

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
Presbyterian Church

“THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL GOSPEL LABOR”

For individual study or group discussion

When Paul and Silas arrive in Thessalonica, they immediately face fierce opposition (cf. Acts 17:1–10). Their evangelism ends abruptly when a public riot breaks out. The charges brought against them are so severe, they are urged to slip away under the cover of night. Seizing the opportunity to undermine Paul’s ministry, his critics exploit his absence, spreading false accusations by attacking his character. In 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12, Paul defends his Gospel witness with confidence, pointing to his integrity and love, and outlining for his readers **the marks of faithful Gospel labor**.

Confidence to proclaim the Gospel even when opposed (vv. 1–2)

As eyewitnesses to his ministry, Paul compels the church at Thessalonica to call upon what they know to be true (vv. 1–2). As one commentator explains, “*You is emphatic. This opening shows Paul’s confidence in his converts, and it also directs their attention to facts within their own knowledge that would refute the accusations of Paul’s opponents.*”¹ Undeterred by the persecution they encounter in Philippi (v. 2), Paul and Silas proclaim the Gospel with boldness in Thessalonica.

- Paul recalls another occasion where both he and Silas are oppressed for the sake of the Gospel (v. 2). Luke records the account in Acts 16:16–40. What happens in Philippi? How are Paul and Silas treated there? How do these hardships embolden them?
- Read Luke 8:36–39 and John 8:48–59; 10:31–39. What are the similarities between Jesus’ treatment at the hands of religious authorities with those of Paul and Silas? Why should persecution embolden us? (cf. 1 Peter 4:12–14)

Integrity of motives before God and others (vv. 3–6)

Paul defends the integrity of his motives by contrasting himself with those who seek to deceive. He reminds the Thessalonians that his appeal did not spring from error or impurity, nor is it an attempt to trick them (v. 3). Rather, he and his companions speak as those approved by God and entrusted with the Gospel. Paul emphasizes that they did not seek to please people but God, “*who tests our hearts*” (v. 4). He also notes that he never uses flattery, nor does he wear a mask to cover greed (v. 5). Instead, his life is an open book before others and God.

- If Paul’s intent was to gain a comfortable life, he would have ended his ministry after suffering persecution in Philippi (v. 2). Read Philippians 1:12–17. What fruit came from his imprisonment in Philippi? What are the marks of a false teacher?
- What does Paul mean to be “*approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel*” (v. 4)? Read 2 Timothy 2:15. How should this truth shape the way we speak and act in ministry?

Love that gently and firmly gives itself away (vv. 7–12)

Paul shifts his imagery from a steward to a nurturing parent, describing himself as “*gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children*” (v. 7). His ministry is deeply affectionate and personal. He and his team share not only the Gospel but their very lives (v. 8). Their love is marked by hard work and personal sacrifice so as not to be a financial burden to anyone (v. 9). Paul also likens himself to a father, exhorting, encouraging, and charging each believer to walk in a manner worthy of God (vv. 11–12). His love is not indulgent or soft on truth. Combining tenderness with firm exhortation, his aim is to see believers grow in holiness and steadfastness.

- Why do you think Paul chose family metaphors to describe his ministry? What do these images teach us about discipleship?
- Of these three marks—bold confidence, pure motives, and sacrificial love—which do you most need to grow in right now, and what would it look like for you to take one practical step toward that growth this week?

DATE: August 17, 2025

SPEAKER: Brian/Frank

SERIES: 1 Thessalonians

PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12

Family Dinner Table

Here I Stand

In 1 Thessalonians 2:2, Paul testifies of having “*boldness in our God to declare to you the Gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.*” That same God-given boldness echoes through history in moments when the truth of the Gospel is under fire. One such moment came in 1521 at the Diet of Worms when Martin Luther, “*a simple monk, a miner’s son, with nothing to sustain him save his own faith in the Word of God*”² stood before powerful rulers and church authorities who demanded he recant his writings and teaching on the Gospel. With his life and future at stake, Luther refused to deny the truth he had come to see in God’s Word. His reply still rings with courage: “*Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise.*”³ That bold stand, rooted in faith and conviction, became a spark that flamed into the Protestant Reformation—transforming the spiritual landscape of Europe. Just as Paul faced conflict in Thessalonica, Luther’s courage reminds us that Gospel boldness isn’t the absence of opposition—it’s trusting God enough to speak truth despite it.

- When have you faced a situation where speaking the truth of the Gospel required courage in the face of opposition? How did trusting God shape your response? Read Isaiah 55:11. Why is preaching the Gospel to others never in vain?

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

Metanoia Prison Ministries,
strategic partner ministry

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Norma A., *supported missionary partner serving in Spain*

¹ Morris, Leon. *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. 1984. Grand Rapids. Wm Eerdmans Publishing. 50
²⁻³ Bainton, Roland. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. 1950. NY. Abingdon-Cokesbury Press. 181, 185