

# To the Saints of God at Topeka, Kansas

## October 15, 2017

***But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.***

Part 1

1 Thessalonians 2:1-20

*1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:*

*2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.*

*3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:*

*4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.*

*5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:*

*6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.*

*7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:*

*8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.*

*9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.*

*10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:*

*11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,*

*12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.*

*13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*

*14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:*

15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

20 For ye are our glory and joy.



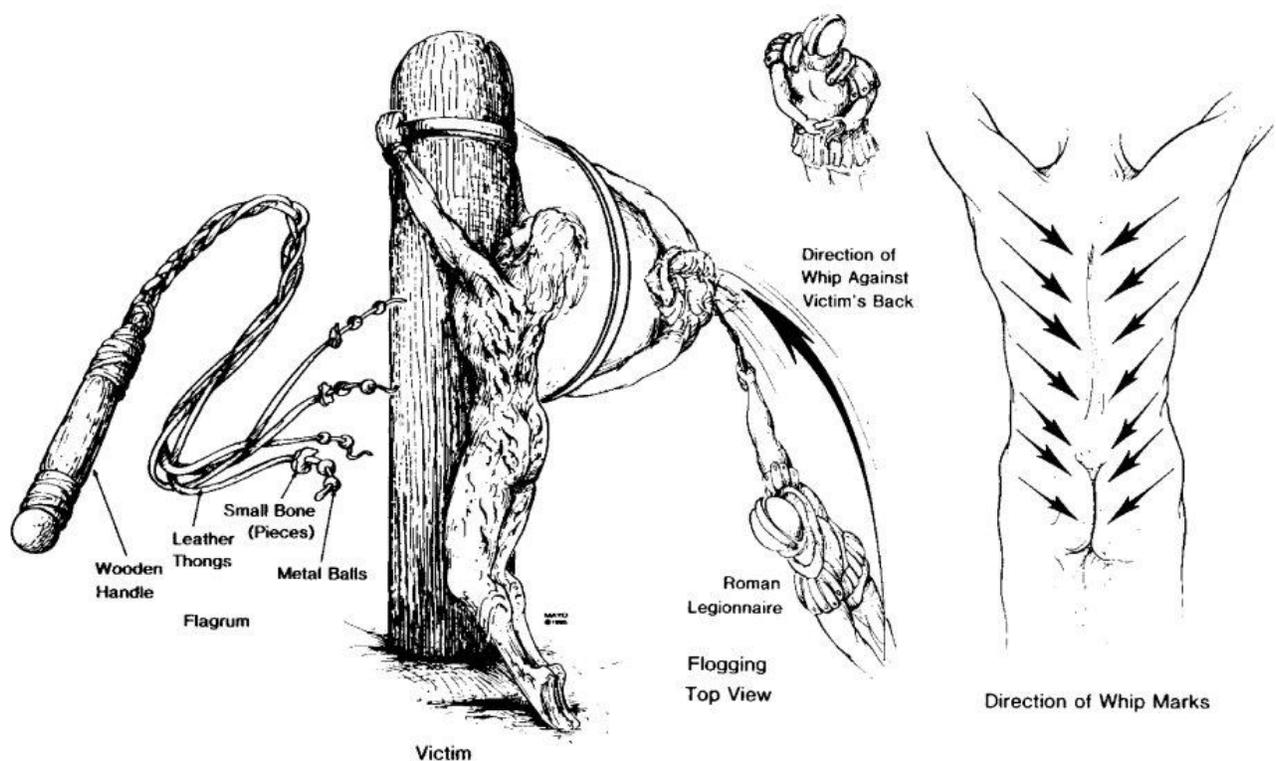
I Thes. 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first letter to the Thessalonians was written by the Apostle Paul while he was in Corinth (or Athens). Thessalonica is near the top of what is now Greece. From the map, you can see that Thessalonica is in the Roman province of Macedonia (or Macedon) and it was the capital of that Roman province. Today, the city of Thessaloniki, Greece is there. It is the second largest city in Greece and has a population of more than one million people. Thessalonica was an important port city and was on a major Roman trade route, so it was a thriving city. Gill adds that it was a large and populous city and that is why among other things Paul stopped there.

Now, before we get to the details of Thessalonians 2, I want to set the stage for you. Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica from Philippi (see the map). You read about their preaching activities at Philippi and Thessalonica in Acts 16 and 17. At the beginning of 1 Thessalonians 2, Paul references what happened in Philippi (he was *shamefully entreated... at Philippi*- 1Thes 2:2). So I will remind you of the backstory of what happened in Philippi.

In Acts 16 Paul goes to Philippi and Lydia hears him preaching there. And while at Philippi he encounters the damsel possessed with a spirit of divination which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying (Acts 16:16). Paul by Christ ordered the spirit to come out of her and her masters caught Paul and Silas and brought them to the marketplace before the magistrates and rulers (Acts 16:19). A flash mob then formed and the magistrates rent their clothes and commanded them to be beaten (no trial, no investigation and no time to inquire to find out that they were in fact Roman citizens, which entitled them to specific rights, including the right to a trial before they are punished, etc.). Paul and Silas were then severely whipped receiving “many stripes”! We call that torture.

The Old Testament forbids the Jews from giving more than 40 stripes (see Deut. 25:3). The reason is that death can follow once you get to that level of punishment and torture. So, the Jews’ law was that the maximum number of stripes was 39. But, the Romans of course had no such law – it was unlimited - being the ruthless, barbarians that they were. In 2 Cor. 11:23 Paul mentions receiving *stripes above measure*. The expositors believe it was at Philippi where this occurred (where he received more than 40 stripes at one time). And you may recall, a scourge or whip was used to deliver the punishment and it typically had three or four leather thongs with pieces of metal on the end to drag flesh off of the victim. So, each lash counted as three or four depending on the number of thongs (see picture).



After receiving this extreme beating Paul and Silas were then cast into the prison in the maximum-security section and their feet were put in stocks (Acts 16:24), which is just cruel. And Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God, bless their hearts. It takes great faith to endure what they did and then see it for what it was and praise God for it. The Lord heard them and a great earthquake shook the ground and all the prison doors were opened. The guard that was responsible for maintaining the prisoners, and keeping them, was going to kill himself. Paul talked him down, assuring him that no prisoner had escaped, so the thankful jailer fell down before them and said “what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). Then the magistrates, upon learning that Paul was a Roman citizen said to let them go, and keep it on the down low. Paul said in effect, “hey, wait a minute, we are Romans – you just beat Roman citizens un-condemned – you come here yourselves and fetch us out – you are not going to do this in private”, and they did. (Acts 16:37). Then they went to Lydia’s house in Philippi and were comforted there. So this whole region in Macedonia was not a place to be taken lightly. You hazard your lives to go preach there.

Then, they proceeded from Philippi to eventually come to Thessalonica. Acts 17:4 *And, some of them [Jews] believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks*

*a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; 7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. 8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. 9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go. 10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.*

*“Fellows of the baser sort”* – We might call them “anarchists” today or “Antifa” or “anti-fascists.” Here is a quote from a CNN story on Antifa:

*“What they're trying to do now is not only become prominent through violence at these high-profile rallies, but also to reach out through small meetings and through social networking to cultivate disenfranchised progressives who heretofore were peaceful.”*

Here is Gill on “fellows of the baser sort.” *Market folks, who sat and sold things in the market, and were generally of the meaner and vulgar sort, as the word may signify; or who stood idle in the market place, squandering away their time in an idle manner, not caring to work, ... and who could easily be gathered together, for such service as the unbelieving Jews employed them in; or they were a sort of officers and servants, that attended courts of judicature, and cited persons thither, and assisted in the business done there, and who were commonly men of profligate and abandoned lives.*

The expositors believe Paul and Silas spent about three weeks in Thessalonica, before they made a run for it. So now the stage is set and we are back to 1 Thes. 2:1 (where I started this sermon). Paul is writing the church at Thessalonica about 50 A.D., maybe a year to two since he was there, to explain to them why he had not come back to see them and to encourage them in their afflictions and to answer some lies that had been promulgated about his intentions.

Beloved, make no mistake, the churches of the True God are constantly in affliction of one kind or another. They need comforting. They have outward afflictions from the world and from “men of the baser sort” and they have persecutions from within (within the

church – or from those that have forsaken the church and turned from God and grieving those little souls). 2 Cor. 7:5 *For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest (continual combat with false teachers and furious persecutors), but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.*

The implication of 1 Thes. 2 is that there were false teachers that had snuck in unawares and that were now implying that Paul's motives toward the church at Thessalonica were not pure and that he only sought to convert them for his own gain, vanity and pride and that he was an impostor and liar. Such are those that go out of here beloved. They are constantly whispering and back biting, and that is what was going on at Thessalonica. Interestingly, but not conclusively, this could have been Demas that was up to this mischief. 2 Tim 4:10 *For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica.*

So Paul writes them and reminds them of the facts and how he treated them. He is going to make his case and stir up their pure minds to what actually occurred. Beloved as we go forth from this place and we warn others, and we preach the Word and are instant in season and out of season and we reprove, rebuke and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine (2 Tim 4:1) we must do it in the way that Paul says that he treated the Thessalonians. There is no other scriptural way.

I believe these words of 1 Thessalonians 2 apply to all of the brethren but particularly to the tender new souls we are teaching, and cultivating. 1 Thes. 2 is the "gold" standard for how we are to do this work because the instruction is so detailed. But, you also get a hint of this in other places like 1 Pet. 2:1-3 *Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings* 2 *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:* 3 *If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.* This also would have clear application to teaching the 144,000 how to acceptably serve God.

Barnes: *The phrase here used "newborn babes" would properly denote those which were just born, and hence Christians who had just begun the spiritual life. There is no doubt that there is allusion to the gospel in its purest and most simple form, as adapted to be the nutriment of the new-born soul. Probably there are two ideas here; one, that the proper aliment (food or nourishment) of piety is simple truth; the other, that the truths which they were to desire were the more elementary truths of the gospel, such as would be*

*adapted to those who were babes in knowledge. That ye may grow thereby. As babes grow on their proper nutriment. Piety in the heart is susceptible of growth, and is made to grow by its proper element, as a plant or a child is, and will grow in proportion as it has the proper kind of nutriment, from this verse we may see, (1.) the reason of the injunction of the Saviour to Peter, to "feed his lambs," #Joh 21:15 1Pe 2:1,2. Young Christians strongly resemble children, babes; and they need watchful care, and kind attention, and appropriate aliment, as much as new-born infants do.*

*1 Thes. 2:1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:  
2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.*

Paul reminds them of what I just told you about in Acts 16 and 17. That their conversion to Christ was not a vain, empty or fruitless thing or done out of Paul's vanity. Paul came to this region at great personal cost and jeopardized his very life. There was no outward show of "pomp and circumstance" from Paul and Silas. Paul and Silas received no outward reward here – they collected no "big fat pay check" for the work they did. They came to Thessalonica in great humility and poverty, misery, reproach, and persecution, still literally licking their atrocious wounds from Philippi. It was with great suffering and pain and austereness that they came to Thessalonica to preach the salvation of Christ unto them. And even though they were treated horribly at Philippi, this did not affect their countenance and they continued to preach Christ with much boldness even in the light of great contention and affliction at Thessalonica – some men would have been intimidated to silence. Paul and Silas came with great and real inspiration from the Holy Spirit to preach the repentance of sins through Jesus Christ unto them! No matter what some heretic is charging, Paul and Silas did not make merchandise of them or collect for personal gain on their labor. Here is what they got for their trouble, in going to Macedonia - 50 lashes from the whip and their feet in the stock and then straightway after Philippi they hazarded their lives to come to Thessalonica to preach unto them that through the foolishness of preaching they might be saved! Beloved, as we preach to our generation, cannot we make the same arguments. What personal gain or mass of wealth have we accumulated? It is just the opposite. And have we also not been shamefully entreated by our generation for our like testimony? Our works are not in vain beloved. It is a good work we have wrought and with boldness we still preach Christ in the face of much contention to this very hour.

*Heb. 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

*3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile.*

Paul argues that his doctrine had no deceit or guile in it (as he is apparently being accused of that now). Deceit is the act of causing someone to accept as true or valid what is false or invalid. The attempt or device to deceive and trick. The quality of being dishonest, misleading, or fraudulent. There is much deceit in this world, but our words are pure. There is no dishonesty here – that is why we try so hard to doggedly stick to the words of the Scripture. It was the sincere and uncorrupted gospel that he preached and exhorted them to believe and obey. The gospel he preached was without deceit, it was true and faithful; it was not fallacious, nor a cunningly-devised fable.

*Mt 24:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.*

*Mt 24:5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

*Mt 24:11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.*

*Mt 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*

*Tit 1:10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:*

*2Jo 1:7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.*

*Re 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

*Joh 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

Guile is deceitful cunning, craftiness, duplicity and trickery.

*Ps 32:2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

*Joh 1:47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!*

*1Pe 2:1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings.*

*1Pe 3:10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:*

*Re 14:5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God (144,000 Jews).*

*2Co 4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

Uncleanness is defined as: "either in the physical or moral sense; the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living, or impure motives. Morally or spiritually impure; infected with a harmful supernatural contagion – dirty or filthy."

*Matthew Henry: His doctrine was pure and holy, worthy of its holy author, tending to discountenance all manner of impurity. The word of God is pure. There should be no corrupt mixtures therewith; and, as the matter of the apostle's exhortation was thus true and pure, the manner of his speaking was without guile. He did not pretend one thing and intend another. He believed, and therefore he spoke. He had no sinister and secular aims and views, but was in reality what he seemed to be.*

I love you all. Amen