

I Thessalonians

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1 Thessalonians 2:9-20

Vss. 9-10

- Paul continues his defense against the slanders and charges laid against him by his Thessalonian enemies. One of the charges was that like so many other traveling preachers, Paul was just another charlatan con man looking to make a quick shekel off the locals before moving on to the next town. But Paul reminds them that he and his friends provided their own support, working night and day (as tent makers? Acts 18:3) so as never to be a burden to the Thessalonians. He puts a period also on the question of ethics, pointing out that all they saw (and all God saw) was the highest of ethical and moral behavior in Paul and his friends.

Vss. 11-12

- Paul returns to the parental imagery of vs. 7 to frame the relationship and depth of feeling he has with the Thessalonian church. In vs. 7 he loves as young mother loves, here he loves the church as a good father loves his children.
- For any parent, one of their greatest wishes is to see their kids grow up to be solid, good, and successful adults and this is what Paul desires to see in the Thessalonian church. So he exhorts them, pushing them on. He encourages them, picking them up when they stumble. He implores them, so they maintain the same moral and ethical standards they see in their "father".

Vss. 13-16

- So often people falsely believe that if they accept Christ as Savior and Lord then all their troubles are over. With the Thessalonians nothing could have been further from the truth. Faith in Christ instantly brought trouble. But Paul tells them that their suffering is a badge of honor, that their suffering is a testimony to their faith.
- First, they were able to understand that the message they heard from Paul was not simply another quote of a Greek philosopher, but the true word of God, a message from God to them. Second, this faith performed such a work in them that they were able to quickly imitate the churches of Judea who had been Christians for decades. Just as the Thessalonian church was being persecuted by their own Macedonian people, so too were the churches of Judea by their own Jewish neighbors.

- Paul then presents to the Thessalonians a brief indictment on the Jews: they murdered Jesus, and had previously murdered all the prophets, and had driven all the true people of God out of the country, and fought furiously to prevent Christian missionaries from speaking to the Gentiles. Paul does this to point out that everywhere people are people and sin is sin. Just as there are sinful people in Judea, so too are there sinful people in Macedonia and we are to have faith no matter where we are or what our circumstances may be. Be faithful and leave the punishment of the sinful to God.

Vss. 17-20

- Paul concludes this section of his letter by again referring to his deep affection for the Thessalonians. Even though they are apart, he is still with them in spirit.
- Evidently it was Paul's intention to circle back north to Macedonia, perhaps instead of going further south to Corinth, yet Satan hindered them. The word Paul uses here is *egkoptein*, a military word used for a roadblock to stop an enemy's advancing march. Satan will always seek to throw roadblocks in the path of effective ministry.
- For Paul, the greatest confirmation of God's Holy Spirit in him and guiding him are the human results of the work. If there was ever any question when Paul had the vision of the Macedonian while he was still in Troas looking for God's direction, that question was settled in Thessalonica. Just as a teacher is never more proud when a student succeeds or a coach with a successful player, so too Paul cannot wait to stand before the Lord and show Him the Thessalonian church. The members of the Thessalonian church are quite literally his glory and his joy.