

GLORY AND JOY AT CHRIST'S COMING

Lesson Aim: Ask your students to examine the works of their faith to see how sincere they are.

Suggestion: Have the students answer the questions in the student lesson and insert any of the questions below for class discussion where they fit the aim of your lesson.

Introduction: Paul learned from Timothy that there were some believers in Thessalonica that felt Paul did not care for them since he never returned to visit them. In this chapter, Paul sets forth a detailed vindication of his motives and ministry. He opens this chapter by reminding the Thessalonian believers that in spite of the personal hardships that attended his ministry, he went to their city and boldly preached the Gospel to them. Surely that precluded any selfish motives that were charged against him. Paul then went on to tell exactly what his motives and message were. His vindication is very important since it reveals aspects of Paul's character that he would not have expressed under any other situation lest he be accused of boasting. "Take heed to yourself, and to the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this you shall both save yourself, and them that hear you" (1 Tim 4:16).

How was Paul able to be bold in his witness? 2:2; Heb 13:5-6; Prov 28:1

Paul said he found boldness in God, not in himself. The Lord would not leave him, nor forsake him, so he could boldly say, "The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear what man can do to me." The wicked flee when no man pursues them, but the righteous are as bold as a lion, the king of the beasts.

How did Paul describe the purity of his message? 2:3

His message was preached from God's truth, not from men's errors. His message did not have an unclean purpose. It was not about him; it was about God. It was not deceptive. He did not have bait with a hook in it. There was no gimmickry or trickery associated with his ministry. He was open and sincere in all that he preached.

How did Paul prove his motives were trustworthy? 2:4-6

God entrusted him with the Gospel, so he wanted His approval, not men's approval. He knew that God was testing his heart's desire and He expected the best motives from His servant (2:4). So he refused to 'sweet talk' his audience to gain favor with them and use it as a hidden pretext for monetary gain. He called on God to be his witness (2:5). For that very reason he supported himself and did not collect any funds from them (cf. v. 9). As an apostle of Christ, Paul had a right to wield authority and demand their respect, but he refused to exercise his authority to get their esteem. Instead he served them (2:6).

How did Paul show an unblemished manner among these believers? 2:7-12

He showed his love to them in four ways (2:7-8): he was gentle with them as nursing mother with her child; he expressed a strong affection for them and a longing to be with them; he was willing to impart his own soul for them; they were dear to him as though they were an only child. He labored among them to the point of exhaustion and worked to support himself so no one could charge him with selfish motives (2:9). He set an example of a blameless life before God for others to follow (2:10-12). He appealed to their minds by exhorting them, to their emotions by comforting them and to their wills by charging them. His goal was to have his converts walk worthy of God who had called them.

Why was Paul's ministry so fruitful in Thessalonica? 2:13-16

These believers received the Word that Paul preached and welcomed the Gospel message as from God, not man. (2:13). Then they remained faithful to God in spite of persecution. The character of these converts was very closely aligned to the message of God's Word and to the character of God's messenger who brought the message to them (2:14-16).

How did Paul defend himself for not visiting the church in Thessalonica? 2:17-20

Paul said he was taken away from them in presence like an orphan, but not in heart. He longed to see them and made several attempts to visit them, but Satan blocked his way back to them. They were his hope, his joy, his glory and crown of rejoicing when he would give an account of his work to Jesus Christ at His coming.