

## **1Thessalonians 2**

*1 You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure.*

What did Paul consider a failure? 3:5; Philippians 2:14-16 Success? 1:3; 2:13  
What do you consider success or failure? How does that line up with eternal values?

*2 We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.*

Background: Acts 16:22-24 With the help of God – 1:5 The opposition - Acts 17:2-9 Paul and Silas must have still been suffering physically when they preached in Thessalonica, but they did not let the opposition instill fear. Hebrews 12:3; Ephesians 6:19-20

*3 For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you.*

It seems that Paul is having to answer accusations made by the Jewish community that was trying to win their people back. When people don't like the message, they often accuse the messenger. There are three accusations addressed. The first was "error". They may have been claiming Paul had misrepresented the Law and the prophets. Christians and Jews see the Law and Prophets very differently. Luke 24:25-27 The term can also mean delusional. It wouldn't be the first time people claimed Paul was crazy. Acts 26:24 People who live a life of faith may appear crazy to the world.

The second claim was impure motives. This term is almost always used with a sexual connotation. People may have misconstrued the kiss of peace 5:26 and the love feast of the early church. To the impure, all things are impure.

The third was a claim of trickery. In other words, they were claiming he was intentionally trying to deceive them for some personal advantage.

*4 On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.*

Because Paul taught a gospel of grace and not works, there may have been a claim that he was teaching what pleased men and not God. But he says that only God can test the heart. When people can't find fault with the message, they will attack the messenger's motivations. You can't defend yourself from such an attack except by pure and generous life style. Paul did not hesitate to say God tests the heart. He had a clean conscious. 2Corinthians 4:2  
This is a good test of motivation – who are you trying to please?

*5 You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed-  
-God is our witness.*

The Greek here and in verse 9 for flattery is always used for personal gain. The early church soon had those who became traveling preachers for the financial support. Around 100 A.D. there was instruction to churches to be cautious of those trying to take financial advantage of churches. It's an old problem still present today. Jeremiah 6:13; Romans 16:18

*6 We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, 7 but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.*

Paul wasn't seeking to exalt himself. John 5:41,44 He could have asked for financial support, but instead he was cautious to do nothing that might offend these young Christians. That doesn't stop accusations from flying.

*8 We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.*

*9 Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.*

They worked in-between teaching and witnessing to support themselves. Imagine preaching all day and then working at night to have enough support to eat. It was a labor of love for him because they were so receptive and became so dear to him.

*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.*

Your personal example is the best defense against accusations. If your example is squeaky clean, accusations just won't stick. Paul was reminding them to compare the accusations with the example they observed. In verse 7 he says they were like a mother, and now in verse 11 like a Father. They were like spiritual parents. That may have included some loving discipline, but it was always instruction out of loving concern and relationship. The verbs in 12 should be true of the spiritual leaders in any church, encouraging, comforting, and urging. Compare with 1Corinthians 14:3 What is a godly life? Ephesians 4:1

*13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.*

This is what gives the preacher or the pastor cause for thanks, when people receive the Word as from God and allow it to work in them. When we see it as

from men, we debate and argue with it. If we see it as from God, we should let it work deep within to change us. Acts 17:11

*14 For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, 15 who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men 16 in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.*

They've joined good company, the churches and prophets before them that have been rejected by the world. The pattern has been repeated from the throughout time. In the next 20 years God's wrath did fall on the whole Jewish system, (Luke 21:20-24) and it has never been the same. Anyone who tries to keep the truth from people faces the wrath of God.

*17 But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. 18 For we wanted to come to you--certainly I, Paul, did, again and again--but Satan stopped us.*

The word Paul uses in the Greek is a technical word for a roadblock that is meant to stop an expedition on the march. Paul sees the spiritual battle going on behind decisions and difficulties. Part of the Christian life is overcoming obstacles that Satan places in our path to keep us from advancing the kingdom of God. Ephesians 6:12

*19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? 20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy.*

The word for crown here is the victory crown of one who wins an athletic event. This is another common metaphor with Paul. He sees us in a great competition in which we must give our all. The winner displays the crown as symbol of all his hard work and discipline. In heaven, the souls influenced by the words Paul shared will be his victorious expression of all he endured. They will bring him great joy in heaven, knowing he was instrumental in their eternal good. And what will we have to show? What will be our joy? Philippians 2:16, 4:1