

## 1 Thessalonians 2:1-13

**Introduction:** This is a part of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians where he talks about how to be a good ambassador for Jesus Christ in a hostile world. We know from the Acts of the Apostles that Paul planted the new church there in the face of great and violent opposition.

Now, just a matter of a few months later, he writes to encourage them to keep going the way they began. In doing this, he gives us some helpful teaching on how we should serve Christ in our own local church. Much of this advice is drawn from his own experience and action while he was with the Thessalonians. Here are four key points we can take from this passage to help us in our own efforts to encourage other people to become followers of Jesus.

### 1. Service for Christ can be costly

In verse 2 he reminds the Thessalonians that he had previously suffered and had been insulted in Philippi. In verse 9 he reminds them that while in their city he worked night and day to earn his living so that he would not be a financial burden to them while he preached the gospel. In Chapter 1:6 he talks about *their* severe sufferings as they tried to serve Christ.

Up till now Christians in Australia have not had to suffer too much for their faith, but the signs are plain that this is now changing as the level of public intolerance of Christianity rises. The question is will we buckle under this pressure, or will we be like the new Christians in Thessalonians and hold firm?

### 2. Service for Christ must come from the Heart

Verse 8 says '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.' Verse 11, 'For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children.'

Here Paul displays the essential quality of unselfish concern for the welfare of those he was serving. He loved them. Verse 3, 'For the appeal

## 1 Thessalonians 2:1-13

we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you.'

We need to be like that. Our Christian service should spring from love and, verse 4, 'aim to please God and not men.'

### 3. Service for Christ should be based on a truthful Witness to Christ

Verse 3, 'For the appeal we make does not spring from error,' and verse 5, 'We never used flattery.' In other places Paul rebuts criticism that some used to make of his ministry that he was trying to trick people by reminding his readers that he never shrank from giving a message just because it might be unpopular. For example, 2 Corinthians 4:2, 'We have renounced secret and shameful ways. We do not use deception nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.'

For some people, the Christian message is not popular and so some try to 'pretty' it up to make it more acceptable. But if people did not listen to Jesus (which was often the case), we should not be surprised if they won't listen to us. But remember, when we sow the seed we look to God to touch people's heart and reap a harvest. Our job is to tell the truth in love and trust God to do his work.

### 4. Service for Christ must spring from an upright Life

Paul says in verse 10, 'You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.' Every Christian who has stood up for Christ becomes aware of the fact that if their life does not match up with the words they speak, they can do more harm than good.

On the other hand, if we waited until we were perfect before we did or said anything, we would never *do* anything. So, in serving the Lord, we must seek his help by prayer to live godly lives and trust his promise to be our strength and help.

Remember also that often people want to shift responsibility for their rejection of God onto us. They will say; 'if that is what Christians are like,

## 1 Thessalonians 2:1-13

I don't want any part of it.' We must try to live up to our own words and leave it to God to deal with those who 'will not listen.'

**Conclusion:** There is a price to pay for Christian service. Paul was prepared to pay it and so should we; after all, other people paid that price so that we could become believers.

Hard as it may be sometimes, there is also a consolation. Look at verse 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.'

Paul's reward for all his labours and sorrows was that people like the Thessalonians were now fellow believers and heir with him of the kingdom of God. That is our consolation too, if we are faithful to our calling to serve our saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord.