

I Thessalonians 2:1-6 The Commission, Commitment, and Conduct of Paul

Alright, this morning we are in I Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 1 through 6.

The first three chapters of Thessalonians is The Inspiration of the Believers in Thessalonica. We saw in chapter 1 The Testimony of the Thessalonians themselves. Paul showing them proof that they belong to the Lord because they received the word of God in much affliction. He says, "That is proof that you are saved." Here in chapter 2 it is The Testimony of Paul. Paul's testimony of his ministry to them and his approach to ministry. Especially as he came into Thessalonica to minister to the saints there. When we get into chapter 3 it will be The Testimony of Timothy. And chapter 4 will be The Testimony of the Lord as we discuss the taking away of the church, the snatching up of the church. In chapter 5 will be Our Testimony. Our testimony in light of the fact that the Lord is coming back and how we are to live our lives waiting for His return.

So having taken The Testimony of the Thessalonians, we are now in chapter 2 The Testimony of Paul. In I Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 1 and 2, The Commission of Paul.

Verse 1, **For you yourselves know, brothers, our entrance** - the word *coming* is literally the word *entrance* - **to you, that it has not become empty, or in vain, for nothing.**

First of all, notice in verse 1 the very first word is *for*. Each one of these three sections is marked off by the beginning with the word *for*: verses 1 and 2; verses 3 and 4 begins the word *for*. In verses 5 and 6, the conduct of Paul, he starts off with the word *for*. That gives us a pattern for these first six verses.

For you yourselves know. It is what is called the intensive form: you yourselves. Not just you, but you yourselves specifically know. So he is telling them something that they already know. And he calls them *brothers*, the term of family affection. **For you yourselves know, brothers, our entrance** - our coming to you, our entrance to you - **that it has not become empty.** Interesting the phrase *to you* in the Greek text again is an intensive form. **Our entrance, our coming to you, specifically the entrance we made to you in your city, that it has not become empty or in vain.** The word *empty* or *in vain* means *no substance, nothing there*. But notice the verb tense, **it has not become empty.** It is what is called the perfect tense, which means from the time he entered in and preached the gospel to them until the present moment, we are talking two years later, there is still substance there. It has not become for nothing. It has not become empty. It was not a ministry to them that went away over a period of time. It is a ministry that stayed with them.

Verse 2, **But also having suffered before and having been insulted, according as you know in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak the gospel of God to you in much agony.** Two past tense verbs: *having suffered* and *having been insulted*.

According as you know in Philippi. They arrived in Philippi before Thessalonica. And when they arrived there - and this is recorded in Acts chapter 16 verses 16 through 40. When

they came to Philippi there is girl who was used by her owners to tell fortunes. And she was under the influence of a demonic spirit. But for some reason she latched on to Paul as he was preaching in the city. She would walk around and she would tell people, "Come and listen to these guys, they have the words of eternal life. They can tell you how to be saved." Well, the text says in Acts chapter 16 that it irritated Paul. You would think that he would approve of the testimony this girl is giving, but it irritated him because he knew it was not the Spirit of God saying it, it was a demon saying it. Demons can speak the truth but they do not submit to the Lord, and it does not save them.

So the men that owned her said, "You took away our business. She cannot tell fortunes anymore," because he cast the spirit out of her. So he upset the owners. She could no longer tell fortunes in Philippi so that caused some to get angry with him.

And as they are going through the town, they began to notice that the people there worshiped Aphrodite, and they sold statues there, and the metalworkers had a union. The people were receiving Christ and throwing out their idols, throwing them away. So the union bosses said, "We have problems. These people are getting saved, and we are losing their work, we are losing our income." So they went to the city council and to talk to them about rounding Paul up. The first thing they did was they beat him physically. Secondly, they imprisoned him, **not** just in jail, they put him in shackles. They drew up false accusations against him. And by the time they were ready to take him into court under these conditions Paul says, "I don't know if you know it or not but I am a Roman citizen." You see you cannot beat or imprison a Roman citizen without the Roman court's permission. Once they heard that he was a Roman citizen they began to fear, because now they could get in trouble for beating him and putting him in prison without going through the Roman courts to do it.

So, Paul says, "While we were there in Philippi we were beaten physically; shamefully insulted; verbally, in public in front of everybody; falsely accused; and as soon as we were finished there we came to you in Thessalonica." Did not even slow down. Did not even stop. He just kept preaching, in spite of the beatings, in spite of the ill-treatment by the people in Philippi. Paul used hardship and suffering, faithfulness, consistency, in the midst of suffering as proof that he has been commissioned by God because there is no other reason for doing it. So what he says is, **You know our entrance to you**, that when we were in Philippi we suffered and were insulted.

Just by way of meaning and definition, verse 2, **But also having suffered before** - that is physical suffering - **and having been insulted** - that is mental suffering. So they suffered mentally and physically in Philippi. **According as you know in Philippi we were bold in our God to speak the gospel of God to you in much agony.** This turnaround. Paul did not quit. He took the beatings, he took the insults as just part of the Christian walk. And when he left Philippi to go to Thessalonica, he kept preaching the gospel, and of course they suffered beatings, and harassment there in Thessalonica as well.

He says, **We were bold in our God.** Not *bold about God*, but *bold in our God*. In the Spirit of God he was bold. **To speak the gospel of God to you in much agony.** The standard text used the word *conflict* here. It is from the Greek word **ἀγών** (agōn), where we get our

English word *agony* from. **We were bold in our God to speak the gospel of God you in much agony.** Paul called the ministry and the work of the Lord *agony*. I think many Christians can identify with that except we try to escape the agony, but in reality that is part of the walk with the Lord.

In Jude verse 3 he says, **Contend earnestly for the faith.** That is, *agonize over the faith*. It is the verb form **ἀγωνίζομαι** (agōnidzomai), to agonize over the faith.

In the book of Hebrews chapter 12 verse 1, **Therefore we also since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily ensnares us, let us run with endurance the race that is being set before us.** The word *race* is the word **ἀγών** (agōn) in Hebrews 12:1. He is calling the race that we are to run as agony. And that it is being set before us. It is a present participle which shows that it is step by step being placed in front of us. We do not really know what direction we are going to go sometimes. We have to wait for the Lord to put down the marker for us to tell us which way to go. But Paul called it *agony*.

Then in I Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 3 through 4, The Commitment of Paul in all of this. **For our encouragement (or exhortation) was not out of error, neither out of uncleanness, nor in deceit.** So he calls it *encouragement*. He did not come into town to command them what to do, he came to appeal to them, to encourage them to respond to Christ, and receive Christ.

But our encouragement was not out of three things. (1) Out of error. The word *error* is word **πλάνη** (planē) where we get our word *planet* from. And it means *a wandering or a misleading*. So he says, "Not out of misleading you, (2) **neither out of uncleanness:** impure motives, (3) **nor in deceit.** We did not come to deceive you.

Interesting word for *deceit*, **δόλος** (dolos) and it means *duplicity, double meaning*. It is used again in I Peter chapter 2 verses 1 and 2, which is a great text. **Therefore laying aside all malice, and all deceit, - there is our word δόλος (dolos) - hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking.** Verse 2, **As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.** The word *pure*, or *sincere* as the old King James has it, is our word **δόλος** (dolos). It is the **δόλος** (dolos) milk of the word. It is the milk of the word that is without duplicity, without double meaning. So the word of God does not say one thing and mean another. It means according to the intent of the writer. What did the writer mean by what he said? That is what's the meaning of the text. **δόλος** (dolos).

And then again in I Peter chapter 2 verses 1 and 2, **Desire the pure (or un-duplicity) milk of the word that you may grow thereby.** The word *word* is not the word *word*. The word *word* is **λογικόν** (logikon), which is the Greek word for *the reasoning process of a human being*. So what he is saying is the milk of the word that is without duplicity is for your reasoning process. That is what the word ministers to. As we figure things out in life, and as we make decisions in life, it is based upon our reasoning process. Reasoning things out and seeking what the Lord would have us to do. And that is all based upon our constant exposure to the Scriptures,

the teaching of the word of God. It feeds our reasoning process and we can trust it because there is no duplicity in the word of God. There is no double meaning. It means what it says.

For our encouragement was not out of error, neither out of uncleanness, nor in deceit - no duplicity there. We did not say one thing and mean another. We did not say whatever we had to say in order to get you to favor us. We told the truth. We did not mislead you. We did not have impure motives.

But verse 4, **But according as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, in this way we speak not as pleasing to men, but to God, the One proving our hearts. According as we have been approved by God.** The word *approved* means *to approve something after testing*. It comes from the word that has to do with the testing of metals for the purification process. To test the metal, to test its value, and to burn it in the furnace, to burn the dross off, to make it pure. But again, notice the verb tense, **We have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.** So God has put us to the test and He has approved of us afterwards. So what he suffered in Philippi, all the hardships were proving that he belonged to Christ, and proving his commission, and proving his commitment.

In this way we speak not as pleasing to men, but to God, the One proving our hearts. And the word *proving* comes from the same word *to test metals*. This is **δοκιμάζω** (*dokimazō*), to test metals in the fire. But it is, **the One proving our hearts**, it is for everybody. All believers go through the agony of this life to be approved by God. That is to say, we are not talking about performance here, we are talking about here a personal relationship with Christ. That is in the midst of the difficulty, and at the end of the difficulty we are still in Christ and Christ is still in us. And the difficulty proves that we are saved, proves that we belong to Christ.

This theme of being tested is found in I Peter chapter 1 verses 6 and 7 where Peter says, **In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials; that the genuineness (there is our word for *proving*) the genuineness of your faith being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to the praise, honor, and glory in the revelation of Jesus Christ.** So the genuineness of your faith - your faith being proved through much testing, through much trials, grieved by various trials so that the genuineness of your faith can be proved. So that by the time the trial is over you are still in Christ and Christ is still in you, and the hardship has passed. That is proof that a person belongs to Christ.

Then, The Conduct of Paul verses 5 and 6. **For neither at any time did we become in a word of flattery, according as you know, nor in pretense of covetousness (God is witness), nor seeking glory from men, neither from you, nor from others, being able to be in weight, as apostles of Christ.** And that last phrase is a literal translation. **Being able to be in weight** literally means *to throw your weight around*. As apostles of Christ, we did not throw our weight around. We did not push people around. So, **Neither at any time did we become in a word of flattery.** We did not use flattery to get in good with you. **Nor in pretense of covetousness (God is witness).**

Paul shared again in I Corinthians chapter 2 verses 1 through 5 the method of his ministry. He says, **And also, when I came to you brothers, I did not come according to excellency of speech or wisdom, while proclaiming the mystery of God. For I judged to know nothing among you, except Jesus Christ, and this one crucified; and I became toward you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my speech and my message was not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power: in order that your faith might not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.** So he says, "We came to you in weakness and fear, and in much trembling, and our speech was not with persuasive words of man's wisdom."

Here he is saying, **We did not become in a word of flattery** and speech of flattery, **according as you know, nor in pretense of covetousness.** The word *covetousness* means *to have more, to have more than what you have*. A coveting person is a person who wants more than what they have, not content with what gives God gives them but desiring more. So, **No pretense of covetousness**, we did not come coveting your things, your money, your possessions. **Nor did we see glory from men**, we did not come into town saying, "We are apostles of Christ, give us glory and honor and provision." And so he says, "We did not throw our weight around as apostles of Christ."

And this concludes this first section of I Thessalonians chapter 2. Paul is impressing upon them that it is the hardships that he had to go through, it is the agony that he had to go through, it is the testing and proving of the genuineness of his faith that God put him through, and God approved. Because God kept using him effectively for the ministry of the gospel after having passed the test. It was not his physical performance. It was his faithfulness to stay true to Christ in the midst of hardship.

We need to realize these things because we live in a day where Christians look to escape the hardship, look for an easy way out. But in reality, the difficult way is God proving us, proving the genuineness of our faith to trust Him through it all. Not knowing what He is going to do, or how He is going to do it, but trusting Him. That He is in charge. And He controls everything. That is our testimony.

Let's close with prayer.