

20200513 1Thessalonians 2 Living Lives worthy

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1 Thessalonians 2 New King James Version (NKJV)

Paul's Conduct

2 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain **(or was a failure)**. **2** But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. **3** For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit.

4 But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. **5** For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. **6** Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. **7** But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. **8** So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. **9** For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.

10 You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; **11** as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, **12** that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. **14** For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, **15** who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, **16** forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.

17 But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. **18** Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us. **19** For what is our hope, or joy,

or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? ²⁰For you are our glory and joy.

Paul had been delighted with this little church. He's excited about them. The people had heard the gospel and the change in their lives was profound. They received the power of God and they were radically changed affecting the community around them. We still need the power of the Holy Spirit.

You know there's two opposite positions that Christians take: One group denies the power of God but they're totally focused just on the Bible. We might call that the "dry group" and we see them in contrast to those who just seem totally focused on the "power of God". They can sometimes get into the weird and wacky. There needs to be a balance and a wisdom. God wants to work in each of us individually and as a body. Paul is excited about them, but he's concerned about them. They were still just children in the Lord.

Paul was concerned because he had brought the gospel to them, but then he had been sort of run off quickly.

v.2 Paul starts off assuring them that it wasn't all a waste. Think about how wasteful it seemed that Jesus died on the cross. His life just ended. It looks like a big bust, a failure. Paul's letting them know that things aren't always as we think they are. Sometimes things look like a big failure, but they're not a failure. We don't have the privilege to see the whole picture of what God is doing. What appears to be bad is often a really positive situation.

I remember losing my business and feeling like it was a bad failure that I would never overcome and yet God knew it wasn't a failure at all. I had to go through all of that to be positioned to answer His ultimate calling on my life; being pastor here at Union Grove. So many times that's the way things are in our life. Things are rarely as they seem to be in the church also.

Sometimes things look like a failure and they're not a failure at all. Sometimes (when I'm not looking at things the way God looks at them) I think, "God, is what I'm doing at Union Grove really helping anyone at all?" We've been together now for going on four years and we've been through a lot together. Remember the home we built for a member. We poured our hearts and souls into that project and then it wasn't appreciated, and in fact that member disregarded what we had done for them. It didn't matter. God was doing things in and through us whether it was appreciated or not. God's ways are just not our ways. And, often God just does things in ways we just would never work out in the same way.

Remember how Jesus was first announced to the lowest in society, the shepherds who watched their flocks by night. What appears important on the outside is not what's important to God. Paul then continues in verse 3 talking about the hardship they went through in Phillipi. They were thrown into that cell, and what happened around midnight? They were singing and

praising God in the difficulty of their moment and their chains came off and they were led out by an angel.

Paul says that in spite of that opposition, they remained bold to tell the gospel message. They did not let getting thrown into jail stop them from coming to Thessalonika. Paul was pretty much in trouble and abused in every town he came to. But, Paul just carried on with what he felt God wanted him to do. It's hard to keep going when you've that kind of hardship. I think a lot of the time we just want to "blend in" and not stir up any trouble. But Paul, says in spite of suffering and strong opposition, "we dared to keep on communicating the gospel" to you guys the very same message that got us in trouble back in Thessalonika.

Paul depended on the HS to give him the boldness to keep on keeping on. This is because there is boldness that comes with holiness. When you choose to follow God's way and do things his way, you'll sometimes do things that are sort of reckless. It's like watching Larry right now jumping into his music like never before. You might say, "Faber, what does playing country songs have to do with living for Jesus. It's because Larry's new pushing into

Verse 3 & 4 . *³For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. ⁴But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.*

Paul says our message wasn't from error or deceit. We came because we were out to please God and not to please men. It is God who tests our hearts. If I am following the Holy Spirit, living my life the way I am supposed to live it, it is God who will test my heart. When we become unconcerned at what others think about us, and when we're more interested in letting God test our hearts, we're on the right track.

As a pastor, I cannot be a "man pleaser" or "woman pleaser". If I speak the word of God to you in love, then your reaction is up to you. If I start being more concerned with what the audience thinks than what God thinks, I'm finished. I need to share that Jesus died for each of your sins. What you do with that message is between you and God.

Paul then repeats the thought in verses 5 and 6. *⁶Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. ⁷But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.*

Don't set out to make people happy. Set out to love them with the love of Christ, speaking the truth of the gospel. We are all sinners, and without the saving love of Christ, we are destined to be separated forever from the love of Christ.

But we all want to be liked by others. Remember what I've said that we all want to be loved and accepted and to have value and worth. When I'm attacked or torn down, there is a part of me that wants to set that thing right.

V.7 & 8 We were gentle among you like a mother to a child. I'm trying to be more gentle. It's fun for all of us to watch Stephanie and Aaron taking care of EJ. They don't ask anything of him, they just pour themselves into him. We should be likewise in each of our ministries. Like Paul, I've never asked anything from any of you all. I am grateful that God put me in such a position to be able to pour myself into you without compensation. What I want from you all is to see you living your lives out to the glory of God. That is my hope and my glory. That is my compensation. That's all I look for.

We should never want to be a burden to those unto whom we minister. Be ready to love others, pray with others, serve others, and pour your life into them. Get into it with others unto whom you minister. This past two days, I've worked side by side a friend who needs the gospel. I'm open with him about the love of Christ, but I'm never preachy. I even teased him as we were moving an old tractor yesterday. As we passed the pond out on my place, I told him, "you know, you could accept the love of Christ and I could baptize you right here." He just laughed, but he knows that I love him.

Too many preachers, teachers, and television evangelists are all about what YOU can do for THEM. It should be the other way around. Does that say that Christian workers should not be supported by the church. Paul says, "NO". In fact he goes to great length to say how it is right to support those who minister to us. But, Paul knew that God wanted it differently with this little church in Thessalonika. He had a profession from which he could live.

In verses 10 - 12, Paul speaks more as a father. A father and a mother have very different roles. I don't quite even know how to describe the differences spiritually between my mother and my father. When we need comfort we go to mom. But when a corrective word is needed, it is often most effective coming from the father. Sometimes we need to hear things from mom and sometimes we need to hear things from our dads.

A father is there to urge living lives worthy. A father is corrective. Sometimes people don't like that. Sometimes people want me to call up and check to see why they're not in church, but if I try to correct them, they'll tell me that it's none of my business. They don't want a shepherd that corrects. They want to be coddled. They want my comfort, but they don't want my correction. Sometimes a father has to show up and say, "you're not coming to church like the Bible commands you to do. " "Be sanctified in your life". "Be sanctified in your giving."

And why do I need to correct you as a "father"? Paul says it in verse 12 *"¹² that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."*

Do others see a realness in your life that attracts them to Christ, or do they see someone who is doing things under the table, and who's living a double kind of life. I want you each to "walk worthy of God who has called you into His own kingdom and glory."

V.14 "you became imitators" of the church in Judea that had suffered so much in the name of God. There are always those out there who are contrary. The Jews did not want the gentiles to receive the gospel and be saved. The Jews were okay with the gospel message but they became enraged when Paul said that God wanted to save the gentiles as well.

v. 16 He says the wrath of God has come upon them at last. Paul wrote this about 10 years from the destruction of Jerusalem. It ALL came down. In 70 AD the Romans came in and turned it all to rubble. Paul knew and understood it was all about to come down. And it happened because they rejected the Lord. The fall of Jerusalem is just a peek into what will happen at the end of times.

Let's end there tonight and we'll take up on Sunday with verse 17 as we keep listening into Paul's conversation with the little church in Thessalonika.

Let us pray.