

1 Thessalonians 2:1-20

In Defense of the Gospel

“False teachers assailed Paul, as they often do other faithful shepherds, by impugning his character and challenging his authority. Thus the opening statement of chapter 2 is a polemic in defense of Paul’s ministry to the Thessalonians. Opponents to his ministry were lying to the church in Thessalonica concerning his integrity and sincerity. They hoped to ruin the new church by destroying its confidence in the person God had used to found it. That group probably included both unbelieving Jews and pagan Gentiles, both of whom were extremely hostile to the gospel... In a negative response to the coming of the Messiah and His redemptive work, as well as to the spread of the gospel message, the attack on the truth of salvation by grace escalated—and Paul was the main target.

In spite of the purity of Paul’s life and the transforming power of the message (sufficient and convincing proof of his legitimacy as an apostle of Jesus Christ), the enemies of the gospel were having some success in convincing the Thessalonians that Paul and his companions were men of wicked intentions, nothing more than self-seeking frauds like so many other ‘spiritual teachers’ of that time. Therefore, as distasteful as it was for Paul to have to defend himself, he answered his detractors directly and concisely for the sake of the truth.” MacArthur

- I. Why do people oppose the gospel? If a believer’s life is based on the faith, love and hope that come from knowing Christ, then why the opposition? After all, they are good character traits meant to bless society. In Billy Graham’s words, *The wisdom of this world is cynical of what was accomplished by the death and resurrection of Christ. The Apostle Paul said, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise” (1 Corinthians 1:18-19). Human beings view life from a personal point of time and space, but God views us from His heavenly throne in the light of eternity. We see ourselves as self-sufficient, self-important, and self-sustaining; God sees us as dependent, self-centered, and self-deceived. Our worldly wisdom has made us calloused and hard. Our natural wisdom, as the Scriptures teach, comes not from God, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish (James 3:15). There is the person you think you are. There is the person others think you are. And there is the person God knows you are and what you can become through Christ. Truth is from God, whether scientific, psychological, philosophic, or religious. He desires that we believe His truth which points us to the cross. It is there that we find forgiveness of the sins of “self” and we also find the solution to dilemmas and problems. The one who does not know Jesus Christ as personal Savior is a “natural man,” not understanding that God, in His grace and mercy, will forgive sinners and transform lives. It’s impossible for the natural man to comprehend how these changed lives can affect society. But you can know the Lord Jesus today if you will receive Him by faith.*

1 Thess. 2:1-2

Matt. 13:23

Matt. 13:18-21

Matt. 12:23

Matt. 12:22

Acts:16:22-24

Rom. 1:16

II. Who are we to trust? We live in a culture steeped in demagoguery and lies meant to trick us into accepting an ideology contrary to the truth of God's Word. With the rise of A.I. and its ever encroaching power and influence, coupled with the scams that seem to never end, we find ourselves, as God's children, constantly challenged by the evil world system we live in. It is essential therefore, to know that *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Ps. 46:1)*. A place that he has provided to be a refuge and strength is the church. It should be a safe haven where we go to receive truth and the ministry of the Spirit through a sincere expression of faith, hope and love. It is our responsibility then, to make sure that it stays that way. Paul, in his ministry to the Thessalonian believers in response to the lies spread about him, emphasized that his motives were pure in his ministry to them. He set an example for the believers that was holy, righteous and blameless to motivate them to live lives worthy of the Lord. To settle for anything less shows that the fear of man wins, making those who bow to it losers instead of overcomers. *You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world (1 Jn. 4:4)*.

1 Thess. 2:3-12
1 Cor. 1:28-31
1 Jn. 4:1

1 Cor. 2:4
2 Cor. 9:6-7
Rom. 12:16

Phil. 2:5-11
1 Pe. 2:13

“The city of Thessalonica sat on the Egnatian Way, the famous highway that went east to west through Macedonia. Thessalonica was also an important port and a melting pot city with cultures from all over the world. There were a staggering variety of religions and religious professionals in Thessalonica. In this city, you would find the worship of the gods of the Olympian pantheon, especially Apollo, Athena, and Hercules. There were the native Greek mystery religions, celebrating Dionysis and the sex and drinking cult. The Greek intellectual and philosophical traditions were also represented. There were shrines to many Egyptian gods: Isis, Sarapis, Anubis. Also present were the Roman State cults that deified the political heroes of Rome. There were also the Jewish people and the God-fearing Gentiles. Most of these religions were missionary minded and sought to spread their faith using itinerant evangelists and preachers. Most of these missionaries were opportunists, who took everything they could from their listeners, and then moved on to find someone else to support them.” Guzik

III. The power of the inerrant, infallible Word of God working in us can't be trivialized or underestimated in how it can give us the strength, wisdom, knowledge and steadfast endurance we need to stand firm against everything the world throws at us. Paul commended the Thessalonian believers for receiving and believing God's Word as genuine truth over what man claims to be truth. A church that takes the Word of God seriously and without compromise is a church that sets a much needed example for other churches to follow. Especially in what seems to be an increasingly hostile environment toward pulpits that speak out against the insidious godlessness the world promotes. Why let the those opposed to us intimidate or hold sway over our love for the Lord and His truth. Their destiny is God's wrath, ours is to glory in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ when he comes.

! Thess. 2:13-20
Matt. 13:23
Phil. 1:5-6
Phil. 2:13

1 Tim. 3:16-17
1 Peter 4:12
Rom. 12:19

Heb. 4:12 *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*