

April 9, 2017

## “Walk in a Manner Worthy of God”

**Focal Passage: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 (NASB)**

Cross References: Acts 16-17; 1 Corinthians 9:14; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6

**Lesson Idea:** Just as Paul and his companions ministered the gospel in godly ways, we should live our lives in a manner worthy of the God who calls us into His own kingdom and glory.

### BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Apr 2 1 Samuel 21-24	Apr 3 1 Samuel 25-27
Apr 4 1 Samuel 28-31	Apr 5 2 Samuel 1-3
Apr 6 2 Samuel 4-7	Apr 7 2 Samuel 8-12
Apr 8 2 Samuel 13-15	Apr 9 2 Samuel 16-18

**Background:** from David Guzik, *1 Thessalonians*:

This begins a section where Paul defended his own character and ministry before the Thessalonians. This wasn't because Paul was insecure about his ministry, but because he had many enemies in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-6; Acts 17:13) who discredited him in his absence, especially because of his hurried departure from Thessalonica. Paul's enemies said he left town quickly because he was a self-serving coward.

“This self-revelation is not being made because the Thessalonian believers themselves were suspicious or doubtful about the missionaries. Paul is answering the insidious attacks being made by scandalmongers outside the church because of their hatred for him.” (Hiebert)

Paul wrote here in a personal manner, but this really wasn't a personal issue for Paul. He knew that it mattered for the sake of the gospel. If Paul was discredited, then the gospel message itself would be discredited.

### 1 Thessalonians 1:1-12

*1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, 2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. 3 For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. 5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you*

*know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness— 6 nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. 7 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. 8 Having so fond an affection 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 very dear to us.*

*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.*

### DISCUSSION:

- v 1-2. Why could some people have thought Paul's missionary trip to Thessalonica had been in vain? (Read Acts 16 to see how Paul was mistreated in Philippi. Read Acts 17 to see his problems in Thessalonica.)
- Why would boldness to speak the gospel be hard in the midst of opposition? What opposition have you faced because of the Gospel?

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

“The word rendered conflict (*agon*) contains a metaphor drawn from the athletic games or the arena. It means the place of contest, and then the contest itself - a race, a struggle, a battle. Such a conflict always involves intense exertion and strenuous, persistent effort to overcome the determined opposition or the dangerous antagonist.” (Hiebert)

- v 3-4. What does “exhortation” mean? How does Paul defend his message? How does God evaluate the way believers share the gospel?
- v 5-6. What practices did Paul assert that his missionary team never did? How do you see these practices alive in Christianity today? How do you avoid them?

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

**For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness:** The purity of Paul's message made it apparent that there was no deceit, uncleanness, or guile in his ministry. In the first century world Paul lived in, there were many competing religions, and many ministers of those religions were motivated by greed and gain.

The city of Thessalonica sat on the Egnatian Way, the famous highway that went east to west through Macedonia. Thessalonica was also an important port and a melting pot city with cultures from all over the world. There were a staggering variety of religions and religious professionals in Thessalonica. In this city, you would find the worship of the gods of the Olympian pantheon, especially Apollo, Athena and Hercules. There were the native Greek mystery religions, celebrating Dionysis and the sex and drinking cult. The Greek intellectual and philosophical traditions were also represented. There were shrines to many Egyptian gods: Isis, Sarapis, Anubis. Also present were the Roman State cults that deified the political heroes of Rome. There were also the Jewish people and the God-fearing Gentiles.

Most of these religions were missionary minded, and sought to spread their faith using itinerant evangelists and preachers. Most of these missionaries were opportunists, who took everything they could from their listeners, and then moved on to find someone else to support them.

**Even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts:** Paul knew his gospel wouldn't always please men, but he knew that it was pleasing to God.

Paul tried to make the gospel as attractive as possible, but he never changed its central character or focus. Paul never compromised issues like man's need, God's savior, the cross, the resurrection, and the new life.

- v 6. What did Paul maintain he had the right to assert? Why?
- v 7-8. How did Paul treat the church? Why? What did Paul and his companions desire to impart to the church? How can we demonstrate this same attitude?

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

**But also our own lives:** Paul's preaching was effective because he gave not only the gospel, but himself as well (also our own lives), and he gave because of love (you had become dear to us).

It has been said that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Paul gave both his care and his knowledge to the Thessalonians.

**For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil:** Paul recognized his right to be supported by those he ministered to (1 Corinthians 9:14), but voluntarily gave up that right to set himself apart from missionaries of

false religions. Paul denied his rights and took a higher standard upon himself.

- v 9. Why did Paul and his companions work so hard? How does this inspire you?
- v 10. How should these adverbs describe all of our behavior: *devoutly; uprightly; blamelessly*?
- v 11. Why should preachers and teachers of the gospel spend time *exhorting and encouraging and imploring Christians as a father would his own children*?
- v 12. What does it mean to "walk in a manner worthy of God?" Since God calls us into His own kingdom and glory, how should that motivate us to live worthy lives?

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

(1 Thessalonians 2:10-12) Paul's own behavior and message to the Thessalonians demonstrates the integrity of his character before God and man.

**You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe:** It is impressive that Paul could freely appeal to his own life as an example. Paul didn't have to say, "Please don't look at my life. Look to Jesus." Paul wanted people to look to Jesus, but he could also tell them to look at his life, because the power of Jesus was real in his life.

As seen in 1 Thessalonians 1:6, Paul was comfortable in the idea of other Christians following his example. He repeated the same idea in passages like Philippians 3:17 and 1 Corinthians 11:1.

This is a worthy goal for any Christian today; to live a life that declares how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among others. This is the kind of life that draws others to follow Jesus for themselves.

**How we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you . . . that you would walk worthy of God:** Paul himself lived justly and blamelessly, but he also told the Thessalonians they should live the same way. He could tell them that they should walk worthy of God because his life and message were consistent.

**APPLICATION:**

- ✓ How bold are you to share the gospel?
- ✓ How committed are you to *exhorting, encouraging, and imploring* others to follow Christ?

- ✓ How could your life be characterized as *walking in a manner worthy of the God who called you into His own kingdom and glory?*

Lesson by Bro Stan