

PAUL'S DEFENSE
--1ST THESSALONIANS 2:1-6--

INTRODUCTION:

Everywhere Paul went he faced opposition. Those attacking Paul tried to bring his character into question and tried to challenge his authority. Those in opposition to Paul's ministry were lying to the church in Thessalonica regarding his integrity and sincerity. Their goal was to ruin this new church by destroying the church's confidence and trust in the person who had planted and founded the church.

It must be understood that the first century world was full of false spiritual leaders and charlatans peddling their own gods and religious practices. Paul's enemies sought to lump Paul in with these false teachers and charlatans who traveled around the Roman Empire and "ministered" simply to gain personal power, wealth, and prestige. The fact that Paul had to defend the purity of his life and the transforming power of his message shows that those in opposition to him were bringing doubt and confusion to the Thessalonians concerning Paul and his co-laborers and their intentions.

I. MINISTRY NOT FRUITLESS (1st Thessalonians 2:1)

- a. Paul's opening line in the first verse sets the tone for his _____, and he begins by calling on the memory of the Thessalonian believers.
- b. The phrase "our coming to you" in that first verse just refers to Paul and his companions' _____ in Thessalonica with the message of the gospel.

II. CONFIDENT IN GOD'S POWER (1st Thessalonians 2:2)

- a. Paul was _____ in God's power in his life and ministry.
- b. Paul uses two terms to describe how he and Silas were persecuted in Philippi because they were actually _____ in two ways.
- c. When arrived in Thessalonica, they had the _____ in God to speak the gospel of God.

- d. Paul's _____ was not in himself, but he states that his confidence or boldness is in God alone. (Ephesians 6:10; 2nd Corinthians 12:9-10)

III. DEDICATED TO GOD'S TRUTH (1st Thessalonians 2:3)

- a. Paul knew that he could be confident in God's power because he was _____ to God's truth.
- b. Paul thought it necessary to defend his integrity by affirming his steadfast, unshakeable dedication to God's _____.
- c. Paul continues and from his words it seems that those trying to undermine Paul's message not only accused him of error but also of outright _____.
- d. As I already stated Paul did not only speak and guard God's truth, but he _____ it out in his life.
- e. Paul's enemies were accusing Paul of the same kind of _____ as the false teachers.
- f. Paul ended his defense on his dedication to God's truth by stating that he had not come to the Thessalonians by way of _____.

IV. APPROVED BY GOD (1st Thessalonians 2:4a)

- a. The third feature of Paul's defense was that his ministry and that of his companions was _____ by God.
- b. God had _____ Paul to be an apostle, he was not self-appointed. (Romans 1:1; Acts 9:15b; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Ephesians 3:8; 1 Timothy 1:11-12; Titus 1:3)
- c. Paul was an _____ under God's call, command, and authority.

V. MOTIVATED BY GOD'S OMNISCIENCE (1st Thess. 2:4b-5)

- a. Paul knew that he was called by God and he rejoiced in that high-calling, but a strong sense of _____ to God balanced Paul's authority to preach the gospel.
- b. Paul's consuming passion was to please God because he knew and understood that only God truly _____ the hearts of those who serve Him.

- c. Paul goes on in verse five, calling on God as his _____, that Paul and his co-workers did not come to exploit the Thessalonians with flattering speech.

VI. COMMITTED TO GOD'S GLORY (1st Thessalonians 2:6)

- a. False teachers and spiritual deceivers are glory seekers, Paul did not seek _____, honor, or praise from men. (Ephesians 3:20-21)
- b. Paul goes on in the end of verse six and says, "...*even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our _____.*" (1st Thessalonians 2:6b, NASB95)
- c. Paul never _____ the authority he had as an Apostle, he always balanced it with accountability and humility. (Romans 11:36)

CONCLUSION:

Within these six verses, we have Paul's defense of his ministry in the face of opposition which seemed to follow him wherever he went. But within this defense, we find five qualities of a spiritual leader:

1. Tenacity or persistence, because the leader trusts totally in the power of God;
2. Integrity, because the leader is fully dedicated to the truth of God;
3. Authority, because the leader is approved by the will of God;
4. Accountability, because the leader knows that the omniscient God examines his heart;
5. Humility, because the leader is consumed with the glory of God.

If the spiritual leader has these qualities, he will be on his way to exercising fail-proof spiritual leadership.