



1 Thessalonians

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Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. 1 Thessalonians 2:6

Paul continues on with the things they did not do when they came to Thessalonica. In the previous verse, it was seen that they didn't use flattering words, and they didn't wear a cloak for covetousness. Now, he says, "Nor did we seek glory from men." Despite their bringing the good news of Christ, and having made converts of those he is now writing to, they never claimed some type of special recognition because of it. There was no need to give them praise or applause, as if they were somehow special in some way.

Today, titles such as "apostle" and "bishop" precede some people's names on their social media profiles. People like this are looking for glory from men. They desire to be recognized as bearing a special position which entitles them to honor and accolades. Stating an official title to someone while he is conducting his official duties may be a mark of respect, but to simply claim a title for all the world to see at all times is not exalting of Christ, but of self. Paul is telling those in Thessalonica that he, and those with them, shunned such glory "either from you or from others."

Not only did they not look for such glory there, but it was their standard way of dealing with all people. They simply came as men with a message greater than themselves, humbly telling of the glory of Christ. However, despite coming in this way, he does acknowledge that "we might have made demands as apostles of Christ."

The Greek here literally says, "to be in weight." It is a term unique to the Bible, and it means to be burdensome. As apostles, or sent ones, they could have expected to be paid for their services. Paul writes about this elsewhere, noting that those who minister in the gospel should be recompensed for their efforts, but these men did not ask for pay, lodging, or anything else. They let go of the rights which they were due in order to not be a burden on their hearers.

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As a note of doctrine, the term “apostles of Christ” does not necessarily mean that they were all designated to the apostolic office as Paul was. Instead, it is being used of Silvanus and Timothy in connection with Paul. He uses the plural to speak of all of them, while he is the only official “Apostle” by designation. Even if the title is spoken of all three of them, as some assume, it is only in the sense of being a messenger of Christ (as the term means), but without the authority of the true apostolic office, of which Paul alone, among the three of them, possessed. There is no definite article in front of “apostles,” and so the rendering of the King James Version, “the apostles of Christ,” is incorrect. It leads to a faulty view of the status of Silvanus and Timothy.

Life application: In the last chapter of Hebrews, the writer twice encourages his readers to acknowledge the spiritual leaders among them. He says to remember them and consider their conduct, and also to obey them and be submissive to them. This is good and proper, but it must also be mixed with discernment. If a ruler does not display the biblical character of a leader then that person obviously doesn’t deserve the respect of the office he holds. Be discerning first, and then grant to your spiritual leaders respect and submission. Assuredly, they get a lot of grief in the office they hold, and so deal gently with them in regards to their position.

But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children.
1 Thessalonians 2:7

For the past two verses, Paul has explained how he and those with him did not act towards those at Thessalonica. They didn’t use flattering words, they didn’t seek to be glorified by their hearers, etc. Now he tells them how they did act by starting with the contrasting word, “But.” In this, he is ensuring that they see a difference in their approach than others who may have come to them with other religious beliefs. Instead, he says they “were gentle among you.” There was nothing overbearing in their nature, nothing demanding, and nothing which would indicate expecting payment or special attention to their needs.

It must be noted that he could not have written this if it were not true. If the Thessalonians received a letter which did not match what really occurred, they would have laughed, torn up the letter, and tossed it in the fire. Instead, it has been carefully maintained for 2000 years, testifying to the truth of the words it contains. And so, Paul continues. Not only were they gentle, but it was “just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children.”

The word for “nursing” is *trophos*, a word unique to the Bible. It signifies a care-giver who sustains someone by nourishing and tending to them like a nurse. It can mean a mother or any other such care-giver. However, in this case, the added word “mother” is probably correct. One reason is that the thought of a mother caring for her children is one of an especially close

bond. But another particular reason is that Paul will return to the parent symbolism in verse 11 when he says, “as a father.”

Their care of those in Thessalonica was displayed in different ways in order to obtain different outcomes. One was as a mother, one was as a father, at other times it is as brothers. In the case of their gentleness among the church, they cared for them even as closely and as tenderly as a mother would care for and nurse her own children. The metaphor is heart-warming and touching. And again, he could not have written this in a letter back to the church if it was not so. The words themselves confirm the truth of the claim.

Life application: How willing are you to act in a gentle and humble manner towards those who have less understanding of the Lord than you? It is true that there are plenty of people who are not well-versed in Scripture, and yet they act as if they are the finest of biblical scholars. Plenty of them, plus. Just ignore those folks. Don't get into debates with them as you will only waste your time. But for those who are truly seeking to know the truth, if you possess it, pass it on to them in a kind and gentle manner.

So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. 1 Thessalonians 2:8

These words tie back to the simile of the mother nursing and caring for her children of the previous verse. The Greek word translated as “So” is even stronger in intent. It means, “Because of this,” or “Along with this.” What he says is following along in the same train of thought. In this state, and as a nursing mother to those at Thessalonica, Paul says he, and those with him, were “affectionately longing for you.”

They had come to Thessalonica and had developed such a closeness with them that there was a yearning to share in life with them. This was so much the case that, as he says, they “were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives.”

As nursing mothers, Paul and those with him not only imparted the spiritual milk of the word of life, the gospel, but they also were willing to expend themselves completely. Just as a mother would tirelessly give her all for her children, so were they also willing to do. They were prepared to exhaust themselves, or even lay down their lives, for their beloved church in Thessalonica. This was, as he continues, “because you had become dear to us.”

The bond of affection which had grown in their hearts was so close and personal that they were united as a family – parents caring for children and expending their lives for them. Paul will continue to explain this in the next verses.

Life application: When you lead someone to the Lord, do you consider it as something that is done and over with, or do you consider it as a first step in their new lives? It is good to offer your phone number or email address and to express to them that you will make the necessary time available to them to instruct them in this new life which they have received. In so doing, you will be ensuring that their life in Christ will develop properly. Try to remember to do this if you are honored enough to lead someone to acceptance of the gospel message.

For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. 1 Thessalonians 2:9

“For you remember, brethren” is Paul’s way of recalling what he is about to say to the minds of those in Thessalonica. As has been previously noted, he could not write these things if they were not true. When asking another to recall something that didn’t occur, a person only makes himself look foolish. But Paul’s words are true, and they are tied to what he just said about not only imparting the gospel, “but also our own lives.” He is expanding on that now by showing the extent of the labors he and those with him went through.

They exhausted themselves in “labor and toil.” This is how they imparted their lives. The labor is a description of the kind of work they engaged in, and the toil explains the intensity of it. They worked physically, and they did so heartily. They earned their own wages, and did not rely on the assistance of the newly established church.

He then notes that they were “laboring day and night.” Surely this included work such as Paul’s profession in tent-making, and it also included teaching of the gospel. They did these things all day and into the night for a specific reason which was, as he says, “that we might not be a burden to any of you.”

Their intent in this was to let them know of the sincerity of the message they brought. If they had come into town, shared a message of redemption, and then relied on those who followed them to support them, it might call into question the truth of the message, or at least the truth of their sincerity concerning the message. But by laboring in order to meet their own needs, Paul demonstrates that they were wholly sincere about the words of the message, and their devotion to those words.

In saying that “we preached to you the gospel of God” without being a burden, he is calling all this to their minds. In doing this now in the letter, he is once again establishing in their hearts and minds the sincerity of their actions then, and asking them to believe in the sincerity of the words of the epistle now. Why would they be so sincere in person, and then make up a false message while absent? There would be no profit in it, and so his recalling their former conduct is solidifying their truthfulness now as well.

Life application: Once you present yourself in an insincere manner to someone, it will be long remembered. There will always be a question in the back of that person's mind about whether you can be trusted now or not. By demonstrating an honest, hard-working, and sincere attitude at all times, you are able to establish yourself in a positive way in all of your future dealings with others. By recalling your actions of the past for them to remember, you give them a baseline by which they can continue to go forward while trusting you.

You *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; 1 Thessalonians 2:10

Just as in verse 2:1 where he said "For you yourselves know," Paul again reminds those in Thessalonica that they were "witnesses" of the conduct he, Silvanus, and Timothy displayed among them. But further, he says, "and God also." It is a reminder that they conducted themselves in the manner they did for the sake of the Thessalonians, but they did it with a conscience towards God, knowing that He is always aware of all actions, and even the motives behind those actions. This then is a reaffirmation of the statement in verse 5, "God is witness." With the eyes of all of the new believers on them, and with God's ever-watchful gaze as well, Paul reminds them of "how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves." The word "devoutly" gives the sense of that which is sanctioned by the Lord, and thus worthy of reverence. The word "justly" gives the sense of being judicially approved. And finally, the word "blamelessly" gives the sense of being morally pure, and thus above reproach.

Paul asks the Thessalonians to remember the conduct that he and those with him displayed, and which they personally saw, for a particular reason. As they so acted, it was setting the example for those who believed to act as well. This will be explained in the verses to come. The thought actually begins, however, with the words, "among you who believe." This does not mean that they didn't act this way among unbelievers, but that those who came to believe were aware of their conduct. It was something they saw and felt was worthy of their attention and further investigation.

Nobody would voluntarily follow someone they had no respect for in regards to their conduct. As the Thessalonians followed them, received the message, and believed, it shows that the conduct of Paul and those with him had a positive effect on them.

Life application: One of the most common criticisms of Christians is that they are hypocrites. People note that they believe one thing, and yet they act in another way. It is true that this occurs, but if hypocrisy is a sin, and Christians first and foremost acknowledge that they are sinners, then there is often a misconception or a misunderstanding about the Christian by those who make such accusations. He has already acknowledged his imperfections, among which may be a seemingly hypocritical attitude at times. Despite this, it is important for

believers to do their very best to act in accord with their words. This is the example that Paul sets in his epistles, and it was because of the premier example of Christ Jesus. Let us do our very best to live our lives in accord with His perfect conduct.

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