

The background of the slide is a photograph of a coastal town, likely Thessalonika, with a mix of traditional and modern buildings along the waterfront. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a hazy, overcast sky. The water in the foreground is dark and shows some white foam from a boat's wake.

# WEEK III

I THESSALONIANS 2

## DAY 1 - MONDAY

1 Thessalonians 2:1-4, 1 Thessalonians 1:5 & 1:9, Isaiah 55:11

**REFLECTION:** Have you ever felt like you've shared the gospel with someone and it was a failure? Can you think of a time that you shared the gospel with someone and it was a success?

How does the truth laid out in Isaiah 55:11 give you encouragement to share the gospel confidently, not worrying about the outcome?

Take a moment to pray for those people in whom you have invested, whether in a quiet, unnoticed way or in a public way. Pray for their growth and maturity in Christ.

### FAILURE OR SUCCESS?

Just prior to Paul's initial visit to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9), he was imprisoned for proclaiming the name of Jesus. Paul knew his visit to the Thessalonians was a risky one, yet he went anyway! This imprisonment likely made him speak the Word of God with more passion. He reminds them in 2:1 that this visit was not a failure, or in other words, "not in vain." The original Greek for this means "without purpose." How can Paul be so sure that it was not in vain? Because he likely knew the truth laid out in Isaiah 55:11, that anytime the Word of God is heard, it can bear fruit. Sometimes, as believers, we can think that our efforts seem to be in vain, but anytime we are faithful in sharing the gospel, it has the potential to bear fruit in our lives and the lives of others.

In Matt Smethurst's commentary on 1 Thessalonians he states this:

As Paul puts it in 1 Thess. 2:4, "We have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel." Entrusted. This gospel treasure is not ours. It did not originate with us. Our responsibility is simply to believe it, cherish it, apply it, guard it, and proclaim it. And Paul insists that this gospel stewardship must be accompanied by pure motives and open methods (1 Thess. 2:3-4).

God's word has been entrusted to us to share with others, but we must be sure that the motives of our hearts are pure as we share. We are not to use God's word as a weapon or to tear others down, but to build others up. When we share God's Word with pure motives, it will plant seeds that can later lead to fruit in the lives of those who hear.

## DAY 2 - TUESDAY

1 Thessalonians 2:1-7, Acts 17:1-9, Ephesians 5:1-2

**REFLECTION:** Why do you think we care more about defending ourselves than about defending the gospel message?

What would it look like if we began to see our purpose each day as living to reflect and share the news of Jesus?

### LEADING WITH PURPOSE

In chapter 2 of 1 Thessalonians, Paul reflects on his visit and his motives for sharing the gospel with the Thessalonians. Paul may have feared what impression his hurried departure with Silas and Timothy would have on the new and struggling Christians in Thessalonica.

Another reason Paul may have had for making his motives clear was to set them apart from other missionaries. Thessalonica was full of missionaries preaching messages about numerous other religions and trying to gain followers. Their common practice was not so much to gain followers as much to profit through financial gain. They would take as much as possible from their listeners, move on quickly to new areas, and try the same grift again.

Paul is trying to differentiate himself, but more importantly, the gospel. It's important to understand that Paul is writing less in defense of himself and more in defense of his gospel message. Michael W. Holmes writes, "Behind this concern over means and motives is Paul's obvious concern for the integrity of the message."

The purpose of Paul's work is not to gain, which is why he voluntarily forfeits any possible payments or donations the Thessalonians might have given him (v. 5-6), but to give the true message and freedom of Jesus. Paul works to prove not his integrity as much as the integrity of his message. Paul sees his purpose as living to reflect and share the news of Jesus, even if that means a cost to his reputation, his comfort, and his livelihood. What might it look like if we lead with this kind of purpose?

## DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY

1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, Galatians 5:13-14, 1 Corinthians 10:31-33, Luke 4:18-19

**REFLECTION:** How would you describe “walking in a way that God would consider worthy”? When sharing the gospel with those who are skeptical, how can you treat them with the loving care of a mother or father?

Pray that you would have the courage to exhibit the characteristics of Christ to those around you in a way that leads them to be curious about the Jesus you follow.

### USING OUR FREEDOM FOR GOOD

In 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, Paul writes about how he shared the gospel with these brothers and sisters, and lived life alongside them. He uses imagery of a loving mother and father to show what it looks like to genuinely care for those with whom we are trying to share the gospel. He encouraged them to “walk in a way that God would consider worthy.” Paul modeled this as he chose to lay down his rights to freedom for the sake of those he was trying to reach with the gospel.

Paul reiterates this to the churches in Galatia and in Corinth as he writes about using our freedom not for ourselves but in service to others. He’s most clear about this in 1 Corinthians 10 when he says, “I, too, try to please everyone in everything I do. I don’t just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved.”

Just as Jesus reminded us in Luke 4, we are called to “proclaim good news to the poor and bring liberty to the captives.” This kind of service to others might come at a cost to us. Jesus set the example for us throughout scripture of how we can lay down our rights to serve others, not mindlessly, but rather with divine purposes in mind.

N.T. Wright points out that:

Paul exhorted the Thessalonians like a sports coach telling his team how to win; he encouraged them like a friend strengthening someone facing a daunting task; he testified to them like a witness in a court of law. He lost no opportunity to explain to them that the living God wanted living human beings to reflect his glory, and that he had called them, summoned them, bidden them to this utterly demanding, but utterly rewarding, way of life. But he didn’t just use words, Paul was telling them all this by his own example.



## DAY 4 - THURSDAY

1 Thessalonians 2:13-20, Colossians 1:28-29

**REFLECTION:** Have you ever thought about the work of real ministry as living life in community with God's people? Why or why not?

Think of someone that you might need to be more intentional about sharing life with that you aren't already. How can you begin to do the real work of ministry with them? End your time of reflection by praying for them specifically today.

### THE WORK OF REAL MINISTRY

As chapter two begins to wrap up, we see Paul's heart pouring out. So much of 1 Thessalonians reads with a tone of warmth, gratitude, and genuine joy. Why is that? Why does Paul feel this way? Is it because he has found success? Is it because of influence and power? Is it because he may inherit some potential material gain from them following his message? No. The opposite is true.

As we have read, Paul received no earthly glory, wealth, or influence. He rejects any personal praise or feelings of pride for his missionary work. Why? Because for Paul, his definition of success is believers living for Jesus, not admiring or uplifting Paul's name.

Paul is living the work of real ministry. The work of real ministry is caring and being in community with those around us as we walk in step with Jesus. We see the gratitude and joy that Paul has towards the believers in Thessalonica. Paul genuinely cares about the gospel message of Jesus and how it is transforming the lives of the people in Thessalonica.

Paul is working to bring about real-life change. This is what we are called to do as well. We are called to genuinely care for God's people and walk with them in this life as we all strive to walk in step with Jesus. We need to be people that care about living life with people, not just our friends and family circle, but all people. The real work of ministry is both beautiful and messy, yet extremely rewarding. Genuinely caring for and being in community with others will bring us gratitude and joy just as it did for Paul.

## DAY 5 - FRIDAY

1 Thessalonians 2:13-16, Matthew 13:1-9, Jeremiah 4:3, Acts 13:44-52, Isaiah 40:8

**REFLECTION:** What benefits have you experienced in your own life by being in God's Word? How can you welcome the Word of God into your life more this week?

### WELCOMING THE WORD OVER THE WORLD

Paul's commendation of the Thessalonians is both instructive and encouraging. He commends them, first, for receiving and welcoming the preached word. This was the word that God had appointed Paul and the apostles to preach, that those who hear might believe, call on the name of the Lord, and be saved (Romans 10:8-17). Like the good soil in the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-9), the Thessalonians had warmly received the word (1Thessalonians 2:13). Not only this, but they received it for what it was: the very word of God. The word of men perishes and is often false. But the word of God gives no cause for doubt. It is a living and active word, discerning all things (Hebrews 4:12). It is unchanging and effective, an almighty word that does not return void (Isaiah 40:8, 55:11), bearing fruit in all who receive it.

Indeed, Paul notes how the received word has transformed the Thessalonians into imitators of God. Having welcomed the word, they became courageous even in the face of persecution, holding fast to the truth. Consider what a contrast is found in their persecutors; having rejected the word, they have become displeasing to God, hostile to everyone, and fill up their sins to the limit until wrath overtakes them. There is no middle ground; we are either hot or cold. There comes a time when we all must either receive the word of God, or reject it. For some, as for the church in Judea and for the Thessalonians, this time of decision was marked by overt persecution. From Adam in the garden, to Abraham at Ur, to you and me living with our modern amenities—we will all either receive or reject the word. At all times, this is the crux of every issue. If you find yourself dissatisfied with the voices of this world, good. We have been made for something far more enduring, far richer, far truer. If you are hungry for unchanging truth, for life-giving and heartening transformation, for light that pierces the darkness, for life that shatters the grave, good. Welcome the word of God, which works effectively and bears fruit in all who believe.

The word of God doesn't just help us deal with a fickle and fallen world. It didn't just help the Thessalonians endure persecution. It answers the world's rumbling folly with the resounding fruit of courage, joy, and thanksgiving.

By Caleb Faires - *He Reads Truth 1 & 2 Thessalonians Reading Plan*

## DAY 6 - SATURDAY

### *Reflection Day*

#### 1 Thessalonians 2

#### REFLECTION QUESTIONS & NOTES:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is one truth you learned this week that you want to share?
- Would you consider your life as being worthy of following? Why or why not? What might need to change?
- How can you begin to internalize and live out what you read and learned in this week's study?



## DAY 7 - SUNDAY

### *Rest Day*

*Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading that you missed. Use the extra space on this page to journal, write down questions, thoughts, or ideas.*