

1 Thessalonians 2: 8-12; "That you would Walk Worthy of God",
Sermon # 8 in the series - "A Persevering Faith",
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 27th, 2008,
in the Afternoon Worship Service.

What does it mean to walk worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory? That is what we want to think about this afternoon. When someone asks you whether or not you were worthy of the great salvation which has been freely bestowed upon you by God, because of the person and work of the Lord Jesus; what do you say? I think that you probably would say with Jacob, in Genesis 32: 10, "I am not worthy of the least of the mercies and of all the truth which you shown your servant...." But saying and doing are two things. You can say that you are not worthy, and yet the further question should come to your mind, "Am I walking worthy of the God who has called me?" You should be able to say that you are very much trying, by God's grace, to walk worthy of His having called you into His own kingdom and glory. What a great and inestimable privilege it is. How should I respond. Our text says, "by walking worthy of God". A person's walk is what he is doing before the Lord to do what He has commanded us to do. Walking requires taking steps. It requires balance. It involves a plan to get up and begin to walk, and then to take the steps necessary to get to the place where we have decided to go. Our walk before God in obedience to Him is done either in a worthy manner or it dishonors Him. To walk worthy of God is to so live our lives before God that He believes that the sacrifice which He made for us in giving us His Only-Begotten Son and the gift and privilege of eternal life, was worth it. As He looks at our hearts and our lives He sees that there was a real return of love and obedience that made His investment worth it. The sacrifice of Christ, we must understand, was of infinite worth to God Himself. He is worthy of having been exalted to the highest place; that of being at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. God would have us to know that He gave us His very heart in giving us His Son. The giving of life and the shedding of His blood are very precious to Him. And they ought to be to us, as well. When we recognize this, and act upon it by pursuing what is good and right in His sight, then He is pleased with us. He considers us as worthy of all the grace that He has given; all the truth that He has shown us. And it proves to Him that the great changes which He has brought to our heart and life will be something that will bring Him everlasting glory. I want to speak to you about the excellence of the example of the Apostle Paul and the other gospel messengers who taught the believers at Thessalonica to walk worthy of God. The Apostle and those with him were, first of all, an excellent example of labor to those at Thessalonica. They were secondly, an excellent example of holy behavior. And then 3rdly, they were an excellent example of being fathers in the faith. Let's look at each one of these excellencies for a few moments.

1st - The Apostle Paul and those who brought the truth were an excellent example of labor to those at Thessalonica. (Verses 8 and 9)

What do you think of the full time Christian ministry? Do respect the labors of pastors, their labor in the Word and doctrine, their work of showing hospitality and privately counseling and teaching the truth; or do you think that it is a waste of time and money? If you do not respect it, and do not support it with your money and your tithe, I would urge you to do a study of the Word of God in this regard. Look at 1 Corinthians Chapter 9, which I do not have time to go into now, and listen to me while I read to you 1 Timothy 5: 17 and 18. It says there, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine." "For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out grain,' and 'The laborer is worthy of his wages.'" Paul was in the full-time ministry, and no doubt he was supported at least partially in the ministry by the church at Antioch, and by some of the other churches that he had planted and preached to. But it does take money and lots of time to minister to people in the way that Paul describes it in verse 8 of Chapter 2. "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 very dear to us." Paul and Silas were imparting not only the gospel, but also their own lives. And in these verses, verses 9-12 we see how they imparted their lives to the saints at Thessalonica. "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." The church at Thessalonica was not yet to the place where they could contribute much to paying Paul what he deserved to be paid for the spiritual services that he was rendering to them. He was struggling to make ends meet. You can see this if you turn over to Philippians Chapter 4. In verse 10. He says, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity." "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content." "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound." "Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." "Nevertheless you have done well that you have shared in my distress." "Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only." "For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. "Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account."

Now there are a number of things that we can learn from this passage. Paul had real needs that he needed to have met. He was content that God should supply those needs. The Philippians did care enough to help him with those needs, and when they heard that Paul was not being supplied in Thessalonica, they sent a gift to him. They did well, he says, to share in his distress. His needs were great enough to have caused him distress. No church shared with Paul except the

Philippian church. Then sent aid, "once and again for his necessities." But still it was not enough for Paul to make him think that he could preach the gospel for free. Paul did believe that the gospel should be preached for free. (1 Corinthians 9: 18) But he also believed that one who was a full time pastor and missionary ought to be provided for. (1 Corinthians 9: 14) His reality of his situation was, that he was called to do both. He was called to work at preaching and he did at times work to help his financial situation. And He was given gifts and perhaps a small salary from those in Antioch. But he also worked to supply his needs as well. Here in our text we find him saying, "he labored night and day, that he might not be a burden to any of them." And while he did this, he preached the gospel to them. If you turn over to Acts 18: 1-3 you will find out what Paul did for a living, while he preached the gospel also. It says, "After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth." "and he found a certain Jew named Aquila , born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them." "So because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers." This was Paul's occupation, and it did him in good stead to accomplish all that he was called to. This tentmaking was not only the answer to many of his difficulties and distresses financially, but it was also a good example to those whom he preached to. And further it is a good example to all of us. It should show us that God does bless the extra work that ministers take on in order to fulfill all the needs which come not only in relation to his family, but also in regard to fulfilling his ministry in the church. The minister, it is true, must be careful that the extra work that he does to provide for his needs does not hinder the actual work which he is called to, and already paid for. This passage also shows us that gifts to ministers are much appreciated when they are struggling financially. It also show us that it is a good thing for the people of God to work hard not only to provide for their own needs, but also to care for the needs of those who are in the full-time gospel ministry, when they are able to.

Now 2ndly - The Apostle and those who were with him were an excellent example of holy behavior. (Verse 10)

" You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe." The word "devoutly" in the KJV is rendered "holily". Indeed we can consider all three of these descriptions of the behavior of Paul and his companions as being a part of true holiness. What an excellent and desirable and necessary thing holiness is. Hebrews 12: 14 says, "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness without which no one will see the Lord." The word "devoutly" in the original Greek is *osiows* and it means piously. These were pious men. That is; they kept up the duties of devotion to God in their lives. They kept themselves holy and separate from the sins which were often seen in men of the world. They were consistent in their watchfulness over their hearts. They were men who did not let private and family worship fall down in their homes. They were not men who only gave part of the Sabbath Day to God and

then went to join in worldly activities like sports and movies in the evening. And they were careful to remember to set aside time for prayer and devotion to God on other days of the week. They thought deeply and carefully about how they could develop fellowship in their conversation with other Christians. They kept themselves in the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. They thought often about how they could do others good. This my brethren is holiness. And unless we have it, we shall not see the Lord. It does not mean that they were sinless or perfect. Far from it. But they were walking in the fear of the Lord all day long. They were trying to love God with all of their heart. They did not want to be those who had a form of godliness but denied the power of it. And neither will you if you want to be more holy.

Paul and those with him are also described here by the word, "justly". They were just men and their behavior proved it. They were men who thought about what the right thing to do at all times. What would be the right thing to do in accordance with the Word of God in relation to God and other men. In the book of Proverbs there are many verses which speak about what it means to be just. Proverbs 4: 18 and 19 - "The path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day." "The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble." When a man is just, when he constantly by the grace of God thinking about what would be the right thing to do, what would God be pleased with, what would lovingly help other people; his way is clear and bright and it becomes more and more so because he continues to think about his thoughts, words, and deeds and whether they have been right. He ponders his way. The wicked person seldom does this. He doesn't know much about this. You probably remember Joseph, Mary's husband, who when he found out that Mary was with child before they had come together in marriage, it says, "being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly." But after the angel came to him in a dream and told him that this child was the Holy Spirit's work, he acted justly in a very loving way. He did what the angel commanded him to do, and he took Mary to him to be his wife, and did not know her until she had brought forth Jesus. The Apostle Paul and those with him were such sterling examples of what it meant to be just before these new believers that he knew that he could appeal to their consciences in the matter. He knew also that God could bear witness to it as well and so he could mention these things without even appearing to be proud of it.

And then they also behaved blamelessly before these young believers. As these babes in Christ observed the way that Paul and those who were with him, lived, they could not find anything that they could charge them with that would show that they were attempting to keep some of the commandments of God and not others. Their was a universal obedience. This did not mean that the new believers did not have many questions about the apostle's behavior. They no doubt did. But they were noble minded enough to search the Scriptures to see if the things that they preached to them were true, and they compared their lives with the life of the

Lord Jesus and the others they read about in the Word of God. They saw that they practiced what they preached, and they lived manifesting the fruit of the Spirit and the mature discernment of those who could be called "fathers" in the faith.

And this leads me lastly to say that the Apostle and those who were with him were excellent examples of being "fathers" in the faith.(Verses 11 and 12)

What is it that an earthly father does that a spiritual father in Christ will also do? He exhorts, he comforts, he charges them, he implores them to do the right thing, to have faith in God and to keep that faith by walking worthy of God who has called them into His own kingdom and glory. Let me ask you earthly fathers if you do this with your children. All of these things are important. You will not be wise or blameless if you exhort them about what they should be doing to walk closely with the Lord if you do not also there to help explain why they should keep the commandments of God, and how they can keep the commandments of God. You must implore them to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that He will be their helper in all their thoughts and every act of obedience, and the One who will be with them to give them the strength and ability to keep those commands and the love to do them to God's glory. You will be there to comfort them when they fail, if they have been trying to do God's will. You will be able to sympathize with them, because you will remember the times when you failed, and God forgave you; and you will be able to lift them up. When you are learning to walk worthy of God, you remember that it is He who has called you into his heavenly kingdom. It is He who has called you to inherit glory. Your salvation was not of your good works, and you full well know that without Christ you can do nothing. But you also know that with Him that you can do all things.