

THE THESSALONIAN EPISTLES: DIRECTION FOR THE LAST DAYS

II. Identifying God's Credible Messengers In These Last Days

(1 Thessalonians 2:1-12)

I. Introduction

- A. Paul's epistles to the believers at Thessalonica addressed new converts out of raw paganism who faced persecution and false teaching, a recipe for spiritual defeat if they failed to get adequate spiritual insight.
- B. These needs are similar to what many believers face in today's godless world, so we view 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 on identifying God's credible messengers in these last days of the Church era for insight and edification:

II. Identifying God's Credible Messengers In These Last Days, 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

- A. Paul's comments in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 "suggest that people outside the church were charging him with unworthy motives and improper conduct," that he was a false teacher, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 693.
- B. In response, Paul defended the ministry he and his team had with the Thessalonians, exposing their ministry credibility and equipping us to identify God's credible messengers in our era (as follows), 1 Thess. 2:1-12:
 - 1. God's credible messengers minister regardless of facing persecution for doing so, 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2a:
 - a. Before arriving at Thessalonica, Paul and Silas had been beaten, imprisoned, placed in stocks and insulted for their ministry at Philippi (Acts 16:19-24), 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2a.
 - b. Nevertheless, having left Philippi, they continued to minister at Thessalonica, 1 Thessalonians 2:2b.
 - 2. God's credible messengers minister regardless of facing continual, strong opposition, 1 Thess. 2:2c:
 - a. Relying on God's help, Paul and his coworkers dared to give the Gospel to the Thessalonians though having both faced persecution for doing so at Philippi and facing strong opposition at Thessalonica.
 - b. That opposition involved facing a city uproar by envious Hebrews for the many converts they won from Greeks and the chief women of the city to where they had to flee the city, Acts 17:1-10.
 - 3. God's credible messengers minister regardless of facing slander, 1 Thessalonians 2:3:
 - a. Paul's team ministered regardless of allegations that their message was errantly deceptive, *Ibid.*, p. 694.
 - b. Paul's team ministered regardless of allegations that their motives were impure, *Ibid.*
 - c. Paul's team ministered regardless of allegations that their methods were misleading, *Ibid.*
 - 4. God's credible messengers minister to please God, not man, 1 Thessalonians 2:4. Paul's team was aware that God was the One Who had entrusted them with the Gospel ministry, that they then spoke to please the One Who had commissioned them to minister rather than pleasing other people.
 - 5. God's credible messengers are not manipulative, 1 Thessalonians 2:5a. Paul and his coworkers did not try to flatter their listeners, but to communicate God's truth in a candid, straightforward manner.
 - 6. God's credible messengers are not greedy for financial gain, 1 Thessalonians 2:5b. Paul's team did not try to manipulate with their speech or actions to take financial advantage of their listeners for the love of money, but they avoided any opportunity to take financial or material advantage of listeners out of greed.
 - 7. God's credible messengers are humble, 1 Thessalonians 2:6. Paul and his coworkers were not looking for praise from men, be it from the Thessalonian believers or from anybody else.
 - 8. God's credible messengers are not burdensome, but self-sacrificing for the people to whom they minister, 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9. As apostles of Christ, Paul's team could have used their apostolic authority to demand financial support and obedience from the Thessalonians, but rather they were gentle, caring for the new Thessalonian converts as a nursing mother would care for her infant, for Paul and his coworkers worked day and night to earn their own livelihoods instead of being a financial burden to the new converts.
 - 9. God's credible messengers are transparent in their godly example before others, 1 Thessalonians 2:10-11. Paul and his coworkers were openly separate from sin, upright and blameless, dealing with the new converts at Thessalonica as a father would relate to his children.
 - 10. God's credible messengers, like Paul and his coworkers, direct other believers to live lives that are worthy of God Who calls them unto His coming kingdom and glory, 1 Thessalonians 2:12.

Lesson: Paul and his coworkers demonstrated their credibility as God's messengers by ministering though facing persecution, by continuing to minister regardless of facing opposition and slander, by ministering to please God, not man, by not manipulating others, by not being greedy for gain, by being humble, not burdensome, by being self-sacrificing, by being transparently upright examples and by directing other believers to live worthy of the Lord.

Application: May we identify God's credible messengers by means of the example set by Paul and his coworkers.