

(Bible used = NIV 1984 translation)

Way in: Discuss – is your group comforted by the knowledge that God is always watching over us, or is this a mixed blessing?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2: 9 - 16

Question 1. There are many clues in this whole passage about how Paul, Silas and Timothy behaved and witnessed the gospel, a new way of living and understanding life. It must have been hard for them, as indeed it remains challenging for us to this day.

a. Paul would have needed to be the principal model for these new Christians, not just talk, but demonstrating a way of living that would bring glory to the new God he was introducing. Paul we are told in verse 9, earned sufficient money (as a tentmaker) so not to be a burden. So, the quality of his workmanship, his business trading and relationships, his day to day conversations, never mind his preaching, were all open to scrutiny. What sort of challenge is this for us personally?

b. Paul, Silas and Timothy worked to support themselves whilst in Thessalonica and were not financially supported by the new 'church'. Read what Paul has written elsewhere on this subject (1 Timothy 5: 17-18 and Galatians 6: 6). How do you think these apparent discrepancies can be explained?

Question 2. Verse 10. 'how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you'.

a. Paul is not boasting here. He is writing to the very people who witnessed and experienced their visit, and they would know. In what ways might Paul and the others have been supported to achieve this perfect record?

b. If this behaviour is important, how can imperfect people (like us) dare to do evangelism?

Question 3. Paul has earlier in this letter (verse 7) likened God's love to a mother's love, and now likens it to a father's.

a. Are these both appropriate, or is one more appropriate than the other?

b. Some people might struggle with these descriptions of God's love. Who might they be, and why?

c. Is there a description of God's love that is more suitable for today's society?

Question 4. Verse 14. Persecution of the Thessalonian church had already begun.

- a. What can you suggest from verse 13 might indicate how the new converts were able to withstand this?
- b. Are you able to give examples of how the word of God working within has transformed you?
- c. Does the fact that the church of Christ has always been persecuted one way or another mean that something has gone wrong with God's purpose?

Question 5. Verse 16. How do you feel about 'the wrath of God'?

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