

1 THESSALONIANS 2:9-12 "Walk In A Manner Worthy Of The God Who Called You"

1 Thessalonians 2:9-12 ⁹ For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and so *is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; ¹¹ just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children, ¹² so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

As we look at Paul's life we see a man full of passion. He never seemed to do anything half-heartedly. In fact, when we first meet him in the scriptures this man called Saul was impassioned to put a stop to this new sect which claimed to be worshipping a man who supposedly rose from the dead and whom they claimed was the Jewish Messiah sent from Jehovah.

To a Pharisee this was nothing short of blasphemy, and his blood boiled with such intensity that he set out on a quest to destroy this sect that would dare use his Scriptures to justify this heresy, and those who embraced it.

But even after Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus and he embraced this Messiah by faith, his passion for service was not diminished. To the contrary, it was enhanced because it was now, not a service performed out of compulsion, but for the first time in his life he actually knew the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, instead of knowing about Him. And now his service was compelled by love in humbleness.

We see this same passion many years later during his second missionary journey which now has him in Corinth writing to the Thessalonians.

As he writes, his passion burns as he recounts how he desired to give of himself to these Thessalonian Christians who, just months before, were blasphemous pagans whose only desire was to please themselves.

We saw this last week in verse 8, "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us."

Passionate Paul, giving them his all; his very life. And in this letter he reminds them of how he gave them his all.

1TH 2:9 "Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you."

Practicing his trade as a tent maker, he chose to work hard and to support himself as well as his friends. He says, 'night and day we worked as we then we preached the gospel to you.'

When you and I think of work, an 8 hour work day comes to mind, and then a five day work week; 40 hours a week for many people. Of course there are those who have jobs that entail working longer hours; possibly 10 hours a day, up to 6 days a week, 60 hours.

In Paul's day it was not uncommon to work 12 hours a day. Sunrise to sunset. As Jews they would do this only 6 days a week, but it amounted to 72 hours a week for many people.

Donald Grey Barnhouse recounts a story he read where "in the days of Thomas Jefferson, (a little over 200 hundreds years ago in this country) there was great agitation because someone in Philadelphia was suggesting they have a 60 hour work week, ten hours a day instead of a 72 hour work week, which had been common in Philadelphia for all carpenters and artisans of the period.....

..... In the days of the Revolutionary War, everyone who had a job -- carpenters, masons, bricklayers, and the people who kept the streets clean -- worked 12 hours a day and people in Philadelphia thought it was terrible that the common man should be trying for a 10 hour-a-day job. "What was civilization coming to that men were so lazy as to want to work only 10 hours a day, six days a week!"

Well, obviously times have changed. Don't get me wrong, I'm not suggesting we bring back the 72 hour work week. But the point is that Paul's work ethic did not let him sit idly by. He worked hard at his trade, but he worked just as hard at his ministry for God's people as he taught them and loved them and encouraged them. Night and day he poured his life into them, and they loved him for it.

They acknowledged that Paul loved them and here Paul calls on them as witnesses to such devotion as he says in verse 10, "You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed."

Paul wasn't trying to puff himself up, he was simply stating what God had done in his life and those of his companions, and how they simply demonstrated the work God began in them as they worked among the Thessalonians.

And similar to verse 5 of this chapter, he calls on both them and God to be witnesses of their hearts as they served and loved the flock God had given them for a short time.

Notice the three words in verse 10, "holy, righteous and blameless."

The NASB puts it, "devoutly, uprightly, and blamelessly."

Paul was holy. His life was devoted to God who is holy. And as he imitated his Savior Jesus Christ he simply walked in the ways the Lord wanted him to go. It's not as though Paul walked around on a cloud with a halo on all day. Holiness comes as a result of Christ's righteousness imputed to us by faith, but it's also shown by loving God because He first loved us and then walking in obedience, by His power and strength, because we love Him.

Righteous. The KJV puts it, justly. The idea here is that while his behavior toward God was holy, his behavior toward these believers in Thessalonica was just, righteous, or as the literal translation might be rendered, equitable. In other words, he was fair with them, but that just behavior toward them was always measured and prompted by God's word with God's love.

Blamelessly. The idea here is that, though Paul was certainly not perfect, his behavior could be scrutinized without his conscience being in constant turmoil over ungodly behavior. What Paul was living before these people he felt they could imitate, because what they were imitating was Godliness manifesting itself in Paul's life.

Speaking of the conscience, Paul gives instruction to Timothy regarding the type of men who would be eligible to serve in leadership roles; the kind of men who were able to imitate Timothy as he lived a Godly life before them.

1TI 3:8-10 "Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. 9 They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons."

A clear conscience before God starts from knowing that, in Christ, we are declared not guilty regarding our sin which we deserve to pay for. But in thanks for that gift we follow Christ and desire to please Him in all things.

In our culture today, there is a movement away from taking responsibility for our actions. If you have a problem with alcohol, it's a disease that has overcome you and you need sympathy instead of a rebuke. If you prefer being identified as a woman, if in fact, you're a man, then you're seen as courageous, as is Bruce Jenner, after coming out as Caitlyn Jenner in 2015.

The problem with these attitudes is that God has designed into us a conscience which even at its most base level knows when we have violated His standards. And, in fact, when a person outside of Christ violates God's word they are truly guilty before God, despite them suppressing God's truth in unrighteousness.

Romans 1:18-19 ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

But, the question needs to be raised for the child of God, is your conscience clear before Him with your behavior? Should others be imitating what you do? Are you in fact imitating Christ?

God's word is a good measure of how we're walking with the Lord and if we're walking by faith in obedience to Him. This is why Paul encourages us in 2TI 2:22 "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

Is your heart pure before God? Do you find yourself confessing your sin to Him and grieving over it as you flee from it? Or do you find yourself not being too concerned about it and fleeing to sin more often than fleeing from it?

Where is your heart? Is it a heart that seeks after God or self? If it's a heart that seeks after self, is that a pure heart? Paul tells us what a pure heart is in the verse I just read.

It's a heart which will fall short at times but it will accomplish more often than not, by God's strength, to flee from sin and pursue His righteousness and the faith He's given us, along with the love and peace from knowing Him and being forgiven of our sin in Christ.

This is the way Paul walked. He didn't take the credit or give glory to himself. He simply obeyed and walked by faith and he expects all of God's people to do the same, because God expects that.

In fact that's exactly what Paul says in EPH 1:4 "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."

Whose sight? God's sight. He's the One who is watching and He's the One we ultimately should be pleasing. You remember how Paul uses the simile of a nursing mother tenderly caring for her child? Well, in the next verse in our text Paul uses another simile which is similar in some ways.

1TH 2:11 "For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children,..."

F.F. Bruce says, "while Paul compares himself to a nurse or mother when he speaks of cherishing his converts, he compares himself to a father when he speaks of instructing them."

Paul wasn't presuming to replace a father or mother in the lives of these people, but using a figure of speech, that is a simile, he shows them how he tries to watch over them in a spiritual sense, not unlike how a mother or father watches over their children.

A few years ago in this country and particularly in Florida there was a group of men by the names of Don Basham, Derik Prince and Bob Mumford, among others, who were instrumental in starting a phenomenon called the "Shepherding Movement" back in the 1970's.

The basic philosophy of this movement was that these men and other leaders assumed a father/mother role in almost a literal sense. For example, whenever their followers were making personal decisions like buying a house or a car they must first go to their leader for prayer and then based upon how their leader was led by the Lord they would give permission to that person to make such a decision.

The same would be true of other things like choosing a marriage partner. The Shepherd would decide for that person if it was God's will to marry such and such a person, even when both the man and woman were believers.

Now, they had every authority to discourage a believer and an unbeliever not to be engaged in a relationship which would lead to a binding bond as Paul tells us in 2Corinthians.

2CO 6:14-15 "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?"

But what these men of the Shepherding movement had done was to take a biblical teaching on shepherding a flock and abuse it in an unbiblical way. As a result, it left the lives of many Christians crippled because they were denied the ability to make many of their own decisions in life.

When the movement broke apart it discouraged many Christians because it left them feeling abandoned like a child would feel if he were abandoned by a father or mother.

I might add that most of those "Shepherds" have repented of their lording it over their flocks, but the damage has already been done, and some of their followers have picked up the ball and have continued with that unbiblical movement.

Paul did not assert such a position. But, his love for these people was very much like a father and mother. And, to the extent that we love the flock like our heavenly Father does, this is biblical, as we see with our God, who used this same figure of speech of Himself.

ISA 66:13 "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem."

PSA 103:13-14 "As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; 14 for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust."

This too, is an example for all fathers to be compassionate to their children and not to break their spirits or to misrepresent their heavenly Father who is our example.

EPH 6:4 "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

Fathers should be training and instructing by what they say, but also by their behavior that they would be the example. And this is what Paul was to the Thessalonians. In verse 11 he say's, that as a father, he exhorted them, encouraged them and implored them to move Godward in all their behavior.

The word exhort as it's used in the KJV and the NAS is more closely related to the word encourage as you and I would understand encourage in the positive sense as Paul uses it in 1Thes.5:14 where he speaks of encouraging the faint-hearted.

And so this kind of exhorting is more gentle in its approach and Paul was often gentle in his dealings with the body of Christ. The second thing Paul mentions is, "comforting" the flock. In the English this sounds very similar to encouraging which is why the NAS uses the word encouraging in this verse.

The fact is, it is very similar even in the Greek. Vincent in his N.T. Word studies suggests that better than comforting is persuading. He say's, "Persuasion is the form of the exhortation assumed."

It would seem that this was a bit more forthright in its approach while still being gentle. However, the third word used is "urging" in the NIV, "imploing" in the NAS and "charging" in the KJV.

All three words denote a more forceful approach in directing them Godward. F.F. Bruce says, "this verb has lost its original force of invoking witnesses. It has a more authoritative nuance than the two preceding verbs." This is why Vincent says, "The verb means to conjure or appeal to by something sacred."

The idea here is that Paul charges them as if he would call someone to witness that charge; in this case, the God of the universe.

The exact word is used elsewhere in God's word with the same idea. We read in Gal. 5:3, "And I **testify** again to every man who receives circumcision that he is under obligation to keep the whole law."

EPH 4:17 "So I tell you this, and **insist** on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking."

Paul can gently nudge and encourage but there are times when he must insist or urge or charge God's people to do what God desires. But, he's balanced about it and we should be as well.

No one likes to get beat up verbally by someone who seems to know no other way of "encouraging in the Lord". What happens is that you avoid that person when the balance of comfort and urging is not employed by that other person.

The other extreme is when urging is not used at all. And so you'll have people come to you for "counseling" when in fact they're only looking for someone to tell them what they want to hear.

Balance; biblical balance which always includes love and truth.

But what is Paul encouraging, comforting and urging these Thessalonians towards?

1TH 2:12 "encouraging, comforting and urging you to **live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.**"

Whether it's done gently or in an authoritative way or a combination of the both, the bottom line is that none of us should live any other way than to God's honor and glory.

The NIV uses the expression above, "live lives" worthy of God. A better translation of the entire verse would be, "... walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His kingdom and glory." NAS

The word "walk" in this verse is a figure of speech used to describe obedience to God by His people. This expression is found in many places in God's word.

EPH 4:1 "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to **walk** in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ..." (NASV)

COL 1:10 "... so that you may **walk in** a manner worthy of the Lord to please Him in all aspects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." (NASV)

You young people have heard this from your parents, because we heard it from ours. 'When you go out to the restaurant act civilized.' Or, 'when we meet with the principal of the school be on your best behavior.'

When I was in High school and we were playing a football game at somebody else's school the coaches would always tell the team not act like animals until you got on the field because you're representing our school in front of these people.

This is the idea we have before us here as we represent our God. However, it goes light years beyond the idea of just being on your best behavior because you represent God.

We are to show the world that we are Christ's Ambassadors and His representatives. But, unlike the child who is encouraged to be an angel in front of the principal, knowing he'll revert back to a devil when home, we as Christ's people must seek to please Him always.

God is worthy of our allegiance and obedience and we should walk worthy of Him who has called us into His Kingdom and glory. And herein lies our motivation for such a walk. He has personally called us from sin to light. We were on a road to hell and He has snatched us, if you will, from the fire.

Can you love that kind of a God who loved you enough to take your penalty of sin? Paul says you must, because God's calling has a purpose, and that is to glorify Himself through your life as He transforms you more and more into the image of His Son Jesus Christ.

Don't take your obedience to God lightly, and don't think that you have no reason to walk according to His ways. He's given you life eternal in Christ. Don't embarrass or insult Him by living according to your own ways. "Walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own Kingdom and glory."

A moment ago I read you Col.1:10. Let me give you the rest of the thought in its context that the Holy Spirit wants to convey to us this morning.

COL 1:10-14 "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

There should be no greater motivation, no greater love and no greater relationship than the one we have with our God through Christ. Make Him proud. Love and serve Him faithfully all your days in the power of His Spirit.