.

The best view to take is the last view which attacks the character of the preaching and not the results of their ministry. The context of 2:1-12 argues that Paul is defending the essential character of his preaching ministry. This preaching ministry was full of power, reality, and courage. These statements are an elaboration of what he has already stated (cf. 1:5, 9a). The results of the ministry are discussed immediately after by Paul in 2:13-16.

2. Powerful preaching is bold (contrasted) (v. 2)

Paul’s argument continues by providing a contrast.⁷ Since Paul did not come with empty preaching or purpose in his ministry he wants to express what he did come to offer to the Thessalonians. The negative view point of his ministry is described in “not in vain,” so now Paul focuses upon the positive.

⁴ D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 85.

⁵ Ibid., 85. Hiebert argues that Paul would have used μάταιος.

⁶ Ibid., 85.

⁷ This is evident by the author’s use of the strong adversative conjunction ἀλλὰ.

The positive side of Paul's ministry is encompassed in the main verb, "boldness."⁸ Paul's boldness was directly related to his preaching or speaking forth, "boldness to speak." Paul and the missionaries were bold to preach.

This singular idea is accompanied with several modifying ideas. Paul's boldness to preach the Gospel was (1) seasoned; (2) empowered by God; (3) it was Gospel-centered; and (4) persistent.

- i. First we find that the boldness that Paul had to speak the Gospel was seasoned. 1 Thessalonians 2:2 begins with the phrase, "**after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi.**" These two words of "suffered" and "mistreated" are a reference to what Paul had experienced prior to coming to the Thessalonians.⁹ They also paint the picture that Paul had endured a plethora of attacks. The first word "suffered" refers to physical suffering, while the second word "mistreated" is a reference to verbal abuse.¹⁰

Historically, Paul is referencing his experience in Acts 16:23-24, "When they struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks." Paul, had a history of physical beatings (cf. 2 Cor 11:23-29) and in 1 Thessalonians highlights one particular experience in Philippi to show forth the validity of his ministry.

What is perhaps just as amazing is the fact that Paul's physical suffering was known by the Thessalonians, "as you know." It is in the face of these hardships that Paul came to the Thessalonians. Despite the sting of fresh wounds he came to the Thessalonians to boldly proclaim the Gospel knowing full-well the potential consequences of his actions.

- ii. Second we find that Paul's boldness was empowered by God. Paul states that the boldness to speak came "**in our God.**" Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus came in boldness with their God.¹¹ Christian boldness comes upon the foundation that the God that is preached is a personal and

⁸ Gk., ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα. AM11P παρρησιάζομαι I have courage. This courage or boldness is accompanied in the text with the infinitive λαλῆσαι.

⁹ These two participles (προπαθόντες and ὑβρισθέντες) describe antecedent action to the main verb.

¹⁰ Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 59.

¹¹ Possessive genitive referencing Paul and his associates.

living God. The God of the Bible, in Jesus Christ, has reconciled sinners to himself. Here, the ability to be bold is recognized as something that has come from a divine source (cf. 2 Cor 3:12; 4:7; 12:9ff). Paul and his associates depended solely on the work of God in them in order to bold proclaimers of the Gospel message.

- iii. Third, the boldness of Paul and the missionaries was specifically focused upon the Gospel message itself. Paul was not bold about any strange or abstract doctrine, but rather spoke in boldness in reference to the truths of the Gospel.

Here, the Gospel is described as “**the Gospel of God.**”¹² This perhaps describes why Paul can be so brave in the proclamation of the Gospel because he knew it was not concocted by sinful man, but rather was a message that was divinely given through the greatest form of special revelation, Jesus Christ in the flesh.

- iv. Fourth, Paul’s boldness before the Thessalonians was persistent. Although this may sound similar to the first aspect (seasoned), it is different because here the emphasis lies upon Paul’s opposition while at Thessalonica and not prior to Thessalonica.¹³

The placement of the phrase makes it emphatic. Paul wants the last thought in the mind of his readers to be the reminder that he “agonized” or was opposed while he was in their midst.

The idea here is that Paul was likened to an athlete training for competition. This particular Greek word is where we get our English word “agony” or “agonize.” Hiebert states, “The noun rendered “opposition” (*agoni*) contains a metaphor drawn from the athletic games or the arena. It means the place of contest and then the contest itself—a race, a struggle, a battle. Such conflict always involves intense exertion and strenuous, persistent effort to overcome and determined opponent or the dangerous antagonist.” Paul uses the word in Colossians 2:1 to describe his ministry to the Thessalonians.

The persistency here and the agony is a reference to the external experiences that Paul had endured. Although there is internal agony experienced by Paul and hardship, the word itself likely refers to what

¹² Ablative of source. This Gospel comes from God and not from man. God was not the one preaching the Gospel (subjective genitive), but it was Paul preaching a gospel that had its source in God Himself.

¹³ Gk., ἐν πολλῷ ἁγῶνι.

Paul and the missionaries had to endure in order to preach the Gospel. Therefore, Paul's boldness came not only after much hardship, but Paul's boldness persisted even in the midst of current hardship.

B. Proven Exhortation (2:3-4)

The focus of these two verses is centered on the “**exhortation**” of the missionaries.¹⁴ The term literally means, “calling to one's side.” The term can communicate the ideas of entreaty, appeal, exhortation, encouragement, comfort, and consolation.

“Clearly the context of 1 Thes. 2:3 concerns the initial delivery of the gospel to the Thessalonians (cf. vv. 2 and 4) and therefore the term παράκλησις embraces this idea by presenting Paul's original preaching as exhortation to a new faith and a new way of life (cf. Malherbe, “Exhortation in First Thessalonians,” 241). It served the overall parenetic intention of the letter well to refer to “exhortation” rather than use a term for preaching, which we would have expected.”¹⁵

The focus of this word is the end goal of its practice. Paul exhorted the Thessalonians with the word of God. The aim and goal of such preaching was for the Thessalonians to adopt a lifestyle that pleases God based on the Scriptures.

This exhortation is directly tied to the previous two verses where Paul defends his ministry.¹⁶ In light of his boldness to proclaim the Gospel he points out the character of his exhortation. The following passage provides the reason for Paul's boldness in the proclamation of the Gospel.

1. Proven Exhortation Void of False Motives (v. 3)

Paul begins his defense by providing three negative statements that do not apply to his ministry. These three defenses are that his ministry is not characterized by error, impurity, and deceit.

- i. Void of False Doctrine (“error”): Objective Error. Paul's first defense is that his exhortation did not, “**come from error**.” The idea behind this

¹⁴ This is the subject of the sentence, ἡ . . . παράκλησις.

¹⁵ Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), 94.

¹⁶ The conjunction, “for” makes this connection.

word is that the source of Paul's preaching was derived from error. The accusation itself assumed that Paul's message was wrong from the very source. This is different from the accusation that Paul was tricking his hearers, which is brought up later. Rather, Paul was accused of being led astray by his teachers.

Paul is arguing against the belief that Paul was confused with his doctrine, despite the charge that Paul was intellectually mistaken. Paul here denies such a notion that he was confused or was drawing water from a bitter well.

- ii. Void of False Morals ("impurity"): Subjective Intentions. The second false motive denied by Paul is that his exhortation was from, "**impurity**." While the first accusation may have been more objective in a doctrinal sense, the second motive denied is subjective. Here, Paul's attackers seemed to have pointed out that Paul had "impure" internal motives in ministering among the Thessalonians.¹⁷

Sexual immorality was common among pagan religions during the time of Paul. Many of the worship centers for pagan religions had perverse sexual immorality. These pagan religions claimed that sexual intimacy with a false gods messenger was a form of intimacy with the false god himself.¹⁸

This type of activity was not only found among the pagan religions, but eventually many tried to import those practices within the Christian community. These individuals are identified in Scripture as false teachers. Passages such as 2 Peter 2:18; Jude 4; and Revelation 2:20 indicate God's judgment upon those within God's church family who practice such activity.

It is against this particular background that Paul's attackers label him as part of these false teachers. Paul's defense begins by stating that he did not come to the Thessalonians and ministered among them with the goal of sexual favor or gain.

- iii. Void of False Methodology ("**way of deceit**"): False Methodology. A third denied false motive was that of false methodology. The first denial

¹⁷ There is debate regarding the type of impurity that is discussed in this passage. Some say that it is sexual immorality while others hold that it is a reference to spiritual impurity such as pride. For some of the pro/con arguments for each view see Edmond D. Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 90-91.

¹⁸ Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 62.

was objective, the second subjective, and now the third is methodological. Paul's exhortation was not characterized as a ministry of deceit.

The word itself "deceit" carries the idea of "trickery" or "guile." The term is used in several other places of literature to describe the idea of fishing. Paul was accused of ministering in a "bait and switch" manner. Therefore, it came to refer to any crafty method for deceiving or catching the gullible.

Paul denies that his ministry was of any such character. He did not want to stoop to low levels in order to ensnare converts. They were open and straightforward in their preaching. There were no gimmicks or attached strings. Paul ministered among them without such methodology.

2. Proven Character's Proper Motivation (v. 4)

Paul changes over from addressing the negative motives and moves forward to the positive motive for ministering among the Thessalonians. This is seen by his use of the adversative conjunction, "but."¹⁹

- i. Proper Motivation is Tested by God. Paul's motivations are rooted in that God had tested him to be in the ministry. Here, Paul says, "**we have been approved.**"²⁰ Paul alludes to the fact that his ministry had passed the proper *examination*. Here, Paul refers to God's past action in Paul's ministry that has continuing effects to the present. Paul, even prior to coming to the Thessalonians had the approval of God to do ministry.

The term itself is a reference to "testing." It was used to describe the process that Athenians would have to endure before they could take public office. The term is also used to describe coins having to be weighed in order to validate their genuineness and value. Paul and his ministry associates had been tested to perform the work of ministry. They were licensed to do the work of ministry among the Thessalonians.

Paul himself was a tested individual. He had undergone several experiences that approved his gospel ministry. Paul had faced much hardship in his ministry even prior to coming to the Thessalonians. He was imprisoned for the proclamation of the word (Acts 16:22ff). Yet, as stated prior, Paul was still persistent in sticking with his message.

¹⁹ Gk., ἀλλὰ.

²⁰ Gk., δεδοκιμάσμεθα. P⁷⁵ P¹⁰¹ δοκιμάζω.

Pastors/elders, both full-time and lay-elders, deacons, deaconess', and ministry leaders must all be tested. This concept is not new and should clearly be applied to the NT church. Paul gives qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 for prospective elders in the church. Similarly, Paul states in 1 Timothy 3:10 states, "these men [deacons] must also first be tested." Ephesians 4 clearly speaks of the necessity to have trained and equipped leaders and saints within the church.

This testing for the ministry is an activity performed, "**by God.**" God the *examiner*. The one who wrote and provided the test for ministry was God Himself. Paul did not have the credentials of a governing body such as a state or organization. Rather, Paul points out that his examination and approval came from God Himself.

The reason that God was the personal agent for testing ministers of the Gospel is because the Gospel itself is divine in origin, "Since the gospel is of divine origin, no one may take it upon himself to proclaim it. God chooses his messengers, and he tests them before committing the gospel to their trust."²¹

Shogren states, "It is not as if God has intervened through Christ and then abandoned his apostles to develop human strategies to spread the message. All that pertains to salvation, including its proclamation, begins and ends with divine intervention. God tests and approves those true envoys who aid its spread around the world."²²

This testing was not unique to Paul himself, but can even be applied to churches today. Paul told Timothy, "These men [deacons] must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach" (1 Tim 3:10).

Those who have proper motives have been tested by God and upon approval are, "**to be entrusted with the gospel.**"²³ God's testing has the purpose to *entrust* the precious gospel into their hands. This entrustment was something that was given to Paul and his ministry associates. It was not Paul's choice to take upon himself the responsibility of spreading the Gospel. Paul did what he did in ministry because he was in a subservient position to God to be a steward of the priceless gospel.

²¹ Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 63.

²² Gary S. Shogren, "1 & 2 Thessalonians" *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2012), 93.

²³ The verb is a passive infinitive, πιστεῦθῆναι. This is an accusative of general reference. In other words, the testing or approval experienced by Paul was in reference to the entrustment of the gospel.

This stands in contrast to his attackers that argued that Paul was delusion with his gospel message. Paul could not have been preaching a wrong gospel message, because it was a message that was passively given to him by God. The gospel was a bestowment from God to him.

The *effect* or result of God's approval to Paul was, "**so we speak.**" The obedient response of the missionaries was to preach with the burden of conscience that God had called them to perform such a task. They were commissioned to complete a task entrusted to them, so they acted. The above passage provides the reason why Paul spoke among the Thessalonians with such boldness. Although Paul never states the fact that he has apostolic authority over his readers, he clearly alludes to his divine calling.

- ii. The Audience of Proper Motivation. Paul now begins to unveil to his readers what his true motivations were in ministering to the Thessalonians people. First, Paul states, "**not as pleasing men.**" Paul's audience and aim for ministry was not to please men. Paul is not saying that he wasn't willing to be a servant to others, but that the overall goal and motivation was not for the pleasure of man.

On the inverse, the aim and goal of their ministry activity was not to please man, "**but God.**" Here the adversative idea is given that given a choice, Paul would neglect the pleasures of man and seek to please God.

God here is described as the one who, "**examines our hearts.**" God is the one who is the witness to their testimony of integrity before the Thessalonians. The idea here behind "examine" is the exact same word used earlier in the verse translated "approved." God, although having already approved Paul and his ministry associates, continues to examine their hearts.

The subject of examination is none other than the missionaries hearts. This is a term that alludes not only to the internal being of an individual, but to his entire existence. The heart is not merely a place for feelings and emotions, but is also biblically described as the place of will and understanding.

C. Proven Concern (2:5-12)

In this section Paul reminds his readers of his proven concern for them as believers. While the previous sections of the chapter have highlighted the aspects of his ministry to them, the focus is now made on their personal relationship with Paul and his ministry associates.

1. Principles of their Concern (vv. 5-8)

Before drawing attention to specific examples of concern Paul lays forth the principles of his concern that are evident. These are laid out in simple explanations that characterized his love for the Thessalonian church.

Paul begins this section by stating **for**, which alludes to the previous section. The approval of Paul's ministry before God and the seeking forth of God's pleasure in all his life leads Paul to remind the Thessalonians of why he behaved and acted the way he did in their presence.

- i. Free from negative characteristics (vv. 5-7). They **never came with flattering speech**. The **never** used by Paul covers all the negative characteristics. Here, the idea is that they *never* entered into a state of flattering speech, greed, or the seeking out of glory. Paul's activity among the Thessalonians was not clouded with flattering speech. The idea behind the word "flattering"²⁴ is an individual who can use smooth words to manipulate people for selfish advantage. Paul denies any notion that his words were being driven by a motive or attitude of flattery.²⁵ None of what Paul and his associates had said in their ministry among the Thessalonians would have ever given them the idea that they were there for selfish reasons.

The Thessalonians were witnesses of this type of ministry as seen by Paul's use of **you know**. Here, we find Paul's third use of recalling his readers memory to the credibility of his ministry (cf. vv. 1, 2, 5).

Second, they also did not come with **pretext for greed**. The word translated for "pretext" can be translated with the word, "mask." The word itself describes a covering meant for the purpose of hiding what lies beneath. The idea of **greed** is not merely monetary, but carries the idea of self-satisfaction in all areas. The greed is driving the action of masking.²⁶

The section ends with Paul making a plain statement, "**God is witness**." Having already alluded to the knowledge of his readers, Paul now reverts back to what he stated in verse 4, namely that God is aware of Paul's motives in ministering among the Thessalonians. This phrase reminds the readers that it is God alone who judges the inner thoughts of a man and his motives. The weight of Paul's language is serious as God is now called to examine the internal motives of man.

²⁴ Gk., κολακείας.

²⁵ Subjective genitive.

²⁶ Subjective genitive.

Third, Paul and his ministry associates did not come seeking **glory from men . . . you** [the Thessalonians] . . . **or from others**. Although Paul had stated in verse 4 that he aimed at pleasing God rather than man, the denial in this context is the one of a desire for self praise. Their motives were pure.

Paul and his ministry associates practiced humble service to the Thessalonians. All of this was in spite of the fact that Paul and his ministry leaders had authority, **even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority**.²⁷ This clause speaks of the apostles actions related to their seeking out of praise—Paul and his associates did not seek praise from man despite having certain privileges as God’s apostles. Paul considered Himself a commissioned officer of the Messiah.

The idea of **asserted** can be understood as “to be in weight” or “importance, authority, dignity.” Despite having the right to be called apostles of Christ, those who were commissioned to fulfill their God-given task of evangelizing the nations and building up the church these individuals did not see the title as of significant importance with how they related to the Thessalonians.²⁸ In essence, the apostles could have been considered men of great importance before the readers but did not appeal to their position or exercise it in such a way.

- ii. The positive characteristics of Paul’s concern are next mentioned. First Thessalonians 2:7-8 now focuses on the positive principles. These contrasts are evidence since Paul provides the inverse reaction **but we became**. These positive features of their ministry are principally communicated in these verses.

Paul in these verses primarily reminds the Thessalonians of the *love* and *care* that was brought to them, **but we proved to be gentle**.²⁹ This gentleness was geared and practiced in the midst of the Thessalonians, **among you**. The Thessalonians were constantly confronted with the gentleness of Paul as he ministered to them. This comes in contrast to

²⁷ Debate exists with how this clause is related to what precedes or what follows. See the discussion of Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 66; D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 96-97. In this study, the verse division may be misleading, but it is best to take the phrase connected with verse 6 despite the verse division. The grammar and context point to such a position since it is a participle that modifies the preceding.

²⁸ For differing views see D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 97.

²⁹ There is a textual debate regarding the word “gentle” or “infants.” The limitations of this study do not allow for an in depth explanation. Rather, the interpreter has decided to favor the reading “gentle” (ἡπιον). Most, if not all, commentators will make mention of several arguments for and against both positions.

what has just been said; the missionaries did not point toward the dignity or worth of their title as “apostle” but were loving and caring in their midst.

This love and care is illustrated by Paul, **as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children**. The focus of this illustration is upon the one who nurses. The term refers to a person who is hired to suckle and care for the child of another person.³⁰ This is strong imagery as it was common for people to hire others to care for their children in this manner. But here in this context, Paul personalizes the illustration by adding the phrase, “cares for her own children.” The term for “tenderly” refers to the body warmth provided children by their mothers. The term is used to describe how birds cover their young to keep them warm and provide protection (cf. Deut 22:6, LXX).

The Thessalonians were spiritual infants upon receiving the gospel from the missionaries. They were in need of the tender care and nourishment of a spiritual mother. The missionaries were personally invested in the spiritual care of the recipients.

The concern for Paul and the missionaries is further explained in 1 Thessalonians 2:8. Here, in this passage the way the missionaries expressed their tender love and care for the spiritual immature is expressed.³¹ **Having so fond an affection**,³² expresses the missionaries concern. This word is not found anywhere else in the NT. It is used in a negative sense in the LXX of Job 3:21 where a person who suffers is described as “longing” for death. In this positive example the missionaries show forth their intense desire to care for the Thessalonians.

This affection of the missionaries was direct toward a specific action being **well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives**. The main idea here is that the missionaries were determined/well-pleased to share. The missionaries were primarily deliverers of the gospel, but it was not void or empty of an accompanied lifestyle manifested in the presence of the readers. While many ministers could be viewed as strict professionals, these missionaries were personal in their ministry toward the Thessalonians. The material passed along to the Thessalonians was first and foremost divine in its origin, **gospel of God**.³³

³⁰ Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 127.

³¹ Use of the conjunction, οὐτως.

³² Gk., ὁμειρόμενοι.

³³ Source.

The lives of the Thessalonians, or literally their “souls” communicates the idea of their entire being and not necessarily the immaterial dimension of man’s existence. The missionaries shared their entire personhood with the readers. Proper and biblical ministry cannot be void of personal care and an example of godly living.

The reason or cause of this type of ministry was their love for the Thessalonians, **because you had become very dear to us**.³⁴ The pastoral ministry team lived with so much selflessness because they were driven by love.

2. Personal Practice of their Concern (vv. 9-12)

The principle of concern are now explained. They are explained and shown by the practice of the missionaries among the Thessalonians.³⁵

- i. Personal Concern in Proclamation (v. 9). This verse emphasizes the proclamation of the missionaries, **we proclaimed to you the gospel of God**. This phrase comes last in the verse but communicates the main idea. The missionaries were primarily proclaimers of the Word. The circumstances upon which they proclaimed are explained here.

First the proclaimers did so in the circumstances of **labor and hardship**. This circumstance was not foreign to the mind of the readers, **for you recall, brethren**. The labor and hardship indicates the intensity of the missionary and their work. As Paul had already stated, he did not minister among them for financial gain. Instead, Paul exhibited a character of selfless labor to the point of fatigue for the sake of the people.

Second, this labor and hardship was done on their time, **working night and day**. This is not to say that the missionaries labored through the night and through the day. Rather, Paul is stating that if need be he worked in the night or day.³⁶ Whatever was convenient for those whom he ministered toward was when he worked. Paul’s timecard only consumed the time that would not interfere with the ministry.

This imagery to the Thessalonians would have left a vivid imprint. The apostles were people of great authority and dignity, yet they were able to

³⁴ See conjunction, διότι.

³⁵ Conjunction, γάρ.

³⁶ These genitives communicate the *kind* of time and not the duration of their work [Gary S. Shogren, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 106].

see their love for people manifested in their willingness to work menial jobs to maintain the ministry. The nature of their work was continual.³⁷ It was a regular and continued characteristic action of the missionaries that the readers would be able to recall.

The nature of Paul's labor was tent making or leatherworking. Acts 18:3 records Luke's description of Paul's willingness to work as a tent maker while he ministered among the Corinthians. While Silas and Timothy may not have been tent makers, they could have been involved in other jobs available on a temporary basis since their stay in Thessalonica probably would not allow for a long term trade to be established.

The Jewish culture taught that every boy should learn a trade. Their tradition demanded a male be able to provide and make a living in the midst of changing circumstances. Although Paul had a mind that made him a prime and worthy candidate to be a rabbi, he was still taught a particular trade that could support him if needed.³⁸

The purpose of such a work schedule is communicated by Paul, **so as not to be a burden to any of you.**³⁹ Paul's purpose of working was not only for personal provision, but had pastoral implications. Paul did not want to be a burden to the people. While we do not know the complete social make up of Paul's audience, we are told that Paul did not want to burden anybody with his needs whether they were rich or poor.

As stated above, Paul ends by identifying his goal among the Thessalonians. Despite working as a tent maker and providing for himself he describes himself as a proclaimer of the gospel of God.

- ii. Personal Concern Manifested (vv. 10-12). For further evidence of their personal concern Paul calls the Thessalonians to witness alongside of God of their character, **You are witnesses, and so is God.** There was so much confidence in Paul's ministry among the Thessalonians that he includes God as a witness to how he behaved in their midst. This again affirms Paul's previous assertion that God was his judge. Paul wants the readers to know that which was done before their very eyes was also recognized by God.

Paul's behavior among the Thessalonians was characterized as ministry that was performed **devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly.** The first

³⁷ Present participle, ἐργαζόμενοι.

³⁸ D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 104.

³⁹ Purpose, πρὸς τὸ + infinitive.

term communicates the missionaries devotion to God. Their service was characterized by a love and commitment to God. The second term, uprightly, refers to their moral life. The Thessalonians would have been able to recall specific instances in their time together where the missionaries dealt with men in an upright manner. The last term is comprehensive and communicates an overall purity in ministry. One commentator says that the missionaries, “had demonstrated that they not only believed the gospel but also ‘behaved’ it.”⁴⁰

This behavior was an example as it was performed **toward you believers**. Here, the witnesses of this ministry was geared toward those who are true believers.⁴¹ This indicates that faith is a central part of the Christian life. It must be continual and persevering. Those who are striving in faith were able to recognize Paul’s attitude in the ministry.

The manifestation of Paul’s concern is also seen and continued in 1 Thessalonians 2:11. Again Paul appeals to the knowledge of his readers, **just as you know**. The following example or manifestation of Paul’s concern as one of personal knowledge by the Thessalonians. They were able to recognize that Paul ministered by **exhorting and encouraging and imploring**. These words describe how Paul was a supporter of the Thessalonian’s spiritual growth. The exhortation and encouragement of Paul were his appeal to see the perseverance of the Thessalonians in the faith. The final term of imploring means to affirm, insist, or implore. Therefore, in the context of 1 Thessalonians Paul is identifying himself and his associates as advocates or witnesses to the Thessalonians and their endurance of faith.⁴²

These ministries were personal, . . . **each one of you**. Paul did not play favorites in the ministry. Paul personally applied this attitude towards all across the board. The personal nature of Paul’s ministry shows his pastoral love and concern for the people as a whole. His obligation was to the entire flock. Ministers must be mindful of the importance to care and shepherd for the flock that God has allotted to them. As a ministry, every person carried equal value before God.

The personal nature of the ministry is pictured with an illustration given by Paul, **as a father would his own children**. While Paul has earlier described himself as a nursing mother, he now turns to describe himself as a loving father who encourages his children. The encouragement given to a child by a father provides a different shade of relationship.

⁴⁰ D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 107.

⁴¹ A present participle is used to describe these individuals, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν.

⁴² Gk., μαρτυρόμενοι.

Often times a Father may lovingly express love in a stern yet caring manner. Each one of the Thessalonians were spiritually raised in a loving and firm manner according to their particular needs.

The use of the term “children” implies the spiritual immaturity of the Thessalonians. They were not yet able to stand upon their own feet in a manner of spiritual independence. Therefore, it was necessary for Paul and his associates to behave as their spiritual fathers. They would have trained the Thessalonians unto spiritual maturity.

The *purpose* of this behavior is expressed in 1 Thessalonians 2:12.⁴³ This purpose was so that the Thessalonians **would walk in a manner worthy of God**. Paul aimed to spiritual raise the Thessalonians to maturity. The term for walk is customarily used to communicate the idea of lifestyle. Christianity goes far beyond Sunday worship, but must be manifested in the everyday life of the believer.

The manner of walking or lifestyle a believer ought to live is described as “worthy.” This term for worthy carries the idea of “weight.” Believers are not instructed to live a life of fluff, but should be solid throughout with great substance. This worthiness is one that is measured in the eyes of God, “worthy of God.”

“For Paul there was a close connection between Christian faith and life. Acceptance of the gospel message carried with it the obligation to live a life consistent with that message. Paul was never content merely to gain large numbers of converts without seeking to induce them to walk worthily of the Lord they had professed. For a true believer the character of his daily life can never remain a matter of indifference.”⁴⁴

God is described by Paul as the one **who calls you into His own kingdom and glory**. The God of Christianity is the God who calls. The present tense of the verb “call” indicates that it is a continuous action of God to call believers toward His kingdom.⁴⁵ God continually calls the believer to live in holiness. This distinguishing mark of spiritual growth culminates with God leading the believer into His kingdom and glory.

⁴³ Another construction of the εἰς τὸ + infinitive is used.

⁴⁴ D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 110.

⁴⁵ Present participle, τοῦ καλοῦντος. Some argue this is the effectual call, while others indicate it is a reference to God’s continual act of saving people and bringing them into His kingdom and glory. It may be best to understand it as God’s continual call in the believers life to live holy that begins with the effectual call and continues onto sanctification. This calling of God cover the entire life of faith of the true believer.