

# 1 Thessalonians

## I. Introduction

- A. **1 Thessalonians 2:9-12** . . . 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.
- B. Today we are going to look at the way and the cost of Paul's, Silvanus', and Timothy's service to God, and the response they were looking for in those they evangelized, taught, and disciplined.
- C. Pray

## II. 1 Thessalonians 2:9-16

- A. [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.
  - 1. Here in Thessalonica, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy made the personal commitment to do missionary work, church planting, teaching, and discipleship at no cost to the Thessalonians who responded by repenting, trusting in Jesus Christ, and proceeded to live a Christ-like life. And though this was a blessing to the Thessalonian believers, it was personally costly for Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy.
  - 2. I do believe it is worth noting that God was not requiring such a commitment from them, and Jesus didn't even ask His own disciples to do this.
    - a. In fact, after sending out His twelve disciples, Jesus sent out seventy others to go – in pairs – ahead of Him to every city and place where He himself was going. And He said to them in **Luke 10:3-7**, "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. [4] Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. [5] Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' [6] If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. [7] Stay

in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; **for the laborer is worthy of his wages.**”

- b. We know Paul understood this principle from what he wrote in **1 Corinthians 9:13-14**, “Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? [14] So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.”
3. The point is that these three men would have been well within the will of God to live off the hospitality and offerings of the new converts, but they made a deliberate choice not to. And here in **chapter 2**, Paul gives us two reasons why:
  - a. **First (vs 9)**, the three men did not want to be a burden to any of the new believers because their situation was already hard enough due to the persecution from their own countrymen.
  - b. **Second (vs 12)**, they wanted to be an example of humility, of hard work, and of willingly suffering for the sake of God and the gospel without complaint – in the hope that their example would give the new believers an added reason to walk in a manner worthy of God.
  - c. Given these two reasons, it ought to be clear that Paul is not bragging on himself, Silvanus, and Timothy, but rather reminding these believers what kind of effort it takes to live a godly life in a challenging, sinful world.
4. Here in **vs 9**, Paul describes what it was like for these three men to serve in this way, and in doing so Paul uses two words and a phrase.
  - a. First word: **labor** – which speaks of hard physical work that apparently resulted from working to pay their own way while devoting time to the ministry. And though Paul does not say what kind of labor they did, **Acts 18:3** says he was a tentmaker.
  - b. Second word: **hardship** – which speaks of a weariness and fatigue of mind and body, most likely from working two full-time jobs – (1) the work of tent-making and (2) the work of evangelism, church planting, and discipleship.
  - c. Phrase: **working night and day** – which indicates the amount of time Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy put into these two jobs, and which indicates the reason for the weariness and fatigue.
5. Paul finishes **vs 9** by saying, “**we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.**”

- a. The word **proclaimed** speaks of someone who says what he has been given to say by the one who sent him.
  - (1) In this regard, Paul was like Jesus, for Jesus said in **John 12:49**, “I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.”
  - (2) God may or may not speak to us as He spoke to Paul, but He has spoken to us in His Word – the Bible. Therefore, when we speak about God and the way of righteousness to those around us, we ought to say what the Bible says about God and righteousness without toning it down to gain acceptance of the message or jacking it up to pressure someone to take the message seriously.
- b. The phrase “**the gospel of God**” first appears in **Mark 1:14**, and is used to describe the source and content of Jesus’ teaching: **Mark 1:14-15**, “Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching **the gospel of God**, [15] and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”
  - (1) This phrase is used twice in Romans, once in 2 Corinthians, three times in 1 Thessalonians, and once in 1 Peter.
  - (2) **1 Peter 4:17**, “For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first (*that is, if judgment begins with those who are obeying the gospel of God*), what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”
    - (a) And let me remind you here that the gospel of God is the broad spectrum of Jesus’ and the NT’s teaching, not just the narrow spectrum of the gospel of salvation.
    - (b) Therefore, obeying the gospel of God includes repenting and trusting in Jesus for salvation, but it also includes all the rest of what Jesus, Peter, James, John, Jude, and Paul teach in the NT.
- c. Since Jesus preached the gospel of God, then studying the essence of His messages from the four gospels is a good way to get a clear idea of what the gospel of God is, what it includes, and what it doesn’t include.

B. [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,

1. As we did in vs 9, we will look at specific words in these two verses to gain a clearer understanding of Paul's message and how we can apply it to our own lives.
2. Paul's first three descriptive words deal with our character and behavior as church leaders and as Christians in general.
  - a. First word: (they behaved) **devoutly** – speaks of being sincere, serious minded, and earnest in their ministry efforts.
  - b. Second word: (they behaved) **uprightly** – points to their morality, honesty, and conformity to the truth they were proclaiming. In other words, they lived what they taught.
  - c. Third word: (they behaved) **blamelessly** – they were careful to say and do what was right so that no one could justifiably find fault with them. In other words, they behaved in a way that kept them free from blame in any and every thing related to their work and ministry in Thessalonica.
  - d. This certainly is a standard of character and behavior church leaders ought to rise to. But it is also a standard all Christians ought to live up to – whether in the home, the work place, the community, or the church.
3. The next three words tell us how we are to deal with those we are evangelizing, teaching, instructing, or correcting.
  - a. First word: (they were) **exhorting** – to exhort speaks of trying to motivate someone to action or change or perseverance through the use of wisely selected words, sound arguments, practical advice, and thoughtfully answered questions.
  - b. Second word: (they were) **encouraging** – to encourage someone is to try and increase their confidence or courage or perseverance when they feel like giving up, or are discouraged, or feel inadequate and unable to deal with or accomplish what lies before them. Encouragement is often needed when people are trying new things or breaking old habits or facing an ongoing situation that looks like it will never end.
  - c. Third word: (they were) **imploring** – to implore is to go beyond exhorting by adding an element of entreating, pleading, or even begging.
    - (1) When people are faced with the challenge of repenting, trusting in Jesus, and living a life that is not only new, but

contrary to the life they lived before, exhorting them to do the right, smart, wise thing may not be enough.

(2) Therefore, taking the next step of imploring just might motivate them to do the right thing.

4. Now it is important to notice the tenderness with which Paul exhorted, encouraged, and implored each one of the Thessalonians. According to his own words, he did this **as a father would his own children**. There are three things I want to point out about this statement.

a. **First**, this is how God deals with us. David affirms this in **Psalm 103:8-10, 13-14**, “The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. [9] He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. [10] He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. [13] Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. [14] For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.”

b. The **second** thing I want to point out is that we want to be dealt with this way. In fact, we are thankful God deals with us this way that we praise Him for doing so.

(1) Now, if we want to be dealt with in this way, and if we are thankful God deals with us this way, **we ought to deal with others this way** – including those nearest and dearest, and those who are frustrating or obnoxious.

(2) After all, dealing with others the way we want to be dealt with is simply loving our neighbor as ourselves. And we could add that it is simply living by a single standard instead of a double-standard – with a harder one for you and an easier one for me.

c. **Third**, I want to point out a second reason beyond the one just given for dealing with others this way, and the second reason is a commitment to other people’s present well-being, their growth toward maturity, and their future – both now and in eternity.

5. Now you may be thinking these methods do not work with everyone, and that is true, they don’t.

a. But we ought to use them as much and as long as possible. In other words, we ought to use them until it is clearly apparent that the other person is committed to resisting the truth and going his or her own rebellious, selfish, and sinful way.

- b. And once again, I want to remind you that tenderness ought never remove or replace or diminish honesty and a clear call to love and righteousness.

6. **How do you deal with the people in your life?**

C. [12] so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

1. **walk in a manner worthy of God** – this is both the motive and the goal of the Christian life lived in this world.

a. It is the **motive** of the Christian life in that we ought to want to live a life that is worthy of God – just as we want to do our job in a way that is worthy of a raise in income.

b. It is the **goal** of the Christian life in that we ought to want to be pleasing to God, to be holy in all our behavior just as God is holy (**1 Peter 1:15**), and to bring honor and praise to God by how we live day by day (**Matthew 5:16**) – which is nothing more than wanting our character, thoughts, desires, words, and deeds to be worthy of God’s love and the price God paid to save us from our sins.

2. This kind of worthiness is not imputed or given to us simply because we are God’s children. This kind of worthiness is chosen and obtained through a sincere, persistent effort at living an upright and blameless life equal to what God deserves.

a. And for those who think I am suggesting you are to do this without God, you couldn’t be more wrong.

b. No one can do this apart from God’s indwelling, empowerment, enablement, promises, word, and answers to your prayers.

c. And yet, even with all of God’s help, only those who choose to live a life that is worthy of God and put in the effort required to live such a life make progress in doing so.

3. Paul affirms this in **Colossians 1:9-12**, “For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of [God’s] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding (*what God does for us*), [10] so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God (*what we do for God*); [11] strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might (*what God does for us*), for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously [12] giving thanks to the Father (*what we do for God*), who has qualified

us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light (*what God does for us*).” (Note **Ephesians 4:1-3**)

4. **who calls you into His own kingdom and glory**
  - a. It is God and only God who rescues us from the domain of darkness and transfers us into the kingdom of His beloved son (**Colossians 1:13**). It is God who reconciles us to Himself (**2 Corinthians 5:19**). It is God who stands at the door and knocks, entreating us to invite Him in so that He can fellowship with us (**Revelation 3:20**). And here in **vs 12** we see that it is God who calls us into His own kingdom and glory – now and for eternity.
  - b. One of the special implications about God calling us is that His call is not a one time call. He keeps calling and keeps calling and keeps calling with the hope that we will answer His call.
5. Do you have that same kind of tenderness and repetitive call for those in your life who haven’t yet answered your call to become a child of God, or to change their ways for their own sake and the sake of those they effect, or to resolve an ongoing conflict, or to work with you in building a loving and trusting relationship between the two of you? Or have you grown discouraged, become angry, or given up?
6. God continues to call. And because we are human rather than divine, I want to remind you that God does not nag or use sarcasm or become derogatory in His repeat calls. His repetitive calls are acts of love that are seeking our good and the good of those we effect. May our calls to those around us be from these same motives – for such motives are worthy of God.