

1 Thessalonians 2: 1-12 (NIV)

1 You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure.

2 We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.

3 For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you.

4 On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.

5 You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness.

6 We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you,

7 but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.

8 We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.

9 Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

10 You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.

11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children,

12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

As the apostle Paul was writing this letter to the Thessalonians, I bet he was feeling pretty surprised. He had sent Timothy to follow up on the visit they had made. Instead of returning with negative news, Timothy returned with an encouraging report, telling Paul that the people of Thessalonica had turned from idols to praise God! In fact, the Thessalonians, in spite of persecution and suffering, had become “a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.” The report that Timothy gave Paul that day was probably the last thing Paul expected to hear!

In this time of Advent, we also can—and we should—be surprised by the power of the Gospel. Advent is a time when people’s minds, ears, and hearts are possibly a little more open. People are longing to hear more about the baby born in Bethlehem or how the star led the magi to the manger. Hearts are being filled with a commercialized holiday when they really want to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. As we hear the story of the nativity, read the Song of Mary, or sing “Silent Night,” we can believe that the

story of the Gospel is penetrating people's hearts in ways we cannot explain. But it is up to us to help people know, understand, and grasp on to the love of Jesus Christ.

Just as Paul dared to go and tell the Good News to the people of Thessalonica, we too are called to the "daring task" of evangelism. Advent gives us an awesome opening to tell friends, family, and co-workers about the love of God that came to us in and through His Son, Jesus Christ. So, let's encourage one another in this task. Let's also encourage one another to expect people to hear and know the true Reason for the Season! This holiday, I invite and encourage you to remember this passage as a challenge and calling to spread the Good News of the Gospel as Paul and the apostles did. Dare to tell friends and family about Jesus Christ. Remember you too are entrusted with the story of Jesus Christ. Delight to share the Gospel. Encourage one another to live in the light of this Advent season.

But most of all, I hope that all of us will approach the task with expectation and anticipation. Don't be surprised if your efforts result in someone coming to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior!

Prayer

Lord God, Thank you for the words of your servant Paul, who reminds us of our task to tell others of the Good News of Jesus Christ! This Advent season, help us to be daring, to be faithful, and most of all to remember the power of the Holy Spirit at work in all of us! We pray to You, Lord, as we delight in the coming birth of the King, Your Son, Jesus! Amen.