

III. Paul's Parental Care

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1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Aim: To recognize that Paul's defense of his ministry among the Thessalonians provides us with a model for Christian ministry today.

In chapters 2 and 3 of his epistle, Paul sets out to defend his conduct during his stay in Thessalonica. This was not prompted by vanity or a desire to promote himself. As a servant of the gospel, Paul knew that the credibility of the message that he preached depended on the credibility of its messengers. His opponents, who probably included both unbelieving Jews and pagan Gentiles, understood this only too well. If they could succeed in their attempt to undermine his character by attacking his integrity and sincerity, this would have the effect of bringing down the gospel too. No one would take the Christian message seriously if it could be proved that its chief missionary was a money-grubbing fraud with suspect motives. The future of the gospel in Thessalonica was at stake. So Paul reviewed his behavior during the short period that he was actually present in Thessalonica.

Two aspects of the apostolic ministry seem to have come under attack. One was the integrity of the missionaries themselves. Were they genuine teachers, or were they, like many self-appointed philosophers who traveled the Egnatian Way, men who were acting out of self-interest? Paul deals with his motivation for ministry in verses 1-6 exclusively in negative terms (what his motivation was *not*). Secondly, how much did they care for those who did believe them? Since they had fled the city there had neither been sight nor sound of them. They were fly-by-nights, people seemed to be saying, men who thought more of their own safety than of their message or those who received it. Paul deals with his method of ministry, acting as a loving mother and father toward the Thessalonian Christians, positively in verses 7-12.

How does Paul respond to the accusation that he, Silas, and Timothy were just self-interested charlatans? He does so by appealing time and again in his apostolic defense to what the Thessalonians themselves witnessed of them. In this short passage, he appeals to their knowledge and memories of the time the missionary team spent among them in Thessalonica no less than six times (vv. 1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 11).

A. Paul's Motivation for Ministry (1 Thess. 2:1-6)

1. Maltreated by Men (2:1-3)

a) *Not in Vain* (2:1)

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain.

Paul opened the defense of his spiritual leadership with a general statement about the effectiveness of his ministry: it was 'not in vain.' Linguistically, there are two options with regard to 'vain' (*κενή, kenos*). Sometimes the word can mean 'empty-handed.' Hence, the meaning would be that Paul did not come empty-handed; in other words, he came with integrity. Or 'vain' could denote something that was without purpose, effect, or importance and was thus inconsequential or without 'results.'

But the ministry of Paul, Silas, and Timothy in Thessalonica was not so insipid. On the contrary, it had a powerful impact because it produced deep and far-reaching effects in the lives of the

Thessalonians – Lesson 3

Thessalonians—the marks of genuine faith recollected in 1:1-10. The Thessalonians knew better than anyone that the missionaries' visit to the city was not a failure.

b) Not in Comfort (2:2)

Paul's primary point in verse 2 is to highlight the boldness and courageousness with which he preached the gospel in Thessalonica.

(1) Suffering in Philippi (2:2a)

But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi...

Paul points to the circumstances surrounding their coming to Thessalonica as proof of their genuineness. They had not strolled into the city as relaxed and overfed tourists. They had entered still sporting the scars of woeful mishandling in Philippi (cp. Acts 16:16-24). While in Philippi, Paul and his friend Silas had been subjected to a brutal public beating with the added humiliation of having been stripped naked. This was followed by imprisonment and confinement in the stocks. Treatment like this would have been enough to stop any phony mission in its tracks.

'Suffered' refers primarily to the physical abuse they received, whereas 'mistreated' refers to public or even legal abuse. In the first century, *hubrizō* (*ὕβριζεσθαι*, 'mistreated') meant to treat shamefully, insultingly, or outrageously in public—all with intent to humiliate.

(2) Conflict in Thessalonica (2:2b)

...as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.

Verse 2 opens with the word 'but,' which suggests that Paul wanted to make a contrast. In spite of all that had taken place in Philippi, he came to Thessalonica nothing daunted. His resolve to preach the gospel had not been shaken by the humiliating treatment he had received. He does not say, 'Having been ill-treated at Philippi, we were more circumspect in Thessalonica,' but rather: 'we were emboldened in God to preach the gospel there too.' Paul's statement here makes it clear that confident, bold, biblical preaching does not lead to popularity. Rather, it leads to conflict that requires courage and renewed boldness. This tells us a great deal about the apostle's caliber.

We must not miss Paul's insistence that he was not naturally courageous. His boldness was God-given; it was not in himself but in God. The verb translated 'were bold' (*ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα*, *parrēsiazomai*) is always associated with speech. Here was a man who had suffered in the past and who knew that more suffering of the same kind would come his way in the future. Nevertheless, he kept on going. This was hardly the behavior of a charlatan!

Paul's boldness came despite much 'opposition' or 'conflict.' The term for 'conflict' is *agōn* (*ἀγωνι*, 'struggle,' 'fight'), from which the English word 'agonize' derives. It referred to an agonizing life and death struggle. He is referring to the violent opposition they faced from the Jews in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-9). Although the problems for Paul were apparently not as severe in Thessalonica as they were in Philippi, there were nevertheless real conflicts there as a result of Paul's bold speaking. His point is that in spite of danger and severe struggle, they nevertheless kept on preaching. And what did this show but their deep sincerity?

Christians who serve out of a sense of conviction and call persevere no matter how difficult their circumstances. God strengthens them to stick at their posts. Those acting out of self-interest,

Thessalonians – Lesson 3

however, tend to falter when the going gets tough. Stickability, especially in times of difficulty and opposition, is a proof of genuineness.

c) Not in Error (2:3a)

For our exhortation did not come from error...

The apostle Paul was committed to God's truth, not only in his preaching but also in his living. When his opponents failed to destroy Paul's ministry by persecution, they set out to undermine people's trust in his message or his personal integrity.

The word 'exhortation' (*παράκλησις, paraklēsis*) means an urgent cry, appeal, or call, with an emphasis on judgment. Paul assure his readers there was no false teaching or living—in other words, 'error' (*πλάνη, planē*)—in his ministry.

His rivals claimed that Paul was not on the side of the truth, but a dealer in lies, a purveyor of falsehoods. His response to this was that the gospel that he preached was not something that he had dreamed up, but something that had been entrusted to him by God Himself (2:4). Their preaching did not originate from myth or speculative reasoning.

d) Not in Impurity (2:3b)

...or uncleanness...

'Uncleanness' comes from a Greek word that means 'impure' (*ἀκαθαρσία, akatharsia*). It is a compound word composed of *katharos*, which means 'pure' or 'clean,' and the prefix *a*, which gives the expression a negative meaning, literally 'without purity.' (*Katharos* is the source of the English word 'catharsis,' meaning purifying or cleansing). This word often refers specifically to sexual immorality (e.g. Rom 1:24), but it might also point to a general moral impurity that would include, for example, greed and pride (e.g. Rom. 6:19).

Apparently, this was an allegation that Paul had behaved unwisely in his relations with the opposite sex. 'Not a few of the leading women' had been converted in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4). Perhaps his detractors saw an ulterior motive at work: 'Your wives and daughters are not safe with this man!' Apparently, traveling teachers in the first century commonly used their influence as a means of sexual exploitation. It was typical for religious charlatans (*γόητες, goētes*) to enter a locale and seek women for personal sexual satisfaction under the pretext of offering them a deeper, more complete, more intimate religious experience. But this was not the case with Paul and his companions.

e) Not in Deceit (2:3c)

...nor was it in deceit.

There was nothing about their ministry designed to beguile or trick people. 'Deceit' translates *dolos* (*δόλος*), literally a fishhook, trap, or trick (forms of deception). False teachers often used sorcery, magic, and theatrics to appear as if they had supernatural power and thereby gain converts, both for sexual favors and for money (cp. Acts 8:9-11; 2 Pe. 2:15-18; Jude 11). But Paul's motives were righteous, and he lived and ministered with the utmost integrity (1 Cor. 4:1-5; 2 Cor. 3:1-3; 4:1-6).

'Error,' 'impurity,' and 'deceit' were characteristic of the traveling mountebanks with whom Paul and his friends contrast themselves here. Paul was the opposite of a false teacher; his

Thessalonians – Lesson 3

message was the truth; his life was pure; and his ministry was honest, without hypocrisy or deception.

2. Approved by God (2:4-6)

a) *Not as Men-Pleasers (2:4)*

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.

Paul preached out of a deep sense of responsibility to God. Paul's response was that he had never tailored his words to suit his hearers because he was concerned to pass the scrutiny of God Himself. They knew they were men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. The perfect tense of the verb *dedokimasmetha* (*δεδοκιμάσαμεθα*, 'have been approved') means Paul was tested and found valid; he was given a lasting approval. God had validated and continued to approve Paul's ministry. Paul was approved by God, and he labored under that calling as one who had divinely delegated authority and was promised supernatural blessing.

Man-pleasing was a common charge made against orators. Elsewhere, Paul also speaks of pleasing God and not men (Gal. 1:10; Col. 1:10; 3:22). On the other hand, Paul tells the Corinthians to imitate his attitude when he says, 'I please all men in everything' (1 Cor. 10:33). When Paul says we are not to please men, he is thinking of situations where pleasing men goes against our loyalty to God. Paul does say that it is proper to want to please men in certain situations. These would include ones where pleasing men is compatible with the higher motive of pleasing God.

His image of himself at this point is that of the steward (cp. 1 Cor. 4:1), someone charged with the responsibility of guarding the property of his master. Paul stood by the trustworthiness of his message, because ultimately it did not originate with him at all, but in the mind of the Almighty. Aware of this awesome responsibility, they spoke not with an eye to pleasing men, but with a deep sense of being under the scrutiny of God who tested their hearts. Nothing provides a better check to self-seeking in Christian ministry than a constant awareness of God.

It is important to Paul to state that ultimately his motives and the truth that he proclaims please God. Even if his opponents cannot see into his inner being to check his motives, God can and does 'test our hearts.' When Paul uses this expression, 'God who tests our hearts,' he is alluding to the Old Testament (Jer. 11:20; cp. 1 Chr. 28:9; Ps. 7:9; 17:3; 139:23; Pr. 17:3; Jer. 12:3; 17:10). Here 'hearts' refers to the inner self, the real person, where thought, feeling, will, and motive converge. Paul was consumed with pleasing God because he knew that only God truly examines the hearts of them who serve Him.

b) *Not as Flatterers (2:5a)*

For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know...

'Flattery' (*κολακείας*, *kolakeias*) was commonly condemned in the ancient world because a flatterer's motive was to gain advantage and curry favor by his kind words (cp. Ps. 12:3). The *κόλαξ* (*kolax*, 'flatterer') was a stock character in the literature of ethics and manners, which habitually employed flattery to gain some advantage for himself. He traded on the fact that people naturally like to hear things which set them in a favorable light, and by telling them such things he expected to gain a following. Paul is confident that the Thessalonians will recall situations where it is clear that Paul's frank speech could not have been motivated by flattery.

Thessalonians – Lesson 3

Because he was not seeking to line his pockets or attracting a personal following, Paul's speaking was never a mask to cover up greed (v. 5b) or a means to win the praise of men. The Thessalonians themselves could verify this from their knowledge and experience.

c) Not as Coveters (2:5b)

...nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness.

Since the Thessalonians cannot readily see Paul's inner motivation for themselves, he calls on God as the witness. 'Pretext' is from *prophasis* (προφσις), which means 'cloak.' Paul and his companions did not come to Thessalonica with a cloak hiding greedy intentions. They were not at all like the spiritual deceivers who come cloaking their real desires for sexual favors and money, using flattery to win over their audience, and then exploiting them for all sorts of personal satisfaction and gain.

'Greed' or 'covetousness' (πλεονεξία, *pleonexia*) does not necessarily refer to money, but is probably included here because this was a common complaint made against traveling philosophers and partially distinguishes 'greed' from the next negative, 'glory.' In Colossians 3:5 and Ephesians 5:5, *pleonexia* is a form of idolatry. It is not merely the desire to possess more than one has, but to possess more than one ought to have, especially that which belongs to someone else.

One issue that shows Paul's conduct in its true light is his approach to the question of financial support. The religious scene of the first century was populated by a mass of itinerant philosophers, teachers, and wise men that hawked their pet insights from place to place and made a fat living in the process. Paul's opponents tried to neutralize his effectiveness by spreading the slur that he was no better than the rest – just one more swindler exploiting the respect of ordinary folk for religion.

When he went to Thessalonica, he judged it appropriate to abstain from this entitlement because that would free him from the charge of covetousness. In the event, that very accusation was leveled at him! At other times he fell foul to the opposite, but equally irrational, accusation that his refusal to insist on his right to financial maintenance was simply a ploy to achieve an undeserved reputation for humility! (2 Cor. 11:7).

d) Not as Glory-Seekers (2:6a)

Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others...

'Glory' (δόξαν, *doxan*) has many nuances in the Bible; here it refers to fame or honor or praise that one receives from other men. The present tense of the Greek participle *zētountes* (ζητούντες, 'seek') indicates that Paul did not habitually seek accolades, applause, awards, or recognition. The only 'glory' that Paul ever sought was eternal.

To sum up, Paul was altogether free of ulterior motives. The Thessalonian believers could rest assured that he neither wanted their money, nor their approval. Admiration, whether theirs or anyone else's was not the prize he sought. This raises him far above the normal plane of saved humanity. The good opinion of our fellows is seductive. The desire to be well thought of is a powerful drug. How many of us can truly claim to be immune to it?

Thessalonians – Lesson 3

e) Not as Demanders (2:6b)

...when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.

It is grammatically possible that this phrase should be attached to the beginning of verse 8 ('but we were gentle') rather than here. However, the present location is more likely, with the meaning that Paul is saying that, yes, he does deserve honor and glory as an apostle of Christ, but he is not seeking it. Paul never abused his authority as an apostle but always balanced it with accountability and humility.

Paul here associates Silas and Timothy with himself as 'apostles' (*ἀπόστολος, apostolos*) or specially called messengers. Most likely he is using the term in a more general sense here (cp. Rom. 16:7), including his companions with his own apostolic ministry—to refer to those who have been entrusted with Christ with the task of establishing the church.

'To make demands' or 'to be a burden' literally means 'to add weight.' It can refer to burdensome commands or duties laid upon people by an authority figure. It can also refer to burdens associated with providing food and shelter and financial remuneration. Paul uses the term most often in this latter sense when writing to churches. Paul uses this fact as an added proof that his ministry among the Thessalonians had not been self-seeking. Had he and his companions been interested in only personal gain they would not have hesitated in making heavy demands upon the new believers.

The temptation to use rank for personal gain is an ever present one. Christian leaders must resist it valiantly. Office within the church is something to be valued but never abused.

In contrast to what we often see today, Paul's was a remarkably plain and transparent ministry. While plainness by itself is not necessarily a virtue in Christian ministry, transparent simplicity is. Methods do count. Anything that misleads and anything that serves personal popularity and wealth comes under God's ban.

B. Paul's Method of Ministry (1 Thess. 2:7-12)

Effective spiritual leadership is a combination of character and activity. Verses 1-6 presented the exemplary leadership of Paul's inner life. In this passage, the apostle views the outward functions of his ministry through the use of metaphors. Paul chose to use the most intimate, compelling metaphors of a mother (cp. Gal. 4:19) and father (cp. 1 Cor. 4:15), which illustrate the primary kinds of spiritual care a leader must provide his people.

Paul reminds them of how gentle he and his helpers, Silas and Timothy, were while with them. Far from exploiting them as money-seeking bullies, they had lived among them as tender and caring parents.

1. As a Loving Mother (2:7-9)

a) With Gentleness (2:7)

But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.

This verse is the positive antithesis to verses 5-6. By starting with the word 'but,' Paul is contrasting the conduct of his colleagues and himself with the sinful behavior of the false teachers. As opposed to flattering his hearers, being greedy, and seeking honor, Paul is 'gentle.'

Thessalonians – Lesson 3

This term means to be kind to someone and encompasses a host of other virtues: acceptance, respect, compassion, tolerance of imperfections, patience, tenderheartedness, and loyalty. Unlike many itinerant teachers, Paul and his preacher friends did not come to Thessalonica to exploit the people for their own prosperity but to live and serve ‘among’ them with kindness.

Paul’s whole treatment of the believers in Thessalonica had been characterized by gentleness. He had acted toward them like a mother caring for her little children. Paul was no paid surrogate mother or modern-style, hired day care worker. The apostle exhibited the same feelings as a ‘nursing mother’ when he cared for the Thessalonians. This simile poignantly describes just how gentle Paul was. There was nothing harsh or autocratic about their ministry. This imagery was also used of Moses to describe his relationship with Israel (Num. 11:12). God is also described with a maternal image in Isaiah 66:13.

The verb rendered ‘cherishes’ or ‘tenderly cares’ literally means to warm with body heat. There is a contrast here between the ‘weighty’ (burdensome) ministry that the apostles might have exercised as representatives of Christ, and the gentle, motherly one that they did. Few images express the idea of gentleness better than that of a mother nursing, warming, and cherishing her own children.

b) With Intimate Affection (2:8a)

So, affectionately longing for you...

Paul and his companions had developed an intense affectionate yearning for the believers in Thessalonica. How much did Paul care for the Thessalonians? He gave his full life. The Greek word translated as ‘affectionately longing’ or ‘fond affection’ (*ὀμειρόμενοι, homeiromenoi*; used only here in the New Testament) means to long for someone passionately and earnestly, and, being linked to a mother’s love, is intended here to express an affection so deep and compelling as to be unsurpassed. Ancient transcriptions on the tombs of dead babies sometimes contained this term when parents wanted to describe their sad longing for a too-soon-departed child.

c) With Sacrificial Love (2:8b)

...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.

The verb translated ‘impart’ means to share, or to give someone something of which one retains a part. There were in fact two things that the apostle wanted to share with his friends: the gospel and his own life. They wanted to share their inner lives with them; they wanted to offer all that they had, mind and body in their service. These people mattered to Paul and his team!

Besides imparting the complete gospel, Paul, Silas, and Timothy shared also their ‘own lives.’ Literally, they gave up their souls—their real inner beings—for the sake of the Thessalonians. There was nothing superficial or partial about their sacrificial service. A woman who fulfills the biblical role for motherhood does the same thing when she, at great cost to herself, unselfishly and generously sets aside her life for the benefit of her beloved children.

Paul unmistakably demonstrates the heart of a godly pastor. A combination of truth and love is the recipe for all effective evangelism and pastoral work. God speaks and works through His word as it is taught. Yet He also uses the loving hearts of His ministers to melt the coldness of listeners. In this way the gospel is not only told but also shown.

Thessalonians – Lesson 3

d) With Unselfish Labor (2:9)

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.

How much did Paul give of his life? In addition to preaching, he worked at another job to support himself financially. Since he clearly stayed in Thessalonica beyond the three Sabbaths which he first taught at the synagogue, he had time to set up a tent making business (cp. Acts 18:3). In Thessalonica, then, as later in Corinth (1 Cor. 4:12) and Ephesus (Acts 19:12; 20:34), Paul maintained himself by manual labor, and his companions evidently did the same.

In the event, Paul's decision to support his ministry by working at his own trade must have cost him a great deal in terms of exhaustion and unremitting effort. The phrase 'labor and toil' translates a rhyming pun in the Greek which could be rendered 'moiling and toiling.' 'Labor' emphasizes the difficulty of a particular deed itself, and 'hardship' underscores the strenuous toil and struggle in performing it. These two words suggest exhaustion and pain, respectively. The idea is that between his evangelism and his tent-making, he had no time to call his own (cp. 2 Th. 3:8).

Those two words combine to reflect not only the loving attitude of motherly concern, but also the sincere application of that concern. Every mother knows there is no price her children can pay her for what she does for them. She does not expect them to compensate her for nursing them, for displaying a deep affection for them, or for embracing their every need sacrificially in heartfelt love. Likewise, Paul told the church that he and his colleagues eagerly ministered to them, with no desire for the compensation they had a right to expect (cp. 1 Tim. 5:17-18).

It would be wrong to conclude from his argument here that there is no place for a paid ministry in the Christian church. There is a clear statement here to the effect that he would have been within his rights to have made 'demands' on them (2:6). Elsewhere, Paul argued that it is just and proper for those who perform spiritual work to receive material support from the churches (1 Cor. 9:3-16). He himself 'took wages' from other churches while engaged in ministry at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:8) and was grateful for the gift sent by the church at Philippi (Phil. 4:10-20), but apparently these gifts were not enough to meet the needs of the three men.

All of this, Paul argues, is clear evidence that he and his companions were not out to delude the Thessalonians. Greed-motivated men would hardly go to such length to support themselves while peddling fables. If they had indeed aimed at wealth, power, and high repute, they would have to be dismissed as men who signally failed to achieve their aim. By secular standards they were marked to the end of their days by poverty, weakness, disrepute, and all sorts of tribulation. No, the selfless efforts of the missionaries surely witnessed to the fact that their gospel was the gospel of God and that their motives were indeed sincere. But even more impressive than their disclaimer of unworthy motives and action is the assertion of their loving care for their converts.

A self-giving spirit is the mark of a genuine spiritual ministry. Christians should not serve in order to get, be it wealth, power, or popularity. They should rather be ready to give in order to serve.

2. As a Loving Father (2:10-12)

Paul pictured Silas, Timothy, and himself as spiritual mothers who made the maximum effort to provide gentleness, intimate affection, sacrificial love, and hard-working provision as they proclaimed to them the gospel of God (vv. 7-9). The maternal metaphor, however, only partially

Thessalonians – Lesson 3

describes the effective spiritual leader. Describing the spiritual leader as a father completes Paul's picture of leadership.

Earlier, Paul has been defending the character of his evangelism (vv. 1-9); here it is the nature of his pastoral care. He wants to prove that it was not only his gospel preaching that had been genuine and above board, but also his ministry among the new disciples. 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 is a complete sentence that appears to be a summary of the positive aspects of the entire defense.

a) With Integrity (2:10)

You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe...

A father's duty is to lead by example, setting the standard of virtuous integrity in his family (Dt. 4:9; Pr. 13:24; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21; Heb. 12:9); and that is also the spiritual leader's responsibility to his people. Paul appeals to their own knowledge of the way in which he and his helpers had conducted themselves. He seems to be saying, 'Don't let the opponents twisted interpretations of me sway you personally, or stop you from defending the true gospel that I preached.' But if that is not enough to convince them, Paul is ready to appeal to a higher witness—God. These witnesses, he argues, are able to establish that their behavior among the new believers was holy, righteous, and blameless.

Paul uses three adjectives to describe their pastoral behavior. It was 'holy,' probably in the sense of being consistently centered on God and devoted to Him. 'Devoutly' (*ὀσίως, osiōs*) means 'in a holy manner' and emphasizes how Paul, Silas, and Timothy lived before God.

It was 'righteous' (*δικαίως, dikaiōs*) in that it was free from any injustice toward men. The adverb 'uprightly' refers to how well then men dealt righteously under divine law toward both God and man.

And it was 'blameless' (*ἀμέμπτως, amemptōs*), not in the sense of being sinless or perfect, but in being above accusation. It refers to their reputation before people.

What a striking example of pastoral fidelity Paul provides. And what urgent need there is to imitate him!

b) With Exhortation (2:11)

...as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children...

The Thessalonians were witnesses in verse 10 to Paul's actions, and in verses 11-12 they were witnesses to his fatherly concern primarily in his preaching and teaching. Fathers are not only examples, but also instructors. So the spiritual father is not to be merely a model but also a personal teacher and motivator. The paternal image is also used of God (cp. Ps. 103:13).

What could matter more to a father than his own offspring? Paul reassured the Thessalonian Christians that he saw his relationship with them in exactly those terms. While he, Silas, and Timothy had preached the gospel to them, they lived like nursing mothers towards them (2:7). Then in their continuing ministry to the new believers, they had acted like caring fathers. This imagery emphasizes both Paul's concern for their proper training and his love for them.

Thessalonians – Lesson 3

Children need not only the tender care and nurture of a mother, but also the example, instruction, and correction of a father. The father image retains the idea of deep and tender interest but adds the thought of strong example and firm demand. This paternal care had demonstrated itself among the Thessalonians in a threefold way.

First, theirs had been an encouraging ministry. ‘Exhorted’ is from *parakaleō* (παρακαλεω), literally ‘to call alongside,’ and is related to the noun *paraklētos* (παρακλητος), ‘one who comes alongside,’ which is one of the titles of the Holy Spirit. The apostle referred to coming alongside children for the purpose of aiding, directing, and instructing wisely as a source of character conduct.

It also had been a comforting ministry, probably in the sense of providing sympathetic support and security in difficulty. ‘Comforted’ (*paramuthoumai*, παραμυθούμενοι), meaning to encourage in the sense of comfort and consolation, is so critical in assisting toward spiritual growth because of the many obstacles and failures Christians can experience. The word was reserved for the tender, restorative, compassionate uplifting needed by a struggling, burdened, heartbroken child.

But it also was a firm ministry. ‘Charging’ is the Greek participle *martyromenoi* (μαρτυρόμενοι), which is usually translated ‘testifying’ or ‘witnessing’ and is related to the word ‘martyr’ because so many faithful witnesses died for their boldness. It has a more authoritative nuance than the two preceding verbs. ‘Charging’ thus refers to speaking that is solemn and serious. Paul warned the Thessalonians that any deviation from the divinely prescribed course of conduct had serious consequences. The missionaries’ sympathy did not stop them urging the new disciples to live the costly life of obedience the gospel demanded.

c) With Results (2:12)

...that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Like any responsible parent, Paul wanted the best for his children. They needed to live in ways that brought God honor and were befitting to His character. They were to live, furthermore, as those called into His kingdom and glory. They had to live lives worthy of God. Paul always had this goal in view when he wrote to Christians (cp. Eph. 4:1; Rom. 8:12-13). The new life we have through the gospel demands a new way of living.

Paul’s fatherly goal was that the Thessalonians should ‘walk worth of God.’ ‘Walk’ (*περιπατεω*, *peripateō*) is a metaphor for ‘conduct one’s life.’ It is used elsewhere with ‘worthy’ in Ephesians 4:1 and Colossians 1:10 (cp. 2 Th. 1:5). Paul has a wonderful balance here. He tells the Thessalonians that *they* are to ‘walk,’ but then immediately reminds them again of their election (cp. 1:4) by informing them that it is *God*, by His ‘call,’ who gives them the ability to live the Christian life (cp. Phil. 2:12-13; Eph. 2:10). Here the divine call, as always in the epistles, refers to the effectual saving call. By it God, through the faith graciously and sovereignly granted to sinners, regenerates, justifies, and sanctifies them. And Paul stated the singular end of that call—entrance ‘into His own kingdom and glory.’

Paul’s writings do not often use ‘kingdom’ (*βασιλείαν*, *basileian*). Paul’s usage of ‘kingdom’ matches Christ’s. Paul emphasizes Christ as King of the kingdom (e.g., Eph. 5:5; Col. 1:13), and the one kingdom has both a present aspect (e.g., Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20) and a future aspect (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:21). What aspect of the ‘kingdom’ is Paul emphasizing here? The

Thessalonians – Lesson 3

future aspect is in very because of the close grammatical association with the term ‘glory’ (*δόξαν, doxan*) (implying ‘glory’ related to the Second Coming). Paul is adding another encouragement for leading a holy life now. Since God is moving us to His future ‘kingdom’ that is filled with ‘glory,’ should not we all act *now* in a manner that is ‘worthy of God’?

It is not enough for leaders just to be compassionate, tender, and caring as spiritual mothers. They also need to live uncompromising, pure, and exemplary lives as spiritual fathers—lives that, in their motives and actions, set the standard for all to follow. Furthermore, they need to teach the truth faithfully, building up the saints in spiritual wisdom and displaying the courage of conviction to come alongside and exhort and call their spiritual children to obedience, through both strong discipline and tender consolation.

The more vividly we see what Christ has done for us, the more likely we are to make progress in godliness and self-denying service. That is why gospel preaching will always prove a better spur to holiness than reciting rules of conduct.

For next time: Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20.