



# Why risk evangelism?

*Imagine your church holds a week of outreach events in your community. Quite a few turn up to the first couple. Some even become Christians. And then...*

... there's a riot. The gospel provokes anger, and some of you are beaten up. Your church leaders leave town, for their own safety. And non-Christians start to say to you: *Why do you follow guys who are failures, whose message provokes riots? Why do you follow guys who don't love you, who have run off? If your Jesus-God is so great—if your leaders are right—then why has he let you be beaten up in riots?*

Those were the questions the Thessalonians seem to have been facing, because those were the circumstances in which their church had been born (read Acts 17 v 1-10). In chapter 2, Paul addresses these questions—and teaches us a lot about what gospel ministry is.

## Success?

### Read 1 Thessalonians 2 v 1-2

- ❓ *What does Paul claim about his visit to Thessalonica (v 1)?*

The ESV's translation is most helpful here: it was "not in vain".

- ❓ *But why was it not in vain (v 2b)?*

## Pleased?

### Read 1 Thessalonians 2 v 3-6

- ❓ *What was Paul not doing as he proclaimed the gospel (v 3, 5)?*
- ❓ *What was he not looking for (v 4, 6)?*
- ❓ *So what motivated him to share Christ? Who was he trying to please (v 4)?*

What stops us evangelising? Often, it is because we think that: it will fail (no one will become a Christian); or it will hurt (we might lose out in some way); or our reputations will suffer (no one will like us). But when we think like this, we are thinking in a worldly way that takes God out of the picture—we want visible success, security, and praise. Paul doesn't live like that—he lives to please God, and he knows that God is pleased when his gospel is proclaimed, especially when that involves taking a risk.

This is liberating—but only if we learn to see our lives in this way. Who will you seek to please today? Yourself? Others? Or God?

## Apply

- ❓ *If you have given up evangelising because you think it keeps failing, how do these verses encourage you to keep going?*
- ❓ *If you have given up (or never got started) because you don't want to lose friends or popularity, how do these verses challenge you deeply?*

There is probably someone to whom you could say today: "I've been thinking of you as I've read in my Bible the last couple of verses. Can I tell you why Christianity matters so much, and what it is?" And then take them through 1 v 9-10.

- ❓ *Will you take a risk, please God, and do it?*