

**Review:** Paul informs the Thessalonians of the extensive and helpful news of their conversion and the formation of the church. This begins to provide a competitive propagating cultural theme that is supportive of Christianity as against the negative narratives which were spreading.

**Passage: 2:1-4**

1. Paul recounts something the Thessalonians already know in v. 1. He says that Paul's team's reception (εἴσοδον, entrance or way in) with them was not in vain (κενῆ, empty, useless, devoid of truth). What purposes might Paul be thinking of? Remember, they are purposes the Thessalonians will immediately recognize and acknowledge. [Thought-provoking question--the obvious choices of a purpose of conveying the Gospel are ruled out by the verses below. Mark the answers discussed and revisit them after discussing the following verses]
2. In v. 2, Paul again recounts something he says the Thessalonians already know. What contrast is Paul drawing here? What kind of approach to the Thessalonians and reception from them in response might we expect after Paul's team's bad experience in Philippi? [We might expect them to be out of resources, weak, intimidated and meek in their presentation, which would probably not be very convincing to the Thessalonians.] What do we actually see in the team's approach? [Paul's team instead showed boldness in the face of much opposition.]
3. Does this help us understand better what Paul might mean when he says their entrance was not ineffective or empty? [Paul seems to be reminding the Thessalonians of his team's surprising energy, power and boldness in presenting the Gospel after such a terrible time in Philippi. It was not empty of energy and unable to produce results.]
4. What would the team's power and boldness in the face of local opposition not just in Philippi but now in Thessalonica communicate about the integrity of their message? How might serious opposition prevent actions based on intellectual error or dishonesty of motive? [They clearly were not in it for themselves, but they were preaching and teaching out of a genuine conviction of the truth of their message. If it were otherwise, they would have stopped or left to save their skin!]
5. Does this help us understand yet better still what Paul might mean when he says their reception by the Thessalonians was not empty of purpose? [Paul seems to be reminding the Thessalonians that they had visible, discernible, honest and fully-exhibited purpose and intent in their engagement with the Thessalonians. There was no empty statement of a false or deceptive purpose, but rather a fully-authenticated purpose that their actions validated.]
6. So we can already see in v. 2 that Paul's team's actions, their boldness in the face of opposition, demonstrated their integrity and honest motives. Paul then states this explicitly in v. 3. Do you notice any difference in the statement in v. 3 from the previous verses? Does any shift in language stand out to you? [Paul shifts from past tense to present tense, and speaks of their current integrity and honorable motives.] Why might Paul make this change, do you think? [Open; second possible lead regarding a need to defend his ministry]
7. What specific things does Paul deny as motivations in v. 3? How do they compare? How do they differ? [Open]
8. In v. 4, what comparisons does Paul make? How do the two compared ideas match up in each case? {Consider a table on the whiteboard}
9. One more time, do we gain more insight into Paul's v. 1 statement by these words? Does this section all begin to show a common theme? [From the very beginning of this section Paul is reminding the Thessalonians of his team's integrity, honest motivations, and truthful message content.]
10. Has Paul begun to build a theme in the letter defending their ministry in the current moment, do you think? [Open]

**Application Questions:**

- What are approaches and tactics we can use to demonstrate the integrity of our work for the Gospel? ["swearing to our own hurt" level of truthfulness; comprehensive application of the Bible's prescriptions for relationships with nonbelievers; transparency of objectives and consistency of action with those objectives; others?]
- What was the rock-bottom basis for Paul's ministry according to this section, and what was its effect on his ministry approach, strategy and tactics? How might we ensure that our ministries, both personal and church, have that same foundation and enjoy the same benefits?
- We saw Paul's point that boldness in the face of opposition is able to communicate integrity and honorable motivation. How might this apply to our work for the Gospel today? How do we realize this in our actions?