

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2

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Paul points to the boldness he had from God to preach the gospel to the Thessalonians, despite having just recently been beaten and imprisoned in Philippi.

In Chapter 1, Paul began reminiscing about the brief time he and his companions, Timothy and Silas, had among the Thessalonians. He reminds the Thessalonians that the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ did not “come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thessalonians 1:5). Their preaching was accompanied by some sort of miraculous display, possibly a healing (Acts 28:8). Thus, Paul and his companions “proved” themselves to be sincere teachers of the gospel.

He will elaborate on this proof of authenticity as he continues to reflect on his history with the Thessalonians. The reason he repetitively tells the Thessalonians things they already know is to build upon the foundational experience of believing in Jesus, and encourage them to endure through persecution. Paul worried that they might abandon their walk with God when attacked by unbelievers. He was chased out of town before he was able to teach them all that he meant to, so he knew that resistance to the gospel was already there. The Thessalonian believers had been born again. Now Paul desired to teach them how to live. He wants them to understand the immense benefit that comes through walking in the obedience of faith in this life. This life is our one and only opportunity to come to knowledge through faith. Enduring persecution is one of the greatest opportunities to walk by faith. Paul views this as an opportunity.

Paul appeals to the sincerity and conviction that he and his team displayed when they endured their own personal sufferings for the Gospel. He has overcome trials, resulting in victory in Christ. Enduring difficulty while continuing in obedience to Jesus is the way to win at life. Paul reminds the Thessalonians, *For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain.* His visit, however brief and tumultuous, was *not in vain.* This is in part because it resulted in their initial faith in Christ. It is also in part because they began to teach the Thessalonians how to win at life, through walking in the obedience of faith. Paul and his companions came to Thessalonica from the city of *Philippi* where they were severely *mistreated.* Paul declares that *after we had already suffered in Philippi, even so we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.*

The abuses in *Philippi* were no small matter. Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten with rods, then thrown in prison with their feet shackled in wooden stocks (Acts 16:22-24). But, consistent with how they taught the Thessalonians, they endured their persecution with joy, counting it a privilege to suffer for the gospel. This attitude was displayed when Paul and Silas sang hymns of praise while shackled in prison (Acts 16:25).

It is as if Paul is saying, “We were attacked and punished for preaching the gospel before we met you. But we are so emboldened by God that we continue to preach it. We preached it to you and were attacked in your city. That didn’t stop us then and it hasn’t stopped us now. We believe in

the gospel so sincerely that these sufferings will never stop us. God is bigger. His promises are greater. The way to win the greatest victory of life as a member of God's family is through the obedience of faith. We are privileged to have this amazing opportunity.”

After Paul and his companions had *suffered* in Philippi, they had *boldness in our God* to continue to *speak* to the Thessalonians. It did not matter to them that there was *much opposition*. Their *boldness* came from a firm belief that their path to winning at life came through radical obedience to the call of Jesus Christ. That emboldened them to persevere through great difficulty and opposition. While Paul and Silas were jailed in Philippi, they prayed and sang to God, who replied by sending a great earthquake which broke all the chains and opened all the doors in the prison. Rather than escape, they remained, and preached the gospel to the jailer and his family, who believed and were baptized (Acts 16:31-34).

Even in prison Paul and Silas taught of Jesus's death and resurrection, helping to reconcile a man and his family to God. They did not know whether they would be killed or released. Either way, they were determined to be faithful. They brought that same boldness with them to Thessalonica.

Biblical Text

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, 2 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.