

Bible Study 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16

1. Acts 16 records how Paul & Silas' visit to Philippi; they proclaimed the gospel, people were converted, but then the pair were seized by a mob, beaten publicly then gaoled. When they were released, the next town they visited was Thessalonica, where their reception was not much different. **Read Acts 17:1-10a.** NB v.2 suggests that they were only in the town for 3 weeks.

2. **Read 1 Thess 2:1-16.** How might Paul's visit to Thessalonica have been considered "a failure" (lit "in vain")?

It would seem, at least at first, to refer to there being nothing to show for it and being thrown out in only three weeks. NB NIV11 uses the phrase "without results".

3. Look again over vv2-12. This is where Paul gives his evidence for his statement in v.1. But notice that Paul doesn't then list the "results" of his ministry. From what he writes, how is it that you can know a ministry has not been "in vain"?

It is not just by counting the number of people converted! If it was, we might expect Paul to discuss their conversion. He had already referred to that in 1:9-10. But here he describes the manner of his and Salas' ministry among them and the kind of life they exhibited while among them. The evidence that a ministry has not been in vain is not merely the impact on the people being gosselled, it is also the impact of the gospel on the lives of those doing the gosselling – the kind of people they are, and the way they live while speaking the gospel.

4. Make a list of the things Paul was **not** like and the things he did **not** do when telling them about Jesus. Make another list of what he **was** like and what he **did** do. Why are these things important for Christians? If Paul is an example for all of us, how do these lists affect you?

Was not / did not do

Was / did

Use error / deceit

Dared to speak / spoke with boldness

Use impure motives

Appealed

Use tricks (manipulation)

Spoke the gospel - with God's approval

Try to please or be praised by people

Aim to please & be praised by God alone

Use flattery

Gentle – not demanding anything from them

Be greedy (and cover it up)

Delighted to speak and share their lives

Holy, righteous, blameless

Telling people about the Lord is not about me, the message doesn't need anything to make it impact someone, all I need to be is godly in the way I speak it.

5. It is a good and proper thing for Christians to financially support those who minister God's word to them (cf 1 Cor 9:4; 1 Tim 5:17). Why do you think Paul didn't want this "burden" (v.6) on the Thessalonian converts?

*A few possible reasons: * So that no one could accuse them of just being there for the money vv3,5 – the message would be lost if the messenger could be discredited, and there were many who made money this way; * They were there for such a short time, they wanted the new Christians to hear as much as possible without misconstruing their message or motives; * They wanted to give an example that all of them could follow – sharing the gospel while they went about their normal working lives.*

6. From what we've read so far in 1 Thess, how is it that someone becomes a Christians and then continues to mature as one? (cf especially 1:5, 2:13)

The gospel is spoken and the Holy Spirit opens the ears and heart of the one who hears enabling them to believe. The God, by his Spirit and through that same word, continues to work in the believer.

7. From vv14-16, what is something that shows a person has truly believed the gospel? (cf Mark 4:17)

The persevered through persecution that came because of the word. No one suffers for something they don't believe.

v.16b seems to suggest God's judgement had already fallen on the Jews who opposed the gospel. It's most likely Paul means that judgment is certain because of their ongoing opposition. Also, to reject Jesus as Christ and Saviour, and to do so repeatedly and wilfully, is to reject the one and only means God has given for salvation. So God often "hands people over" to the desires of their sinful hearts (Rom 1:24ff).

8. It's clear that the Christians in Thessalonica suffered from their own people for becoming Christians. How does Paul expect them to live in response to this? Does this speak to your life situation?

Godly, blameless lives that speak of the gospel we believe, even to those who oppose us. By this God receives praise and honour, and those who currently oppose the gospel might well come to repent and believe it themselves.

9. In pairs, consider one person who shared both the gospel and their life with you. Think of one person you have the opportunity to do the same thing with. Spend time praying for these two people.