**1 Thessalonians 2:9-12**

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**Traits of Godly Leaders— Part 2**

***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.***

* In my message last week we began to examine Paul’s defense of the actions of his missionary team during the time that they were with the new believers who were in Thessalonica.
  + The purpose for Paul’s defense is because the enemies of Christ were accusing Paul of defrauding and stealing from the unsuspecting Thessalonians while he was present with them.
* But while Paul is compelled to formally and publicly defend himself from the false accusations, Paul also knows that the Thessalonians don’t believe a word of the accusations against him. This certain knowledge of Paul is seen in the fact that he makes several references to the fact that **the Thessalonians already knew** the things that he was telling them.
  + In v. 9, 10 & 11 of our passage today, Paul uses the phrases ***you recall, you are witnesses*** and ***just as you know***, indicating that the Thessalonians had no doubt as to Paul’s true motives while he was among them.
  + And in case any of the Thessalonians were persuaded by Paul’s accusers, Paul’s argument here in chapter 2 is compelling evidence in his defense.
* For this reason, Paul takes the time to answer the accusations against him. And I believe that the reason Paul is so thorough in his own defense is because he sees the description of his own behavior among the Thessalonians as an opportunity to instruct us on **the traits of godly behavior and leadership**.
  + In other words, while refuting the accusations of his enemies, Paul is reinforcing that attitudes and actions that should be present in all Christians, but especially present within church leaders.
* Last week we examined Paul denial of the accusations that he used ***flattering speed*** as a ***pretext for the*** motives of ***greed*** and ***self-glory***. In fact, quite the opposite was true. Paul and Silas and Timothy had demonstrated ***tenderness*** and great ***affection*** toward the saints in Thessalonica, nurturing and feeding the new believers as ***a nursing mother*** would her own children.
  + Their affection for the Thessalonian believers was so strong that, as Paul says in v. 8 . . . they ***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.***

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**The second aspect of godly leadership: personal sacrifice**

***v. 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.***

* Now, in our passage this morning, Paul continues to defend himself, while building the case for what godly leaders and leadership looks like.
* The **second aspect of godly leadership** that Paul instructs us on is found in v. 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.***
  + Here in v. 9 we see that Paul points to their own **personal sacrifice** on behalf of the Thessalonians.
* Here in v. 9 Paul uses two significant terms to describe their personal sacrifice . . . ***labor and hardship***.
  + The terms ***labor*** and ***hardship*** are words that refer to **hard, difficult labor** . . . the type of ***labor*** that results from working hard, from sun up to sundown.
* From this passage . . . and others . . . we know that Paul was a tent-maker. Though he was trained as a Pharisee, it was Jewish custom for fathers to train up their sons . . . even those who were in religious leadership training . . . to have a trade that they could use to support themselves.
  + Paul’s father apprenticed Paul to be a tent-maker. And this trade served him well as he worked to support himself everywhere he went.
  + So, while he was in Thessalonica, Paul ***labored*** long hours to earn a living, so that he would not be a financial burden on the Thessalonians.
  + **And**, when not working long hours at his trade, Paul and Silas and Timothy were ***laboring*** many more hours in evangelizing and teaching the Thessalonians.
  + Paul’s and Silas’ and Timothy’s lives were not lives of ease and comfort. Their lives, in service to God, were lives of continual **hard *labor and* physical *hardship***.
* To emphasize this point, we also find other passages in which Paul refers to the ***labor and hardship*** he lived through in service to God. In his defense of himself to the Corinthians, Paul reminds them of how much he endured for their sake and for the sake of the gospel. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 Paul reminds the Corinthians of what he suffered, compared to the trouble-making Jews, who accused him of profiting from his false teaching . . .

***2 Corinthians 11:23-28— 23 Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.***

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* + Then, to show you how persistent his accusers were in their claims that Paul was a greedy profiteer and false teacher, Paul is again compelled to defend himself to the Thessalonians **from these same charges** in his **second letter to the Thessalonians** . . .

***2 Thessalonians 3:7-8— 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;***

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* + Despite their daily laboring to the point of exhaustion . . . and despite having come to the Thessalonians with grievous wounds from the unjust flogging they received in Philippi . . . Paul and Silas and Timothy were faithful to fulfill their commission to ***proclaim the gospel of God*** everywhere they were sent.
* Here, in 1 Thessalonians 2:9 we are taught that **true godly leadership is hard work**. It is sacrificing of oneself for the welfare and benefit of those whom you are charge with caring for.
  + Again, using the picture of a shepherd tending his sheep, this self-sacrificing attitude is seen in David when he reminds King Saul of his actions while tending his father’s flock . . .

***1 Samuel 17:34-35— 34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, 35 I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him.”***

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**The Third Aspect of Godly Leadership— One’s Conduct**

***v. 10— You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers;***

* The third aspect of godly leadership that Paul teaches us on is found in v. 10. Once again reminding the Thessalonians that they already knew these things, Paul states . . . ***you are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers;***
  + Here in v. 10 Paul calls upon both the Thessalonians and God as witnesses to defend against his accusers.
  + And the thing that Paul calls upon the Thessalonians and God to testify to is to the ***devout, upright, and blameless* conduct** of the missionaries while among the Thessalonians.
* While the first two terms . . . ***devout*** and ***upright*** . . . may seem similar, they have different connotations.

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* + The term ***devout*** is translated from the Greek word *hosiōs*, meaning “holy or pious.”
  + The term ***upright*** is translated from the Greek word *dikaiōs*, meaning “the kind of conduct that comes up to the full standard of what is right our just.”
* The difference between ***devout*** and ***upright*** is in **the object of this behavior.**
  + ***Devoutness*** is action and duties that are directed **toward God**, while ***uprightness*** refers to one’s duties **toward other men**.
  + In other words, ***devoutness*** is vertical behavior and ***uprightness*** is horizontal behavior.
* On the other hand, the third term, ***blameless***, is a negative term.

* + In other words, Paul is saying that **“despite being accused of being greedy and self-seeking, we are without blame in regard to these accusations.”**
* Here in v. 10 Paul is making the point that Christians and Christian leaders must strive to be ***devout and upright*** in their both their daily personal conduct, but also in their leadership of the church.
  + If a Christian does not strive to be ***devout and upright***, that person goes from being ***blameless*** to ***blameworthy***.

**The Fourth Aspect of Godly Leadership— One’s Care**

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***v. 11— just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children***

* The fourth aspect of godly leadership that Paul teaches us in this section is found in v. 11. And for the third time in this section Paul again reminds the Thessalonians that they already knew these things, Paul states . . . ***just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children***.
* Here in this verse Paul teaches us that the fourth aspect of godly Christian living and Christian leadership is **care for one another.**
* Having earlier stated in v. 7 that ***we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children***, here in v. 11 Paul cites the **fatherly example** the missionaries had been in their work with the new converts in Thessalonica.
* In citing the example of a ***father***, Paul describes how **a godly *father*** should be ***exhorting, encouraging and imploring*** to ***his own children***.
* The three verbs that Paul uses here are descriptive of **the nature of pastoral care . . . *exhorting, encouraging and imploring***. But of these three, the first . . . ***exhorting*** . . . is the main verb.
  + The word ***exhorting*** is a significant word because of the connotation it has in Scripture in relation to **the Holy Spirit**.

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* + The verb ***exhort*** is translated from the Greek word *parakaleō*, meaning **“to beseech, encourage or entreat.”** It carries the idea of **being an ever-present encourager**.
  + Some of **you may recognize this Greek word** because of its similarity to the noun *paraklētos*, which is the word the Lord use in John 14 **to identify the Holy Spirit**.

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***John 14:26—*** ***"But the Helper* [***paraklētos***]*, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.***

* The noun *paraklētos*and the verb *parakaleō* are both compound words from the preposition *para*, meaning “**alongside**,” and the verb *kaleō*, meaning “**to call**.”

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* + The word *paraklētos*, that is translated ***Helper***, is very descriptive of the role of the **Holy Spirit**. It is the role of the Holy Spirit, as the operative member of the Godhead in our sanctification, to **come alongside** each of us and to **guide and exhort** us to become more Christ-like in our attitudes and behavior.
* But, not only is the Holy Spirit named as a *paraklētos*, but the Lord Jesus is also identified as performing this function. In 1 John 2:1 we read . . .

***1 John 2:1— My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate* [***paraklētos***] *with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;***

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* + Here in 1 John 2:1 we learn that while the Holy Spirit is our resident ***Helper*** here on earth, we also have a ***Helper*** or ***Advocate*** who intercedes in heaven for each of us ***with the Father***.
  + As we see in Job chapters 1 and 2, when Satan is permitted to speak to God, he accuses us of sin. But for those who are in Christ, the Lord Jesus stands before the Father as our Advocate to defend us.
* It is not a coincidence that here in 1 Thessalonians 2:11 that Paul uses this word, *parakaleō*, to describe the role of church leaders.
  + Just as **church leaders are under-shepherds** of God’s flock, so they are also **assistant Helpers** of God in serving to come alongside the sheep to ***encourage and implore.***
* And those two verbs . . . ***encourage and implore*** . . . are the two descriptive verbs that Paul uses in v. 11 to describe the function that pastors and church leaders.
* It is significant to note that in functioning as assistant Helpers of God, Paul teaches us that the role of **exhorting, encouraging and imploring** are functions that fathers have with their own children.
  + In other words, Paul’s instruction here is also aimed to teach fathers what godly parenting should look like. Church leaders perform the function within the church that fathers should be performing within their family.
* We’ve seen that the word ***exhort*** means “to strongly and continually encourage.”

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* + Well if the word ***exhort*** means “to strongly and continually encourage,” what does ***encourage*** mean?
  + The Greek word for ***encourage*** means “to speak to someone both by way of admonition and incentive.”
    - This word carries more of a connotation of **correcting what is in error and encouraging what is done right.**
* And the third word, ***implore***, means “to affirm” or “to testify.”
* Taken as a pair, the words ***encourage and implore*** are used to mean, “to correct what is in error and to positively affirm what is correct.”
  + Again, this is the role of fathers . . . to correct and discipline what is in error, and to positively affirm and encourage what is correct.”
  + In the same way, Christians and church leaders should strive to emulate this behavior, displayed perfectly by the Holy Spirit.
* It is also significant to note in Paul’s statement in v. 11 that the missionaries were ***exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you***.

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* + With this statement Paul is making the point that **the efforts of the missionaries was not of mass or large-group evangelism and training**.
  + Here Paul is saying that **although it was time consuming, the missionaries took the time to *exhort, encourage and implore* the Thessalonians individually . . . each of you, one by one. The point is, the instruction of Paul, Silas and Timothy was very personal instruction and encouragement to each of these new believers.**

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* There you have it. Paul’s defense of himself and his companions to the accusations of his enemies. But in that defense we also see Paul’s instruction to Christians and church leaders, which he lays out in this passage.

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* He begins by stating emphatically that he ***never*** **used *flattering speech* as a *pretext for greed* and *self-glory***.
  + But the implication of this denial is that there are false shepherds who do use these self-serving methods to deceive God’s people.
* Instead, Paul states how he **positively** served God and the Thessalonians.
  + **First,** Paul states that he and his companions were ***gentle* and *tenderly loving of the sheep***, as a ***nursing mother*** would be to her own children.
  + **Second**, Paul states that they **personally sacrificed** their own interests for the interests of others.
  + **Third**, Paul states that they demonstrated **godly conduct**, so as not to bring reproach upon the name of Christ.
  + And **fourth**, Paul states that they demonstrated great **care for the sheep** by exhorting, correcting and encouraging them as a father would his own children.

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**The Goal of faithful ministry**

***v. 12— so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.***

* But even as Paul describes how and why they faithfully ministered to the Thessalonians, their faithful labor on behalf of the Thessalonian church was not the goal of their ministry. In v. 12 Paul goes on to point to the **ultimate goal of his faithful ministry . . . *so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.***
* While Paul, Silas and Timothy are to be commended for their faithful labor and example to the Thessalonians and to us, **if their labor yielded no fruit, it would have been in vain.**
* While Paul, Silas and Timothy were obedient to the call of God to go where they were called, their goal was always that they would see men and women receive salvation . . . that they would see the fruit of their labor . . . that they would see lives changed.
  + That is what Paul is saying in v. 12 . . . the goal of their faithful labor was not to bring reward or commendation to the missionaries from God, but that they would see men and women saved and that, as a result, **these new converts *would walk in a manner worthy of the God who* called them**.
* Here in v. 12 Paul uses an important word in the Christian life . . . the word ***walk***.
  + The Greek word is *peripateō*. It means “to live” or “deport oneself.” But the English translation, ***walk***, is a very appropriate word because it perfectly describes the process of our **sanctification**.
  + The Christian life is not static. It is a journey . . . a linear process in which we proceed from moment to moment.
  + And along our Christian journey we encounter obstacles, challenges and enemies of Christ. That’s what makes John Bunyan’s classic story of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* so beloved. Bunyan captures and describes some of the obstacles that Christian encounters in his ***walk*** toward the Celestial City . . . heaven.
* That is what Paul is saying here in v. 12 . . . the ultimate goal of his ministry was not to bring glory to himself for his faithful service. The goal of his ministry is that he would teach those who have received salvation so that they would successfully ***walk in a manner worthy of the God who called* them . . . that they would grow in faith and sanctification and live obedient lives**.

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**How do I live a life “worthy of God”?**

* I want you to notice a phrase in v. 12 that has caused some confusion. Notice that Paul states the goal of their ministry was that the Thessalonians would ***walk in a manner worthy of the God who called* them**.
* Some people misunderstand the meaning of the word ***worthy***. Some people mistakenly believe that this verse is saying that we can be **worthy of God’s favor** and **worthy of salvation**.
  + That is not what Paul is saying here. We know that salvation is by grace . . . the unmerited favor of God. We know that there is nothing inherently good or **“worthy”** in any of us. We have been saved because we can never be worthy of salvation. That’s what makes grace so marvelous.
* So what does the word ***worthy*** mean, as Paul uses it here?
  + The Greek word for ***worthy*** . . . *axios* . . . means “befitting” or “having the weight of another thing of like value.”
  + The word *axios*, as Paul uses it here in this phrase means, ***walk in a manner* befitting the great gift you have received from *the God who has called you into His own kingdom and glory.***
    - In other words, **live a life of obedience that reflects the change that God has wrought in you.**
* This concept of ***walking in a manner worthy of the God who has called you*** is a consistent theme in Scripture.
  + It is not enough to merely know that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God. In order to truly be saved, a person must be transformed by this knowledge.
* Prior to our study of this letter to the Thessalonians Pastor Matt preached through the letter of **1 John**. The purpose of 1 John is one of self-examination. John continually forces us to ask ourselves, **“am I a true Christian, or am I just a pretender?”**
  + And one of the things that John continually does is to hold up a mirror to our faces and forces us to look at ourselves. Am I living according to faith or am I just fooling myself.

* + And there are **two words that are very important in 1 John that serve as John’s mirror . . . the words *walk* and *abide***.
  + We’ve already defined ***walk*** as “the habitual pattern of one’s life.”
  + The word ***abide*** means “to remain in.”
* We see these two words used in 1 John to reflect our true image according to light of Scripture . . .

***1 John 1:6-7— 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.***

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***1 John 2:6—  the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.***

***1 John 2:10-11— 10 The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.***

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***1 John 3:9— No one who is born of God walks in sin, because His seed abides in him***

***1 John 4:15— Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.***

***1 John 4:16— God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.***

* We see throughout 1 John these tests of faith. And while the purpose of John’s letter to his home church in Ephesus was to counter the false teaching that had begun to encroach there, the message is just as appropriate to the Thessalonian church . . . and to every church.
* Here in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 Paul is teaching us that the purpose of faithful and godly leadership in the church is so that the saints will be equipped to ***walk in a manner* befitting and reflecting the great gift we have received *from the God who calls us into His own kingdom and glory***.
* But, the fact of the matter is, **if you are truly *called* by God . . . if He has called you into His own kingdom and glory . . . the Holy Spirit will give you a desire and the ability to abide and walk in a manner worthy of your calling. That’s what the Spirit does . . . He gives us the desire and the ability that we are otherwise incapable of.**

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* As Paul states in Romans 11:36 . . . ***For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.* Amen!**