

“Ye Remember, Brethren ...”

“... our labor and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and righteously and unblameably we behaved ourselves toward you that believe: as ye know how we dealt with each one of you as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging you; and testifying to you to the end that ye would walk worthily of God who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:9-12)

Surely Paul’s work ethic at Thessalonica made a lasting impression on the brethren. He sought nothing from them: he worked night and day to sustain himself and often others that were with him that he might preach the gospel to these brethren. Whether the Thessalonians offered help to him we are not told. We only know that on this journey, funds were tight and he worked to support his work, not only here at Thessalonica, but also at Corinth. If anything should have made an impression regarding the sincerity of Paul and his conviction in that which he preached was true, it was this fact that he worked “free gratis” for them.

The apostle was ever conscious that others were watching him. In just a half dozen verses Paul twice reminds brethren that they witnessed his labors among them and he called God as a witness as well. These brethren were witnesses of his holy living among them. Peter said Christians are a holy nation and that God has said, “Ye shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16). In Peter’s second epistle he told brethren of the great events which would happen at the end of the world: “The heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” He then asked, “Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness?” (2 Pet. 3:10-11). The answer to Peter’s question should be obvious!

Paul equally had behaved himself righteously and unblameably before these brethren. Neither here nor in Corinth to which field of labor he passed, had he behaved in any way to bring reproach upon himself and the brethren.

Earlier in this chapter Paul likens his compassion and gentleness with his brethren as like that of a nurse who cheriseth her own children (v. 7), but in v. 11 he likens himself to a father who exhorts, encourages, and testifies to his children about the kingdom of God. He urged them to walk worthily of God who called them into His own kingdom.

Our lives determine in large measure our destiny. Paul begged the Ephesians to “walk worthily of the calling with which ye were called, in all lowliness and meekness and long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1ff). Paul sang of the mercies of God in Romans 11; then in chapter twelve he besought the Romans by those mercies to “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Rom. 12:1f). A holy God desires

a holy people; only a holy people can show forth the excellencies of Him who calls us from darkness to light.

We should walk worthily of God because He calls us into His kingdom and we are told that call comes through the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14). Obviously, walking worthily of God means that I cleanse myself from all unrighteousness, just as Paul walked worthily of God by behaving himself holily, righteously, and unblameably toward the Thessalonians and all men. But a worthy walk involves more than transformation in our lives; it must also involve transformation of our heart, for it is in the heart where Christ commands that He be sanctified (1 Pet. 3:15). Jesus said, "No man can come unto me except the father sent me draw him and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Everyone that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me" (Jn. 6:44f). God calls (draws) us by the revealed love He had for us by allowing His own Son to die for us. Truly, "Greater love hath no man than this than that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 13:13). God's love for us should kindle a responding love for Him for "we love because he first loved us" (1 Jn. 4:19). Just as a worthy walk involved a love for God because of His love for us; it equally should provoke a heart laden down with profound gratitude for what God saved us from. "The Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

Because of His love for us and the fiery fate His love saves us from, we should draw nigh to God and offer Him grateful worship. We have God's assurance: "Draw nigh to me and I will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8).

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