



**Sunday School Lesson**  
**1 Thess. 2:1-16**  
 by Lorin L. Cranford  
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**Ministry in Thessalonica**



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In this second of five Bible studies on 1 Thessalonians in the Smyth-Helwys Formations series, the study focuses on the apostle Paul's autobiographical recounting of his initial ministry in the city of Thessalonica located in the Roman province of Macedonia. This autobiographical material extends from 2:1 through 3:13. Our study is on the first part in [2:1-16](#). This text will stand with Luke's account of this episode in [Acts 17:1-9](#). Additionally, the extended letter [Proem](#) in 1:2-10 contains elements that signal this discussion in chapters two and three, and therefore should be given some consideration. The establishment of the Christian community there came about during the second missionary journey of the apostle who was accompanied by Silas and Timothy. The church was established around [AD 49-50](#). Within a few months after leaving Thessalonica, this first letter was written to the church while Paul was in the province of Achaia in southern Greece.



**I. Context**

In the instance of our scripture text, both the historical and literary context of the passage will play a very important role in gaining detailed understanding of the ideas in the text.

**a. Historical**

The **external history** of 1 Thessalonians is rather clear and easy to determine. Luke's account flows as follows: When Paul and Silas left Antioch at

the outset of the second missionary journey, they revisited the churches which Paul and Barnabas had established in the Roman province of Galatian on the first missionary journey ([Acts 16:1-5](#)). Eventu-

ally they ended up at Troas in the northwestern section of the Roman province of Asia. They had originally planned to go to Ephesus in the middle western coastal region of Asia, but the Holy Spirit didn't allow them to do so. In Troas, Paul had his Macadonian vision ([Acts 16:6-9](#)) and they consequently crossed the Aegean Sea over into Macedonia, spending time first at Philippi ([Acts 16:10-40](#)). Passing through a couple of towns, Amphipolis and Apollonia, they arrived at Thessalonica ([Acts 17:1-9](#)). The Jewish synagogue was the first place for preaching the gospel message but many of the Jews did not accept this message and created a furor that

resulted in the arrest of a Jason and some other believers. Paul, Silas, and Timothy had to escape during the night before being arrested themselves. From Thessalonica, they went to Berea where they found a much more receptive audience for the gospel ([Acts 17:10-15](#)). The Jewish leaders from

Thessalonica who had so vigorously opposed Paul came to Berea to cause trouble there as well. Paul was whisked out of town quickly and went to Athens, but Silas and Timothy remained in Berea ([Acts 17:14-15](#)). After a period of ministry in Athens, Paul moved on to Corinth where Timothy and Silas joined him from Macedonia ([Acts 18:1-5](#)).

Luke provides a rather brief summation of this period. This summation would work easily with Paul's depiction, except for a couple of references in [1 Thess. 3](#). In verses 1-2 Paul says that he sent Timothy from Athens to Thessalonica to help them, and then in verse 6 he mentions that Timothy has just rejoined him. Timothy's arrival -- presumably in Corinth -- from Thessalonica provides the grounds for the writing of the letter called 1 Thessalonians. The challenge here between Paul's account and Luke's is not regarding the movement of Paul. Rather it relates to the activity of Timothy. The assumptions that underlie bringing these two accounts together force a scenario as follows: 1) Timothy is left behind at Berea with Silas; 2) Timothy rejoins Paul in Athens; 3) Timothy returns to Macedonia; 4) Timothy and Silas rejoin Paul at Corinth.

With a distance by boat between Macedonia and

Achaia on the Aegean Sea of about 300 to 400 miles, most ships could have made such a trip in less than a week's time, given favorable winds. Luke doesn't explicitly mention time intervals -- nor does Paul -- but both texts suggest that Paul arrived in Corinth about a year after his departure from Berea after having spent perhaps a month or so in Athens.

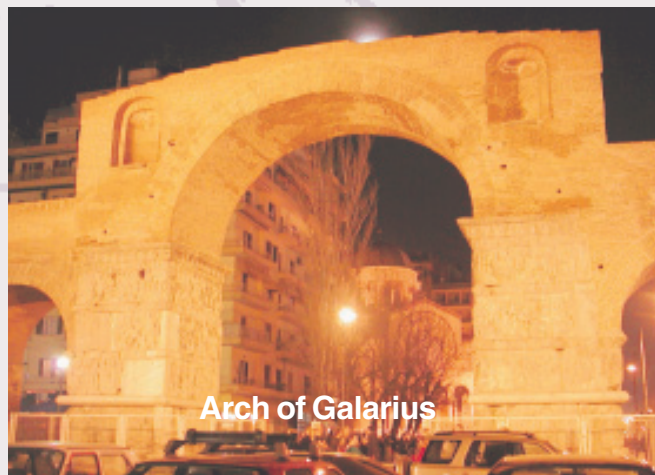
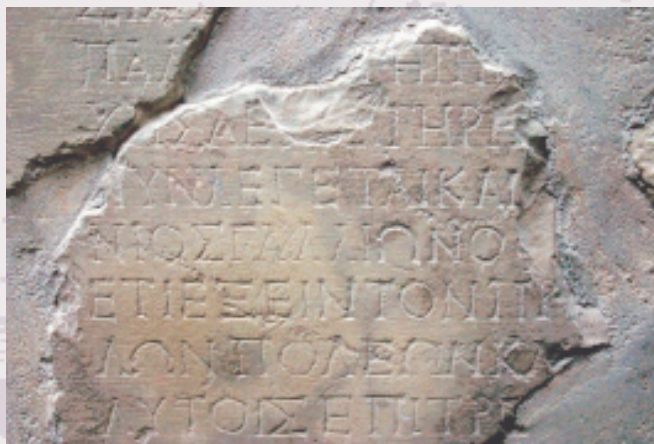
During that period of ministry in Corinth, which Luke describes as a **eighteen months** (ἐκάθισεν δὲ ἐνιαυτὸν καὶ μῆνας; [Acts 18:11](#)), both letters to the believers in Thessalonica were written. At the end of his Corinthian stay, trouble for the Christian community there resulted in some Christians being

brought before the proconsul L. Junnius Gallio, whose governmental leadership over that area can be dated from Jan. 25, 51 to Jan. 25, 52 using Roman records (see the [Gallio Inscription](#)). Depending on when this incident took place during Gallio's rule, -- early or late 52 -- this would place the writing of 1

Thessalonians sometime in AD 50.

The ancient city of Thessalonica is important to understand, particularly in regard to the **Internal History**. Robert Mounce offers this summation in the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*:

Chief city of Macedonia and the seat of Roman administration in the century before Christ. In addition to a magnificent harbor Thessalonica had the good fortune of being located on the overland route from Italy to the East. This famous highway, called the Egnatian Way, ran directly through the city. Two Roman arches, the Vardar Gate and the Arch of Galerius, marked the western and eastern boundaries.



Arch of Galerius

According to Strabo, a famous Greek geographer, Thessalonica was founded in 315 B.C. by the Macedonian general Cassander, who named it after his wife, the daughter of Philip and stepsister of Alexander the Great. It was settled by refugees from a large number of towns in the same region which had been destroyed in war. When Macedonia was divided into four districts (167 B.C.), Thessalonica was made the capital of the second division. Its influence continued to expand when the area became a Roman province. In the second civil war between Caesar and Pompey (42 B.C.) Thessalonica remained loyal to Anthony and Octavian and was rewarded by receiving the status of a free city. This gift of autonomy allowed the city to appoint its own magistrates, who were given the unusual title of politarchs. The historical accuracy of Luke is seen in the fact that while the term politarch does not appear in earlier Greek literature it is used in Acts 17:6, 8 and has been found on an inscription on the Vardar Gate and in other inscriptions from the area. At the beginning of the 1st century Thessalonica had a council of five politarchs. Cicero, a Roman statesman who lived shortly before the time of Christ, spent seven months in exile at Thessalonica.

The church at Thessalonica was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-4). At Troas the apostle had been directed in a vision to cross over the Aegean Sea to Macedonia. After ministering at Philippi, where he was beaten and jailed, Paul's Roman citizenship secured his release and he traveled on to Thessalonica. On the Sabbath Paul went into the synagogue and reasoned with his Jewish brethren that Jesus was the Christ. Some were persuaded along with a number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women (Acts 17:4).

Paul's success stirred the jealousy of the Jews, who gathered some rabble from the marketplace and started a riot. They rushed the house of Jason where Paul was staying, but when they were unable to find the apostle, they dragged his host and some other brethren before the city officials. They claimed that Paul was guilty of defying Caesar's decrees because he taught another king called Jesus. That very night Paul slipped out of town and made his way to Berea (Acts 17:5-10). The hostility of the Thessalonian Jews toward Paul is seen in the fact that when they learned that he was preaching at Berea they followed him there and stirred up the crowds against him (Acts 17:13).

Our basic knowledge of the church at Thessalonica comes from two letters by Paul from Corinth at a slightly later date. These early letters of the apostle supply an important insight into the life of a 1st-cen-

tury Macedonian congregation which was primarily gentile. Paul probably passed through Thessalonica on at least two other occasions (coming and going from Greece on his third journey). In the centuries that followed, the city remained as one of the major strongholds of Christianity. It won the epithet, "The Orthodox City."

### b. Literary

The literary genre of 1 Thessalonians is that of an ancient letter. In the New Testament, these documents are occasional writings. That is, the writing of them was brought about by some particular occasion either in the circumstance of the sender (Superscriptio), or more often by some situation present in the life of those to whom the letter was sent (Adscriptio). Understanding what prompted the sending of the letter is essential to proper interpretation of the contents of the letter. Often the first two

segments of a letter -- the Praescriptio and the Proem -- will signal what that was. This is especially true in the letters of Paul, and can be detected not in the standard

elements of these sections, but rather in the expansions of these core elements. The Praescriptio of 1 Thessalonians (1:1) doesn't provide much help, since it is the shortest one of all Paul's letters and contains only core elements: "Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace." The Proem (1:2-10) does provide important help:

**2 We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers,** constantly 3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake.

6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. 9 For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to

**2:1-16 is Paul's elaboration of the expansion elements in the letter Proem in 1:4-7 especially.**

God from idols, to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

The expansion elements (vv. 2b-10; non-bold print) paint a picture of a growing, vibrant Christian community. This community grew out of a Spirit-filled preaching of the gospel by Paul in the beginning (vv. 4-5). It took place in the midst of persecution, but the rapid spiritual growth of the Thessalonians believers became a model for other believers all over ancient Greece and elsewhere (vv. 6-10). These elements touch on at least two themes that will be developed in greater detail in the body of the letter: 1) the beginning of the community under Paul's leadership, and 2) their awaiting the Lord's return. Our passage in 2:1-16 becomes the detailed elaboration of the first theme on the beginning of the Christian community there.

2:1-16 is the first pericope of the Body of the letter, and in literary **sub-genre** form it is an autobiographical narrative. Paul recounts in greater detail his experience of preaching the gospel initially at Thessalonica. His depiction of this period of time will

differ considerably from Luke's in Acts [17:1 -18:18](#). Luke stresses certain events that highlight his own purposes which are more historically oriented. Paul, on the other hand, will place major emphasis on the



religious or theological side of these events, particularly as they relate to the Thessalonian believers. He is mostly concerned to encourage the believers there. Luke has a different goal and this period of Paul's ministry is but one segment of a lengthy ministry by the apostle. One needs to remember this when studying the two sources in tandem with each other.

In terms of **literary setting**, the passage is the first element of the letter body, as well as being the first segment of a longer autobiographical section in 2:1-3:13. Together this longer section supplies the Thessalonians believers with a "newsletter" of the events that had taken place in his ministry from his initial visit there to the writing of this letter, about a year or so later.

## II. Message

The internal **literary structure** of 2:1-16 is somewhat challenging to determine, largely because of somewhat rambling style of writing in the Greek text. But the [Semantic Diagram](#), based on the [Block Diagram](#), produces a reasonably clear understanding of the thought flow, as is reflected in the [Exegetical Outline](#). See the larger internet version of this study posted at Cranfordville for these sections. The core structure revolves around the way Paul preached the gospel to the Thessalonians in his initial ministry there (vv. 1-12) and the unceasing thanksgiving he possessed for the genuineness of their acceptance of that gospel message (vv. 13-16).

### a. Preaching the Gospel, vv. 1-12

#### Greek NT

<sup>2:1</sup> Αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε, ἀδελφοί, τὴν εἴσοδον ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὅτι οὐ κενὴ γέγονεν, <sup>2:2</sup> ἀλλὰ προπαθόντες καὶ ὑβρισθέντες, καθὼς οἶδατε, ἐν Φιλίπποις ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν λαλῆσαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι. <sup>2:3</sup> ἢ γὰρ παράκλησις ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐκ πλάνης οὐδὲ ἐξ ἀκαθαρσίας οὐδὲ ἐν δόλῳ, <sup>2:4</sup> ἀλλὰ καθὼς

#### NASB

<sup>2:1</sup> FOR you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, <sup>2:2</sup> but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. <sup>2:3</sup> For our exhortation does not *come* from error or impurity or by way of deceit; <sup>2:4</sup> but just as

#### NRSV

<sup>2:1</sup> You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, <sup>2:2</sup> but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. <sup>2:3</sup> For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, <sup>2:4</sup> but just as

#### NLT

<sup>2:1</sup> You yourselves know, dear brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not a failure. <sup>2:2</sup> You know how badly we had been treated at Philippi just before we came to you and how much we suffered there. Yet our God gave us the courage to declare his Good News to you boldly, even though we were surrounded by many who opposed us. <sup>2:3</sup> So you can see that we were not preaching with any deceit or impure purposes or

δεδοκιμάσμεθα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πιστευθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, οὕτως λαλοῦμεν, οὐχ ὡς ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκοντες ἀλλὰ θεῷ τῷ δοκιμάζοντι τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν. <sup>2:5</sup> οὔτε γάρ ποτε ἐν λόγῳ κολακείας ἐγενήθημεν, καθὼς οἴδατε, οὔτε ἐν προφάσει πλεονεξίας, θεὸς μάρτυς, <sup>2:6</sup> οὔτε ζητοῦντες ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξαν οὔτε ἀφ' ὑμῶν οὔτε ἀπ' ἄλλων, <sup>2:7</sup> δυνάμενοι ἐν βάρει εἶναι ὡς Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι. ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν, ὡς ἐὰν τροφὸς θάλπη τὰ ἐαυτῆς τέκνα, <sup>2:8</sup> οὕτως ὁμειρόμενοι ὑμῶν εὐδοκοῦμεν μεταδοῦναι ὑμῖν οὐ μόνον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ἐαυτῶν ψυχάς, διότι ἀγαπητοὶ ἡμῖν ἐγενήθητε. <sup>2:9</sup> μνημονεύετε γάρ, ἀδελφοί, τὸν κόπον ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν μόχθον· νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ἐργαζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαι τινα ὑμῶν ἐκηρύξαμεν εἰς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ. <sup>2:10</sup> ὑμεῖς μάρτυρες καὶ ὁ θεός, ὡς ὁσίως καὶ δικαίως καὶ ἀμέμπτως ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐγενήθημεν, <sup>2:11</sup> καθάπερ οἴδατε, ὡς ἕνα ἕκαστον ὑμῶν ὡς πατὴρ τέκνα ἐαυτοῦ <sup>2:12</sup> παρακαλοῦντες ὑμᾶς καὶ παραμυθούμενοι καὶ μαρτυρόμενοι εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐαυτοῦ βασιλείαν καὶ δόξαν.

we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts. <sup>2:5</sup> For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed -- God is witness -- <sup>2:6</sup> nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. <sup>2:7</sup> But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children. <sup>2:8</sup> Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-leased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. <sup>2:9</sup> For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. <sup>2:10</sup> You are witnesses, and *so is* God, *how* devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; <sup>2:11</sup> just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children, <sup>2:12</sup> so that you may walk in a manner worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. <sup>2:5</sup> As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; <sup>2:6</sup> nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, <sup>2:7</sup> though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. <sup>2:8</sup> So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us. <sup>2:9</sup> You remember our labor and toil, brothers and sisters; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. <sup>2:10</sup> You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers. <sup>2:11</sup> As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, <sup>2:12</sup> urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

trickery.

<sup>2:4</sup>For we speak as messengers who have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to please God, not people. He is the one who examines the motives of our hearts. <sup>2:5</sup>Never once did we try to win you with flattery, as you very well know. And God is our witness that we were not just pretending to be your friends so you would give us money! <sup>2:6</sup>As for praise, we have never asked for it from you or anyone else. <sup>2:7</sup>As apostles of Christ we certainly had a right to make some demands of you, but we were as gentle among you as a mother feeding and caring for her own children. <sup>2:8</sup>We loved you so much that we gave you not only God's Good News but our own lives, too. <sup>2:9</sup>Don't you remember, dear brothers and sisters, how hard we worked among you? Night and day we toiled to earn a living so that our expenses would not be a burden to anyone there as we preached God's Good News among you <sup>2:10</sup>You yourselves are our witnesses -- and so is God -- that we were pure and honest and faultless toward all of you believers. <sup>2:11</sup>And you know that we treated each of you as a father treats his own children. <sup>2:12</sup>We pleaded with you, encouraged you, and urged you to live your lives in a way that God would consider worthy. For he called you into his Kingdom to share his glory.

## Notes:

Paul begins by recounting the way that he had preached the gospel to the Thessalonians in his initial ministry at Thessalonica. His emphasis zeroes in on two aspects: 1) the conscious effort to avoid a pattern of ministry that could have been understood like the itinerant philosophers as false and self-seeking (vv. 1-7) and 2) a unselfish sharing of himself in hard work while in Thessalonica (vv. 8-12).

Paul begins on the positive note that his initial ministry there “has not been not in vain” (οὐ κενὴ γέγονεν). That is, he is convinced that genuine work took place in that beginning ministry and that this valuable ministry has continued to produce positive things. Thus the positive tone about the church that first surfaced in the Proem (1:2-10) now resurfaces in this first section of the body of the letter. Paul is convinced that God began something good in Thessalonica and that it has continued to prosper.

The details of Paul’s defense of his style of ministry while at Thessalonica raises the question of whether something is in the background causing the apostle to feel the need for this detailing of his ministry. Some are convinced that criticism of his ministry has erupted from inside the church possibly from Jewish members or from Gentile members who have cast doubt on the sincerity of Paul’s motivation. Although this scenario can’t be ruled out completely, the remainder of the letter in its positive tone argues strongly against such an understanding. A much more likely situation is that the apostle is distancing himself from the typical fashion of traveling philosophers, such as the Sophists, who came into town, set up shop touting the superiority of their interpretation of how life works (i.e., their philosophy), and squeezed as much money from listeners as possible before moving on to the next town. Because Christian missionaries and these itinerant philosophers would have looked virtually identical to the Thessalonians, Paul felt the need to remind the church members about the very different style of his preaching of the gospel.

In recalling that initial ministry in the late 40s, Paul notes that great opposition was expressed against him there ( ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι). Luke, in his account,



highlighted this aspect ([Acts 17:1-9](#)):

1 After Paul and Silas had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This is the Messiah, Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you.” 4 Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. 5 But the Jews became jealous, and with the help of some ruffians in the marketplaces they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar. While they were searching for Paul and Silas to bring them out to the assembly, they attacked Jason’s house. 6 When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some believers before the city authorities, shouting, “These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also, 7 and Jason has entertained them as guests. They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus.” 8 The people

and the city officials were disturbed when they heard this, 9 and after they had taken bail from Jason and the others, they let them go.

Paul doesn’t, however, dwell on this opposition to him and Silas.

He does allude to his

“shameful treatment in Philippi” (προπαθόντες καὶ ὑβρισθέντες) just prior to coming there. Luke gives a much more detailed picture of this in [Acts 16:16-40](#). Paul had experienced opposition almost everywhere he preached in gospel, and, even by this point in the second missionary journey, he was accustomed to such. Although such attempts to silence him did have discouraging effects on him, “our God gave us the courage to declare his Good News to you boldly” (NLT).

The basis of this declaration is set forth in vv. 3-7 with two contrastive assertions. 1) “Our admonition was not...but we thusly spoke” (vv. 3-4a); 2) “We did not become flatterers...but we became nursing mothers” (vv. 4b-7). See the [Block Diagram](#) (statements 3-4 and 5-6) for a clear expression of this rhetorical structure, as well as the [Semantic Diagram](#).

In the first assertion, the initial negative disclaimer contains three disavowals: our admonition did not stem from a) deception (οὐκ ἐκ πλάνης); b) impure motives (οὐδὲ ἐξ ἀκαθαρσίας); nor c) deceit (οὐδὲ ἐν δόλῳ). These three disclaimers are effectively summarized by G.L. Green (*Pillar NT Commentary*):

**Paul’s depiction of his initial ministry in Thessalonica wasn’t driven by criticism of his ministry style. Rather, it came from a desire to protect the Gospel from identification with phoney Greek philosophical teaching advocated by itinerant philosophers.**

Paul declares that in their evangelistic campaign in the city both their motives and their methods were pure. Their proclamation did *not spring from error*, which means that the doctrine they preached was not false but true. This was the “gospel of God” (v. 2), the message that God communicated (v. 13), and as such it was not false teaching but true (Col. 1.5; 1 John 4.6). The teachers of error assailed many of the early churches (Eph. 4.14; Col. 2.8; 1 John 2.26; 3.7; 4.6; 2 Tim. 3.13; 2 Pet. 2.18; 3.17), just as numerous philosophers of those days were accused of teaching error.<sup>22</sup> Paul and his companions were not like those whose motivation was to corrupt the minds of the hearers with false or heterodox ideas. Moreover, they were not driven by *impure motives (akatharsias)*. Although this word may refer to ceremonial impurity, the sense here is moral. In the vast majority of the NT texts where it appears, it denotes “sexual impurity” (Rom. 1.24; 2 Cor. 12.21; Gal. 5.19; Eph. 5.13; Col. 3.5; and 1 Thess. 4.7). Some commentators believe that Paul uses the word in this way, distancing himself and his associates from the various cults in Thessalonica that gave place to and even promoted sexual license. But what element in the immediate context would lead the Thessalonians to believe that this is what Paul had in mind? The word had a broader range of meaning and could simply refer to any kind of moral impurity (Rom. 6.19; Eph. 4.19), and it is precisely this wider sense that is found in Dio Chrysostom when he speaks of the type of purity of mind that the true philosopher should possess.<sup>25</sup> No impure motive brought these gospel messengers to town, whether it were greed or glory (vv. 5–6). Finally, the author reminds the Thessalonians that not only

their motives but also their methods were upright: *nor are we trying to trick you*. They did not deceive the Thessalonians by using the bait of rhetorical tricks (cf. 1 Cor. 2.4) in order to gain disciples for their cause.

These negative disclaimers are contrasted by the claim that Paul spoke not to please men but to please the God “who tests our hearts” (τῷ δοκιμάζοντι τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν). Consistently from Paul’s beginning ministry he had consciously avoided saying what people wanted to hear. Rather, he was driven by the real-

ization that he was accountable to God for what he preached -- and that was the only thing that mattered. He first asserted this even stronger to the Galatians in his letter to them, written during this same period of time (1:10): “Am I now seeking human approval, or God’s approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

The second set of contrastive declarations (vv.5-7) parallels the first set, while moving the negative/positive ideas a step further in thought expression.

With the negative side Paul emphatically denies that he came to them falsely. Three modes of possible operation are strongly denied: a) not “with words of flattery” (οὔτε ποτε ἐν λόγῳ κολακείας); b) not “with a pretext for greed” (οὔτε ἐν προφάσει πλεονεξίας); and c) not seeking “praise from mortals, whether from you or from others” (οὔτε ζητοῦντες ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξαν οὔτε ἀφ’ ὑμῶν οὔτε ἀπ’ ἄλλων). With one concessive statement, Paul does indicate that he could have made a legitimate demands on the Thessalonians as an apostle (δυνάμενοι ἐν βάρει εἶναι ὡς Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι).

The positive alternative in this second set is “But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children” (ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν, ὡς ἐὰν τροφὸς θάλπη τὰ ἑαυτῆς τέκνα).

In the early centuries of copying this text, scribes sometimes were not sure about the adjective translated as “gentle.” Ancient texts had no punctuation marks, nor spaces between words. The spelling of

the verb and the adjective created problems in copying. Two patterns of spelling surfaced as alternatives. Let me illustrate their problem:

ΕΓΕΝΗΘΗΜΕΝ  
*NHHTIOI* or (egenthem*n*  
*nepioi*) ΕΓΕΝΗΘΕΝ  
*HHTIOI* (egenthem*n*  
*epioi*). The adding or dropping of one letter “N” between the words shifts the meaning. To add it makes the text read: “We became gentle....” But to drop it makes the text

read: “We became infants...” Although several early important manuscripts contain the second reading where the “N” is dropped, the first reading with the second “N” is has even stronger support, and is to

### Two Characterizations of Ministry

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>1. Bold preaching of the Gospel in the face of hardships.</b></p> | <p><b>2. Sharing of self along with the Gospel.</b></p> |
|---|---|

#### Foundations for Ministry

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>a. <i>Admonitions not deceptive for human gain, but focused on pleasing God.</i></p> <p>b. <i>Minister not driven for personal gain, but for gentle nourishment of his spiritual children.</i></p> | <p>a. Sharing of Gospel and self in hardship driven by integrity and sincere motive to protect the Gospel from misleading associations.</p> <p>b. Built on premise of preacher’s lifestyle supporting his Gospel preaching.</p> |
|---|---|

be preferred. Also a second technical note: In my reading of the text, I understand the comparison to a nursing mother to be grammatically linked to the preceding main clause “we became gentle.” A wide range of viewpoints regarding what the comparison belongs to can be found among modern printed Greek texts and different translations. The main alternative is to use the comparison to introduce the following sentence: “[Like nursing mothers we so cared to speak...](#)” A variety of reasons favor the former reading of the text.

Paul compared his gentleness to the believing community to a nursing mother’s tender care of her infant. To be sure, the term for “nursing mother” doesn’t always indicate the birth mother, since “wet nurses” were commonly used to provide nourishment to new born babies in the ancient world, pri-

**Paul’s financial support as a missionary came from two sources: 1) his own manual labor as a tentmaker, and 2) the generous help from churches already established by the apostle, such as the one at Philippi. He did not take support from his converts during his church planting activities.**

marily in aristocratic levels of society. Paul’s point is the same in either instance. While he was being treated violently by the synagogue community at Thessalonica, his approach to the newly formed believing community was gentleness and loving care. This takes on particular significance in light of Luke’s description of the violent treatment given some of these new Christians, a Jason in particular, by the authorities ([Acts 17:5-9](#)).

The second subsection, vv. 9-12, extends the theme of the first subset. The rhetorical structure here takes the form of a declaration, v. 8a, with a lengthy justification first at a secondary level (v. 8b, “because..”) and then a threefold justification at a primary level (“for...”) in verses 9-12. For a clear representation of this structure see the [Semantic Diagram](#) in the internet version of this study.

The header declaration is “[So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves.](#)” Paul asserts that he grew to deeply care for the Thessalonians. The Greek verb expression indicates that this determination to share grew out of a yearning for the Thessalonians that began in his initial ministry but that has continued to the time when he was composing this letter to them many months later. Undoubtedly the news that Timothy brought to the apostle, first in

Athens, and now from a second trip from Thessalonica to Corinth, had deepened that desire to go to Thessalonica to be with the believers there. Circumstances prevented that at the moment. Paul would next see them a few years later on the third missionary journey. Thus, the letter came as the next best thing to a personal visit.

His deep care -- actually that of Paul, Timothy and Silas; note the “we” verb form -- for them led him to share himself with the believers, rather than just preach to them. The initially expressed reason is that the Thessalonians had become beloved people to them (“to us”): *διότι ἀγαπητοὶ ἡμῖν ἐγενήθητε*. The larger basis for his assertion of sharing himself with the believers is seen in vv. 9-12 with a threefold declaration about how he had conducted himself while he was with them in that initial ministry.

These center around Paul’s pattern of working with his hands perhaps as a tentmaker in order to earn enough money to live on while preaching the gospel. This did not prevent him from receiving support from other churches, but usually that

wasn’t enough to provide for all his needs. But this support came to Paul after he had left that place to go to the next town, not while he was there establishing a church. In fact, some support from Philippi came while Paul was in Thessalonica ([Phil. 4:15-16](#)): “[15 You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone. 16 For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs more than once.](#)”

This “bivocational” approach to ministry made Paul’s ministry much harder (“[our labor and toil](#)”; “[we worked night and day](#)”), but it enabled the apostle to avoid tainting the preaching of the gospel as a sophist kind of money grabbing scheme. The two terms in verse 9 for this manual labor, “[our labor and toil](#)” (τὸν κόπον ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν μόχθον), stress a physically exhausting level of work. Using Jewish temple sacrificial language, Paul asserted “[how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers](#)” (ὡς ὀσίως καὶ δικαίως καὶ ἀμέμπτως ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐγενήθημεν). Then he shifts the image from the earlier nursing mother to that of a father pushing and urging his children to achieve their very best. The goal of Paul’s urging of the Thessalonians in his gospel preaching was “[that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory](#)” (εἰς τὸ



περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βασιλείαν καὶ δόξαν). For the apostle, the Thessalonian believers could see how to live that way, only if someone modeled that integrity before them. This Paul attempted to do in his ministry.

What is the connection of all this to us today? The links are many! At the heart of them is how we do ministry, especially as Christian leaders. By looking at both Luke's account in Acts along with Paul's here, we see a picture of a tough ministry done with great sacrifice. Paul preached the gospel at Thessalonica in an atmosphere of exploding hostility stemming mostly from the Jewish synagogue leadership. It erupted beyond the synagogue into the town itself when "the Jews became jealous, and with the help of some ruffians in the marketplaces they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar." (Acts 17:5). This ultimately forced Paul to have to hurriedly leave for his own safety.

We seldom, if ever, have to live our Christian life under such hostile conditions. Sometimes we American Christians face opposition to establishing a new church in certain neighborhoods that don't want new churches built in their addition. But rarely does it ever go much beyond this. To be sure, in other parts of the world, the situation is vastly different and much like what Paul encountered. Paul didn't flinch in the face of hostility to preaching the gospel. Neither should we. Secondly, this opposition didn't sour his attitude toward the new Christians that came out of that preaching. It easily could have, but Paul moved in the exact opposite direction. He became like a "nursing mother" in gentleness to them, and also like a "urging father" to them in order to help them achieve their best in their newly found Christian faith. These are worthy models for us to follow.

Another aspect of the toughness of Paul's ministry there was having to split his time between manual labor and preaching the gospel. This meant working long hours, usually from sunup to sundown, every day and then preaching the gospel on Friday evenings in the synagogue at first, and then in private homes of believers such as Jason's in the evenings. He deeply appreciated the support that came from other churches, as he reflected to the Philippian church in his letter to them many years later (Phil 4:15-16). But this did not provide "full time" support. Sometimes when we feel like we "are supposed to be at the church night and day" we could pause and remember Paul's example here. He willingly sacrificed his time and energy to serve God. To be

**Paul's style of ministry challenges Christians today to examine seriously how we approach ministry in terms of 1) our integrity in ministry, 2) our motivation for sharing the Gospel, 3) our willingness to sacrifice personally for the Gospel, 4) our goals in winning converts to Christ, 5) the consistency of our living with our ministry, 6) our willingness to face hostility in ministry, just to name a few of the ways.**

sure, that sacrificial sharing of himself was not motivated by the feeling of "earning his way" before God with deeds of Christian work. This is the motivation I've seen from excessively busy church people over the years. For Paul, he loved what he was doing and gave himself out of sincere love for Christ and for the people to whom he was ministering. There's a world of difference between the two motivations!

On the character of Paul's ministry model, one central theme stands out in repeated emphasis: genuineness. In our day of money-grubbing TV preachers who live as millionaires off TV, Paul's sincerity and simple life-style shine brightly. He sought to be transparent with the Thessalonians about who he was and what he stood for. His assumption was, to use an old cliché, if you're going to be taken seriously you're going to "have to walk the walk when you talk the talk." What you say in witness to the gospel has credibility only when it is matched by how you live the gospel. Paul knew that and followed that principle. We should do no less.

The goal of Paul's preaching of the gospel was not simply to count large numbers of conversions. As his mother / father imagery suggests, he was concerned not merely with "birthing" Christians, but with "nourishing" Christians. The big picture was to help them live a life worthy of the God who had taken them into His own family. If we focus in contemporary church life only on baptisms, we miss the boat and fail to take seriously Paul's example here. Baptisms, as symbols of conversions, are the necessary starting point for the Christian life. And thus are important. But Christianity is a life lived, not just an experience experienced one time. The quality of living is high and very demanding. Paul's ministry was shaped by this understanding. Ours should be as well.

## b. Accepting the Gospel, vv. 13-16

### Greek NT

<sup>2:13</sup> Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ ἀδιαλείπτως, ὅτι παραλαβόντες λόγον ἀκοῆς παρ' ἡμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐδέξασθε οὐ λόγον ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ καθὼς ἐστὶν ἀληθῶς λόγον θεοῦ, ὃς καὶ ἐνεργεῖται ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν. <sup>2:14</sup> Ὑμεῖς γὰρ μιμηταὶ ἐγενήθητε, ἀδελφοί, τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν οὐσῶν ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὅτι τὰ αὐτὰ ἐπάθετε καὶ ὑμεῖς ὑπὸ τῶν ἰδίῶν συμφυλετῶν καθὼς καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, <sup>2:15</sup> τῶν καὶ τὸν κύριον ἀποκτεινάντων Ἰησοῦν καὶ τοὺς προφήτας καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐκδιωξάντων καὶ θεῷ μὴ ἀρεσκόντων καὶ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἐναντίων, <sup>2:16</sup> καλλύνοντων ἡμᾶς τοῖς ἔθνεσιν λαλῆσαι ἵνα σωθῶσιν, εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας πάντοτε. ἔφθασεν δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ εἰς τέλος.

### Notes:

In this section of the passage, Paul turns the spotlight on how the Thessalonians believers had accepted the preaching of the Gospel. Again, Paul's thought pattern follows a typical structure that we have already seen. He sets forth a basic declaration (v. 13) and the proceeds to provide a twofold foundation for it (vv. 14-16).

Although vv. 13-16 do seem to interrupt the thought flow of vv. 1-12 and 17-20, this does not warrant the conclusion of some that vv. 13-16 have been artificially inserted into the text of the letter by other, later hands. One additional justification for this view is seen in the similar core introductory phrase: "we unceasingly give thanks to God ..." (ἡμεῖς εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ ἀδιαλείπτως; v. 13) to the introductory phrase in the letter Proem (1:2): "We al-

### NASB

<sup>2:13</sup> And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted *it* not as the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. <sup>2:14</sup> For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they *did* from the Jews, <sup>2:15</sup> who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, <sup>2:16</sup> hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.

### NRSV

<sup>2:13</sup> We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers. <sup>2:14</sup> For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you suffered the same things from your own compatriots as they did from the Jews, <sup>2:15</sup> who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out; they displease God and oppose everyone <sup>2:16</sup> by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. Thus they have constantly been filling up the measure of their sins; but God's wrath has overtaken them at last.

### NLT

<sup>2:13</sup> And we will never stop thanking God that when we preached his message to you, you didn't think of the words we spoke as being just our own. You accepted what we said as the very word of God -- which, of course, it was. And this word continues to work in you who believe. <sup>14</sup> And then, dear brothers and sisters, you suffered persecution from your own countrymen. In this way, you imitated the believers in God's churches in Judea who, because of their belief in Christ Jesus, suffered from their own people, the Jews. <sup>2:15</sup> For some of the Jews had killed their own prophets, and some even killed the Lord Jesus. Now they have persecuted us and driven us out. They displease God and oppose everyone <sup>2:16</sup> by trying to keep us from preaching the Good News to the Gentiles, for fear some might be saved. By doing this, they continue to pile up their sins. But the anger of God has caught up with them at last.

ways give thanks to God..." (εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε...). 2:13-16 is seen as a clumsy repetition of that initial thanksgiving but with a second century anti-Jewish twist. Most of this is driven by current post-holocaust ecumenical motives to reduce Christianity down to a religion sympathetic to modern Judaism. Properly understood in the context of its own day, 2:13-16 fits nicely into Paul's thought flow in the body of the letter. Christianity doesn't need to distort ancient Jewish opposition to the gospel and to Christ in order to dialogue in respect with modern Judaism. If anything, Paul's ministry example demonstrates that integrity is paramount in Gospel witness.

His constant expression of thanksgiving to God

was that the initial reception of the preaching of the Gospel viewed this message not as a humanly contrived religious approach to life. Rather, the Thessalonians heard in the Gospel preaching a life-changing message coming from God himself. This stood in sharp contrast to the Sophist Greek philosophical approach to seek converts via clever oratory and cutesy organization of ideas that promised a better, more successful way of living. Each of these views claimed profound insight into life and the possession of the 'secrets of successful living.' An appeal to the emotions of the audience often typified these approaches. But as the classical philosophers like Plato had seen three centuries before Paul, these clever systems of thought rarely ever contained substance and accurate insight. By Paul's day, the money grubbing motivation dominated these traveling philosophers more than anything else. The only people getting rich were the philosophers as they fleeced naive listeners.

In contrast, the Thessalonian believers heard through the words of Paul an echo of the voice of God and realized that this message did not have human origin. Rather, it was God's word being voiced by human messengers. As such, they had experience the powerful presence of God through their faith commitment to Christ.

In that sort of response, Paul saw validation of them along the lines of the Jewish Christian believers in Palestine who had suffered greatly because of their commitment to Christ. As Luke described in [Acts 17:1-10](#), the Thessalonian believers made their faith commitment in the face of intense hostility from the Jewish synagogue. Some of them were Jewish members of the synagogue, and many were God-fearing Gentiles, including some very prominent women, who regularly worshipped at the synagogue. The appeal of the Gospel to these who formed the initial circle of believers threatened the leaders of the synagogue and prompted their violent response.

Paul praises this believing community for being willing to suffer like the Jewish Christians in Palestine had suffered from similar opposition. This imitation image first surfaced in 1:6 where Paul asserted that they had become imitators of him and of the Lord. Now they are imitators of the Judean Christians as well.

This synagogue opposition had several traits. 1) it led to the murder of Jesus along with several OT prophets; 2) it forced the premature termination of Paul's mission in both Thessalonica and later in Berea; 3) it did not please God, in whose name this

opposition arose; 4) it sought to prevent Paul from preaching the Gospel to Gentiles for their salvation; 5) it represented a stacking up of their sins into a huge pile that 6) awaited the intensified outpouring of God's wrath upon them at the end of times. In similar ways Jews in Judea had already opposed the spread of the Gospel, and thus that which was experienced in Thessalonica was something of a carbon copy.

The expression in verse 16b ("God's wrath has overtaken them at last") is not real clear in its thrust. The tense of the verb, "**has overtaken**," suggests that this wrath has already been expressed. But Paul speaks of [God's wrath](#) in eschatological terms, in particular in 1 Thess. 1:10 and 5:9. The phrase translated "at last" (εἰς τέλος) can mean fully, finally, at the end. F.F. Bruce (*Word Biblical Commentary*) has the best explanation:

The "wrath" which is here said to have overtaken them is an instance of the "coming wrath" (1:10) from which Jesus delivers his people. Without further delay it has come upon these Ἰουδαῖοι [Jews] already. They have reached the point of no return in their opposition to the gospel and final, irremediable retribution is inevitable; indeed, it has come.

Thus in the tradition of the OT prophets' concept of the [Day of the Lord](#), Paul sees the coming wrath of God as already a reality upon those who refused to turn to Christ and cease persecuting God's people. This is very similar to James' pronouncement of God's wrath on the wealthy Jews and Gentiles who were persecuting Christians during the 50s in Palestine in [Jas. 5:1-6](#).

What is the connection of this to our day? Two points come to mind among many that may be possible. First, genuine commitment to Christ, especially in the face of opposition, identifies us with a long line of fellow believers who have walked the same path. This is not something unique and particular to just us. That is, we are not being singled out for unusually hard circumstances. There is comfort from knowing this.

Second, the enemies of God's people will eventually face the awesome justice of God in the form of His anger against them. They have oppressed His people. In God's identity with His own people, to persecute them is to persecute God Himself. At a certain point that wrath becomes irreversible and inevitable. God's people can find encouragement in this. Evil is not victorious after all. God's justice will prevail, no matter how powerful evil may appear to be.

**Greek NT**

<sup>2.1</sup> Αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε, ἀδελφοί, τὴν εἴσοδον ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὅτι οὐ κενὴ γέγονεν, <sup>2.2</sup> ἀλλὰ προπαθόντες καὶ ὑβρισθέντες, καθὼς οἶδατε, ἐν Φιλίπποις ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν λαλῆσαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι. <sup>2.3</sup> ἢ γὰρ παράκλησις ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐκ πλάνης οὐδὲ ἐξ ἀκαθαρσίας οὐδὲ ἐν δόλω, <sup>2.4</sup> ἀλλὰ καθὼς δεδοκιμάσαμεθα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πιστευθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, οὕτως λαλοῦμεν, οὐχ ὡς ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκοντες ἀλλὰ θεῷ τῷ δοκιμάζοντι τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν. <sup>2.5</sup> οὔτε γὰρ ποτε ἐν λόγῳ κολακείας ἐγενήθημεν, καθὼς οἶδατε, οὔτε ἐν προφάσει πλεονεξίας, θεὸς μάρτυς, <sup>2.6</sup> οὔτε ζητοῦντες ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξαν οὔτε ἀφ' ὑμῶν οὔτε ἀπ' ἄλλων, <sup>2.7</sup> δυνάμενοι ἐν βάρει εἶναι ὡς Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι. ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν, ὡς ἐὰν τροφὸς θάλπη τὰ ἐαυτῆς τέκνα, <sup>2.8</sup> οὕτως ὁμιροῦμενοι ὑμῶν εὐδοκοῦμεν μεταδοῦναι ὑμῖν οὐ μόνον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ἐαυτῶν ψυχάς, διότι ἀγαπητοὶ ἡμῖν ἐγενήθητε. <sup>2.9</sup> μνημονεύετε γάρ, ἀδελφοί, τὸν κόπον ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν μόχθον· νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ἐργαζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαι τινα ὑμῶν ἐκηρύξαμεν εἰς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ. <sup>2.10</sup> ὑμεῖς μάρτυρες καὶ ὁ θεός, ὡς ὁσίως καὶ δικαίως καὶ ἀμέμπτως

**NASB**

<sup>2:1</sup> FOR you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming [Lit., *entrance*] to you was not in vain, <sup>2:2</sup> but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition [Or *struggle, conflict*]. <sup>2:3</sup> For our exhortation does not *come* from error or impurity or by way of deceit [Lit., *in deceit*]; <sup>2:4</sup> but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines [Or, *approves*] our hearts. <sup>2:5</sup> For we never came with flattering speech [Lit., *in a word of flattery*], as you know, nor with a pretext for greed -- God is witness -- <sup>2:6</sup> nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority [Or, *been burdensome*]. <sup>2:7</sup> But we proved [Lit., *became gentle*] to be gentle [Some ancient mss. *read babes*] among you [Lit., *in the midst of you*], as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares [Or, *cherishes*] for her own children. <sup>2:8</sup> Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-leased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives [Or, *souls*], because you had become very dear [Lit., *beloved*] to us. <sup>2:9</sup> For you recall, brethren,

**NRSV**

<sup>2.1</sup> You yourselves know, brothers and sisters [Gk *brothers*], that our coming to you was not in vain, <sup>2.2</sup> but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. <sup>2.3</sup> For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, <sup>2.4</sup> but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. <sup>2.5</sup> As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; <sup>2.6</sup> nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, <sup>2.7</sup> though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle [Other ancient authorities *read infants*] among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. <sup>2.8</sup> So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us. <sup>2.9</sup> You remember our labor and toil, brothers and sisters [Gk *brothers*]; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the

**NLT**

<sup>2:1</sup> You yourselves know, dear brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not a failure. <sup>2:2</sup> You know how badly we had been treated at Philippi just before we came to you and how much we suffered there. Yet our God gave us the courage to declare his Good News to you boldly, even though we were surrounded by many who opposed us. <sup>2:3</sup> So you can see that we were not preaching with any deceit or impure purposes or trickery. <sup>2:4</sup> For we speak as messengers who have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to please God, not people. He is the one who examines the motives of our hearts. <sup>2:5</sup> Never once did we try to win you with flattery, as you very well know. And God is our witness that we were not just pretending to be your friends so you would give us money! <sup>2:6</sup> As for praise, we have never asked for it from you or anyone else. <sup>2:7</sup> As apostles of Christ we certainly had a right to make some demands of you, but we were as gentle among you as a mother [Some manuscripts *read we were as infants among you; we were as a mother.*] feeding and caring for her own children. <sup>2:8</sup> We loved you so much that we gave you not only God's Good News but our own lives, too.

ὕμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐγενήθημεν, <sup>2:11</sup> καθάπερ οἶδατε, ὡς ἓνα ἕκαστον ὑμῶν ὡς πατὴρ τέκνα ἑαυτοῦ <sup>2:12</sup>

παρακαλοῦντες ὑμᾶς καὶ παραμυθούμενοι καὶ μαρτυρόμενοι εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βασιλείαν καὶ δόξαν.

<sup>2:13</sup> Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ ἀδιαλείπτως, ὅτι παραλαβόντες λόγον ἀκοῆς παρ' ἡμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐδέξασθε οὐ λόγον ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ καθὼς ἐστὶν ἀληθῶς λόγον θεοῦ, ὃς καὶ ἐνεργεῖται ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν.

<sup>2:14</sup> Ὑμεῖς γὰρ μιμηταὶ ἐγενήθητε, ἀδελφοί, τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν οὐσῶν ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὅτι τὰ αὐτὰ ἐπάθετε καὶ ὑμεῖς ὑπὸ τῶν ἰδίων συμφυλετῶν καθὼς καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, <sup>2:15</sup> τῶν καὶ τὸν κύριον ἀποκτεινάντων Ἰησοῦν καὶ τοὺς προφήτας καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐκδιωξάντων καὶ θεῷ μὴ ἀρεσκόντων καὶ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἐναντίων, <sup>2:16</sup> κωλύοντων ἡμᾶς τοῖς ἔθνεσιν λαλῆσαι ἵνα σωθῶσιν, εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας πάντοτε. ἔφθασεν δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ εἰς τέλος.

our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. <sup>2:10</sup> You are witnesses, and *so is* God, *how* devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved [Lit., *became*] toward you believers [Or, *who believe*], <sup>2:11</sup> just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring [Or, *testifying*] each one of you as a father *would* his own children, <sup>2:12</sup> so that you may walk in a manner worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

<sup>2:13</sup> And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted *it* not as the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. <sup>2:14</sup> For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they *did* from the Jews, <sup>2:15</sup> who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out [Or, *persecuted us*]. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, <sup>2:16</sup> hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved; with the result that they al-

gospel of God. <sup>2:10</sup> You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers. <sup>2:11</sup> As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, <sup>2:12</sup> urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

<sup>2:13</sup> We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers. <sup>2:14</sup> For you, brothers and sisters [Gk *brothers*], became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you suffered the same things from your own compatriots as they did from the Jews, <sup>2:15</sup> who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets [Other ancient authorities read *their own prophets*], and drove us out; they displease God and oppose everyone <sup>2:16</sup> by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. Thus they have constantly been filling up the measure of their sins; but God's wrath has overtaken them at last [completely or forever].

<sup>2:9</sup> Don't you remember, dear brothers and sisters, how hard we worked among you? Night and day we toiled to earn a living so that our expenses would not be a burden to anyone there as we preached God's Good News among you <sup>2:10</sup> You yourselves are our witnesses -- and so is God -- that we were pure and honest and faultless toward all of you believers. <sup>2:11</sup> And you know that we treated each of you as a father treats his own children. <sup>2:12</sup> We pleaded with you, encouraged you, and urged you to live your lives in a way that God would consider worthy. For he called you into his Kingdom to share his glory.

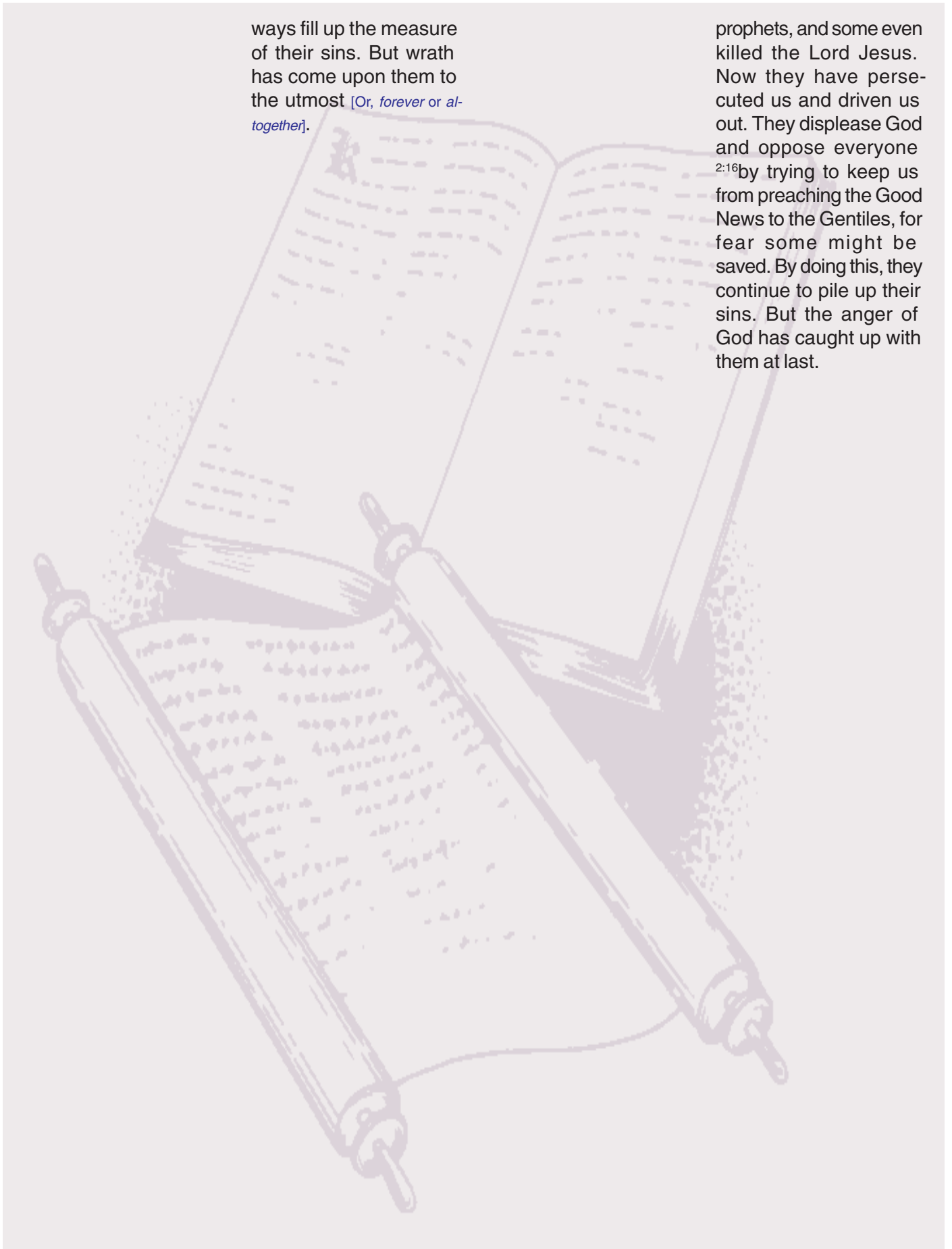
<sup>2:13</sup> And we will never stop thanking God that when we preached his message to you, you didn't think of the words we spoke as being just our own. You accepted what we said as the very word of God -- which, of course, it was. And this word continues to work in you who believe.

<sup>2:14</sup> And then, dear brothers and sisters, you suffered persecution from your own countrymen. In this way, you imitated the believers in God's churches in Judea who, because of their belief in Christ Jesus, suffered from their own people, the Jews.

<sup>2:15</sup> For some of the Jews had killed their own

ways fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost [*Or, forever or altogether*].

prophets, and some even killed the Lord Jesus. Now they have persecuted us and driven us out. They displease God and oppose everyone <sup>2:16</sup>by trying to keep us from preaching the Good News to the Gentiles, for fear some might be saved. By doing this, they continue to pile up their sins. But the anger of God has caught up with them at last.



- 2.1 γάρ  
 (1) **Αὐτοὶ οἶδατε... τὴν εἴσοδον ἡμῶν**  
 ἀδελφοί | τὴν πρὸς ὑμᾶς  
 ὅτι οὐ κενὴ γέγονεν,
- 2.2 ἀλλὰ  
 προπαθόντες  
 καὶ  
 ὑβρισθέντες,  
 καθὼς οἶδατε,  
 ἐν Φιλίπποις
- (2) **ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα**  
 ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν  
 λαλῆσαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ  
 ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι.
- 2.3 γάρ  
 (3) **ἡ παράκλησις ἡμῶν οὐκ (ἦν)**  
 ἐκ πλάνης  
 οὐδὲ ἐξ ἀκαθαρσίας  
 οὐδὲ ἐν δόλῳ,
- 2.4 ἀλλὰ  
 καθὼς δεδοκιμάσαμεθα  
 ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ  
 πιστευθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον,  
 οὕτως
- (4) **λαλοῦμεν,**  
 οὐχ ὡς ἄνθρωποις ἀρέσκοντες  
 ἀλλὰ  
 θεῷ (ἀρέσκοντες)  
 τῷ δοκιμάζοντι τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν.
- 2.5 γάρ  
 οὔτε ποτε ἐν λόγῳ κολακείας
- (5) **ἐγενήθημεν,**  
 καθὼς οἶδατε,  
 οὔτε ἐν προφάσει πλεονεξίας,  
 θεὸς μάρτυς,
- 2.6 οὔτε ζητοῦντες ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξαν  
 οὔτε ἀφ' ὑμῶν  
 οὔτε ἀπ' ἄλλων,
- 2.7 δυνάμενοι ἐν βάρει εἶναι  
 ὡς Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι.
- ἀλλὰ
- (6) **ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι**  
 ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν,  
 ὡς ἐὰν τροφὸς θάλπη τὰ ἑαυτῆς τέκνα,

2.8

οὕτως  
ὀμειρόμενοι ὑμῶν

(7)

*εὐδοκοῦμεν*

*μεταδοῦναι ὑμῖν* οὐ μόνον *τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ*  
ἀλλὰ καὶ *τὰς ἑαυτῶν ψυχάς,*

διότι ἀγαπητοὶ ἡμῖν ἐγενήθητε.

2.9

γάρ

(8)

*μνημονεύετε... τὸν κόπον ἡμῶν*

ἀδελφοί, καὶ

*τὸν μόχθον·*

νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας  
ἐργαζόμενοι  
πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαι τίνα ὑμῶν

(9)

*ἐκηρύξαμεν... τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ.*

εἰς ὑμᾶς

(10)<sup>2.10</sup>

*ὕμεις μάρτυρες καὶ ὁ θεός,*

ὡς ὀσίως καὶ δικαίως καὶ ἀμέμπτως

(11)

*ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐγενήθημεν,*

2.11

καθάπερ οἴδατε,

ὡς ἓνα ἕκαστον ὑμῶν

ὡς πατὴρ τέκνα ἑαυτοῦ

2.12

παρακαλοῦντες ὑμᾶς

καὶ

παραμυθούμενοι

καὶ

μαρτυρόμενοι

εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ

/-----/

τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς

εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βασιλείαν

καὶ

δόξαν

2.13

Καὶ

διὰ τοῦτο

καὶ

(12)

*ἡμεῖς εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ*

ἀδιαλείπτως,

παραλαβόντες *λόγον* ἀκοῆς παρ' ἡμῶν *τοῦ θεοῦ*

ὅτι... ἐδέξασθε

----- οὐ λόγον ἀνθρώπων

ἀλλὰ

καθὼς ἐστὶν ἀληθῶς

----- *λόγον* θεοῦ,

ὃς καὶ ἐνεργεῖται

ἐν ὑμῖν

τοῖς πιστεύουσιν.



2.14  
(13) γὰρ  
*ὕμεις μιμηταὶ ἐγενήθητε,*  
ἀδελφοί,

τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ  
τῶν οὐσῶν  
ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ  
ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ,

ὅτι τὰ αὐτὰ ἐπάθετε καὶ ὑμεῖς  
ὑπὸ τῶν ἰδίων συμφυλετῶν  
καθὼς καὶ αὐτοὶ (ἔπαθον)

ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων,

2.15

/-----|  
τῶν καὶ τὸν κύριον ἀποκτεινάντων Ἰησοῦν  
καὶ  
τοὺς προφῆτας

--- καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐκδιωξάντων  
--- καὶ θεῶ μὴ ἀρεσκόντων  
καὶ

πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἐναντίων,

2.16

--- κωλύόντων ἡμᾶς

τοῖς ἔθνεσιν  
λαλῆσαι

ἵνα σωθῶσιν,  
εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας  
πάντοτε.

δὲ  
(14) *ἔφθασεν... ἡ ὀργή*  
ἐπ' αὐτοὺς  
εἰς τέλος.

## Semantic Diagram

			<b>γάρ</b>							
		a-----	1	Perf	Act	Ind	2	P	(ὕμεις)	
	1--			ἀλλὰ						
		b-----	2	1 Aor	Mid	Ind	1	P	(ἡμεῖς)	
	A--			<b>γάρ</b>						
		i-----	3	(Impf	---	Ind	3	S)	παράκλησις	
		a--		ἀλλὰ						
		ii-----	4	Pres	Act	Ind	1	P	(ἡμεῖς)	
	2--			<b>γάρ</b>						
		i-----	5	2 Aor	Dep	Ind	1	P	(ἡμεῖς)	
	I--			ἀλλὰ						
		ii-----	6	2 Aor	Dep	Ind	1	P	(ἡμεῖς)	
				(οὕτως)						
	1-----		7	Pres	Act	Ind	1	P	(ἡμεῖς)	
		a-----	8	<b>γάρ</b>	Pres	Act	Ind	2	P	(ὕμεις)
	B--			---						
		i-----	9	1 Aor	Act	Ind	1	P	(ἡμεῖς)	
	2--			---						
		b-----	10	(Pres	---	Ind	3	P)	ὕμεις & θεός	
		ii-----	11	2 Aor	Dep	Ind	1	P	(ἡμεῖς)	
		c-----	12	Καὶ	Pres	Act	Ind	1	P	(ἡμεῖς)
	A-----		13	<b>γάρ</b>	2 Aor	Dep	Ind	2	P	ὕμεις
	II--			δε						
		1-----	14	1 Aor	Act	Ind	3	S	ὀργή	
	B--									
		2-----								

Uses of γίνομαι:

Statements: 5, 6, 11, 13

Present tense verbs:

Statements: (1), 4, 7, (10), 12

Aorist tense verbs:

Statements: 2, 5, 6, 9, 11, 13, 14

Uses of γάρ before in order to causally link back:

Statements: 1, 3, 5, 8, 13

Uses of ἀλλὰ to set up strong contrast:

Statements: 2, 4

Verbs of state of being:

Statements: 3, 10

Verbs of speaking:

Statements: 4, 9, 12,

## Exegetical Outline

- I. **(1-11) The Thessalonians were reminded how Paul shared himself and the gospel to them.**
  - A. (1-6) Paul's preaching the gospel to the Thessalonians avoided falseness in favor of genuiness
    - 1. (1-2) Paul wanted the Thessalonians to remember the fruitful way the gospel was preached
      - a. (1) Paul reminded the Thessalonians that his initial coming to them was not fruitless.
      - b. (2) Paul's speaking the gospel to them came from renewed courage given to him by God.
    - 2. (3-6) Paul did not adopt the style of the Sophists in preaching to the Thessalonians
      - a. (3-4) Paul reminded them of the sincerity of his preaching the gospel to them
        - i. (3) His admonishing of them was not phoney and deceitful
        - ii. (4) He spoke to them in a way pleasing to God rather than to people
      - b. (5-6) Paul reminded them of his genuineness in preaching the gospel to them
        - i. (5) He did not become a false "flatterer" in his gospel preaching
        - ii. (6) He became like a gentle nursing mother to the Thessalonians
  - B. (7-11) Paul's ministry was based on hard work that shared himself as well as the gospel.
    - 1. (7) Paul decided to share himself as well as his gospel with the Thessalonians
    - 2. (8-11) The Thessalonians were reminded how hard Paul had worked among them.
      - a. (8) His ministry there involved hard work and hardship
      - b. (9-10) Paul's ministry focused on helping the Thessalonians rather than himself
        - i. (9) He worked hard to not be a burden on the Thessalonians
        - ii. (10) Paul called the Thessalonians to validate his statment.
      - c. (11) Paul labored genuinely like a father to his children in order to bring them to God
- II. **(12-14) The Thessalonians' genuine response to the gospel in suffering brought unceasing thanksgiving to Paul**
  - A. (12) Pau's unceasing thanksgiving centers on the genuiness of the Thessalonians' receiving the gospel as God's message.
  - B. (13-14) The Thessalonians followed the Jewish Christians' example in spite of synagogue opposi-  
tion to the gospel.
    - 1. (13) They became immitators of other Christians in Palesting
    - 2. (14) The Jews who blocked the gospel brought down God's wrath at the end.