

## Well Rounded

### 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2:8; Acts 17:1-9

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As Christians, we know we are called to share the good news of God's love. This is a given. Christianity is meant to be shared. It's not a shameful secret, it's a joyful relationship. Why wouldn't we want others to know about it?

But how do we do that? How do we share the good news? What's the best way to be a witness? Memorizing the Bible from cover-to-cover? Mastering theology? Living pious and upright lives? As devout Christians who want to share the good news of God's love, what's the single most important skill we should master?

Let's look at Paul.

Paul is in Thessalonica. He wants to witness. So, he goes to the Synagogue and proclaims Jesus. He uses the Hebrew Scriptures to make his point Jesus is the Messiah. Clearly, Paul knows his Scripture.

But some are not convinced. They resent Paul. They get angry. They won't agree to disagree. They cause a ruckus. They even pull in the government. They make it political. "They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus" ([Acts 17:7](#)). When you have to involve the government, when you have to have the government turn your beliefs into law, there's your sign you've lost the argument in the court of public opinion.

Reasonable people can disagree about the Bible and Christianity. We can disagree about abortion, homosexuality, caring for the poor and the environment. We can disagree about

pre-marital sex, drugs and alcohol, and how to treat the immigrants at our southern border. We can disagree and still be brothers and sisters in Christ, loving each other and worshiping together.

But when we start going to the government, using the government to get our way, there's our sign we have a weak argument. There's our sign we've already lost in the court of public opinion.

In Thessalonica, Paul clearly has the stronger argument. Paul knows his Scripture.

But Paul does more than quote the Bible. He's honest, straight, above board. "We never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; nor did we seek praise from mortals" ([1 Thessalonians 2:5b-6a](#)). Paul says what he means and means what he says. He's a straight shooter.

Paul is not lukewarm. He's bold. He has the Holy Spirit. He believes what he says. "Our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" ([1 Thessalonians 1:5a](#)).

Paul witnesses with his lifestyle. "You remember our labor and toil, brothers and sisters; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you" ([1 Thessalonians 2:9](#)). He's not sponging off them while he's proclaiming God's love.

And Paul cares. He has affection for the Thessalonians. "We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers" ([1 Thessalonians 1:2](#)). Paul genuinely cares for them.

His caring is not rough. It's not tough love. "We were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children" ([1 Thessalonians 2:7](#)). They're special. "You have become dear to us" ([1 Thessalonians 2:8b](#)).

Paul is not perfect. None of us are. In my opinion he can be both headstrong and arrogant.

But if we were pagans in Thessalonica, if we worshiped Zeus or Artemis or one of the other gods, and we saw what was happening down at that Synagogue, who would we believe? Who would win the day and convince us of the truth of their claims?

Would we believe those who were angry and grumbled? The ones who hired a bunch of thugs and tried to start a riot? Would they win our hearts and minds?

Or would we believe Paul? Someone who knows his Scripture, but who's not overbearing. Someone who clearly believes but presents his beliefs with gentleness, love, and genuine affection? Someone who takes to heart the old saying that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

God calls us all to share our faith, to witness to how much God loves us. But what kind of witness will we be? The sore loser, who resorts to lies and violence? The specialist who only preaches, or only teaches, or only prays?

I suggest taking Paul as our role model. Being well rounded. Knowing our Scriptures, living our faith, caring for all God's children, sharing our resources, and sharing how much God loves us. May our witness not be lopsided, but well rounded. Amen.