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 This week at MRC we continued our Autumn series in 1 Thessalonians as we reached chapter 2. We noted last week that Paul in the first half of the letter seems to be defending himself from accusations and charges against him and his ministry.

Last week we focussed in on the results of his ministry - namely the Thessalonian church who, although small, had been utterly transformed by the gospel ministry of Paul and his team - this is supernatural - it shows that Paul is a legitimate minister of the gospel. This week Paul seems to defend himself and the motivations and methods that lie behind his work, again seeking to defend and so show himself to be a legitimate minister of the gospel.

We noted a number of aspects regarding Paul's ministry and ended up by looking at the results...

Determination.

v1-2 Paul and his team were determined (and fruitful) - despite strong opposition and hardships. Contrasting with 'truth peddlers' of their time who would have run as soon as the heat got turned up too high. No-one dies for a lie. If Paul was not a legitimate minister he would not have been prepared to suffer as he did.

Drive.

From v3-7 Paul specifically defends against (at least) 4 attacks that all spring from a self-centred ministry... power grabber (v4), people pleaser (v5), money stealer (v5 and v9) and praise seeker (v6). Essentially Paul is painted as self-centred and each of these is a facet of that. He defends himself strongly saying that the Lord appointed him to this, that they were trying to please God not man, that they funded themselves and that they were not seeking human

approval.

Design.

Paul describes the 2 facets of his ministry as being like a nursing mother (v7-8) and a father (v10-12). The mother loves, sharing both the gospel but their lives. Full of grace. The Father urges and encourages - pointing them to live live worthy of God. We need both as we seek to minister to one another. One without the other is dangerous.

Developed.

The outworking of this kind of a ministry is a mature church, prepared to suffer as Paul and his team did. Paul tells them that these who have caused their suffering will be held to account for their wrongdoing and persecution. Paul uses the past tense as it is a certain reality. With the truth of future certain judgment in mind, how much do we need the kind of biblical ministry that Paul has outlined for us.

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As always here are a few questions to start off your group discussion.

- What do you remember from last week?
- Why does v1-2 legitimize Paul and his ministry?
- Have a look over the verses again, how many 'accusations' can you see against Paul's ministry? How does he defend himself? Where do you see these wrong drives today?

What drives Paul in his role? How do we see these things in current ministry? How do they apply to each of us?

- How does Paul describe his ministry as 'a mother' and 'a father' what is he getting at? What does a ministry look like that has both of these facets?

What happens if one is not there? What would a church look like where we were all 'mums and dads' (in this sense) to each other?

- 1 key thing to take away and reflect upon?