

**1st 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 July 23rd, 2017, 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 morning. When someone asks you whether or not you were worthy of the great salvation which was so 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 have 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 you then respond? Our text says, by walking worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

A person’s walk is what they are 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 you take the steps necessary to get to the place where you have decided to go. Your 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 your life before God that He believes that the sacrifice which He made for you in giving you His Only-Begotten Son and the gift and privilege of eternal life, was worth it. As He looks at your heart and your life, He sees that there was a real return of love and obedience that made His investment worthwhile. 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.

There are, however, a number of practical things which walking worthy of God, will involve. In this message I want to give you 3 very practical things which God will take notice of, when you do them, which will indicate to Him that you are walking worthy of what He has done for you through Christ. These things will involve your responding to the truth of His word that your pastor is trying to show you and teach you. 1st of all – Walking worthy means that you will study to respond to the truth that you are very dear to your pastor. 2nd – Walking worthy means that you will study to respond to the financial needs of your pastor, your church, and missions. And 3rd – Walking worthy means that you will study to respond to the exhortation and the comfort of the Scriptures which has been shown to you by your own pastor.

1st of all – Walking worthy means that you will study to respond to the truth that you are very dear to your pastor.

Verse 8 says – “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 dear to us.” What do you think of the full time Christian ministry? Do you respect the labors of your pastor; his labors in the Word and doctrine, his labors of showing hospitality, his labors of privately counseling and teaching the truth? Paul said that he and Silvanus and Timothy were pleased, not only to impart the gospel to the believers in Thessalonica, but also their own lives, because the people in

the church there had become dear to them. If a man is a pastor he must study to know what the work is that God has called him do. If he is a Biblical pastor, and a man after God's own heart, he will be laboring hard at preaching and teaching. But he will be laboring hard, not just to prove that he is a hard worker, but in order to show his Christian love for your soul. The persons that he regularly preaches to will become dear to him over time, for he will be concerned for their eternal welfare. Yes, he will know that the work that he has been called to is the preaching of the word of God and prayer. But he will prepare to do that work of preaching based upon the love which he has for you; the ones whom he is called to preach to. He bears this love in his heart for you, and he lovingly keeps you in mind, for you are dear to him.

A good pastor will love the people in his congregation and he will present the truth of the word to them as those who are his dear brothers and sisters in Christ. He will not preach to them continually with a frowning disapproval on his face. He will continually raise his voice to them to command them to do God's will. He will not be continually questioning whether their faith is genuine. He will distinguish between true and false faith, but he will do everything in his power to speak all the truth of the word of God to them in love. This is because he has a fond affection for them, and he affectionately longs for you to benefit from all of his labors. His love for you will be seen in all the presentation of the great doctrines of the faith. He will withhold nothing that is profitable to you. And when he presents the truth it will not simply be didactically teaching the truth to you in a take or leave it fashion, but he will be earnest and zealous in his presentation of it, because he wants you to receive and to believe it, for Christ's sake. He is preaching God's kingdom and His great glory and not his own. His laboring in this way is his walking worthy of God's having called him into His kingdom; to perceive and to participate in God's glory in His saving of people through the preaching of the word and His building them up through the human instrumentality of his labors being blessed of the Spirit. The blessing of fruit for his labors will come because God will see all that he is doing comes from his heart; that he loves the people that he is ministering to, and because God sees that he is walking worthy of his calling as a pastor.

Let us ask this question then? How can you, as Christian and member of this church show that you are walking worthy of the Lord's having called you into His kingdom? It is by your learning to respond to the labors of the pastor on your behalf, in his preparing to teach the truth, and then actually teaching you the truth of the word, by supporting his ministry to you by word and deed. This means first of all that you should pray for your pastor that he would be guided into the truth of the word in such a way that he would know what truths to present every Sunday. God's word is very full and very deep. There are many things which could be taught, but what will benefit God's people the most. What will most show the people God's greatest concerns? What will establish the people's faith, and their obedience to God's word with joy? Because of your pastor's love for you, because you are dear to him, he will study to present the truth of the word to you, as coming from his heart for you, and his greatest desire will be to spiritually feed you build you up in your most holy faith.

God is expecting that you will be in prayer before you come to church to listen, that the pastor would be able to present the truth in a lively discerning way; the way that would best represent the things that God is concerned to bring to your attention, so that you will order your way aright before God; that you would repent of your sins, and you would find your greatest joy in God Himself, and in doing His will, in connection with the exhortation, instruction, and encouragement which is given to you by your pastor. And further, God is expecting that after you hear a sermonic message that you would strive and pray to retain all the truth that you hear; that you would attempt to hold on to this truth in your mind and heart, and that you will then interact with the pastor and with the other members of the church, by talking with them, and speaking with them, about the truth that has been preached. Malachi 3: 16 says – "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of

remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate of His name.” Are you and I written in this book?

This kind of spiritual activity and practice is called having Koinonia; it is our having spiritual fellowship; speaking of spiritual things related to what has been preached; the pastor with the people, and the people with each other, in the fear of God. I believe that our text is telling us here, and it something that God values very highly. Ask yourself if you are doing this? Are you storing up the truth that you have heard, in order to benefit from what has been preached? Are you then, attempting to build others up with the spiritual truth that you have been fed by the pastor in the local church which you belong to, so that those whom you are speaking to, will have the truth re-inforced to their mind and heart, and they will benefit from it in every way? This is how you yourself will grow in Christ, and how you yourself can walk worthy of the calling wherewith you have been called.

2nd – Walking worthy means that you will study to respond to the financial needs of your pastor, your church, and missions.

In this regard, the apostle Paul and Silvanus and Timothy set a very good example. Verse 9 says – “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.” Paul reminds the believers at the church in Thessalonica that they had seen his labors and those with him; both in spiritually ministering to them the word of God, and then physically laboring to support themselves financially during that time. There was a mix of both; their working at the occupation of tent making and preaching. The believers at Thessalonica saw that Paul and company had labored night and day, so that they might not be a burden to them. In the early days of Paul’s first encounters of preaching to them, he and the others with him had evidently worked hard at making tents at certain times so that they would not have to ask the people who they were presenting the gospel to, to support them in their ministry.

Listen to how he relates what his practice was, when preaching the gospel in his missionary journeys. 1st Corinthians 9: 16-19– “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!” “For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.” “What is my reward then?” “That when I preach the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.” “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more.” If we were to turn over to Acts 18: 1-3 you would find a good example of how this tent making business could go hand in hand with the preaching of the gospel. 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.” “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.”

So we see that this was Paul’s occupation, and it did him in good stead to accomplish all that he was called to as a traveling apostle, and preacher and teacher. This tent making was not only the answer to many of his difficulties financially, but it was also a good example to those he preached to. And further it is a good example to all of us. It should show us that God does bless the hard work of our orienting all labors to promote the kingdom of God and His glory; that we would do the work of our hands to the glory of God, and that we will tithe on our income in order that the work of the Lord might flourish; both in regard to the preaching of the word and that promotion of missions. Let us remember the great promise of Malachi 2: 10 – “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house, (that is that the priests in the temple would be provided for) and test me in this, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such a blessing that there will not be room

to receive it.” “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field, says the Lord of hosts; and all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land, says the Lord of hosts.” Now who will say that it is legalism to give a tithe of your income to the work of the Lord in the church of which you are a part? Certainly if this is what they did, having been given such great promises in relation to giving 10%, why will not each of us here consider doing the same if we are not already?

Even though Paul and Silas and Timothy labored night and day in order that they might not be a burden to the church in Thessalonica in its infancy, I would like to convince you now; how very vital your financial support is to the continuance of the depth of the preaching ministry here, the ministry of truth. The pastor is giving himself full time to the preaching and teaching of the word. And the need for us is not only to support the pastor financially in relation to his labors, but there is also the need to see our church grow once again in our involvement in missions. I believe that this can be done if each of will carefully consider what we can give. If when Israel gave the tithe on the gross of their income, and the nations called them blessed when they did so, and they were a delightful land, how much more so will we be blessed and blessing to all the nations of the world in missions if we will give all that the Lord is asking us for?

3rd – Walking worthy means that you will study to respond to the exhortation and the comfort of the Scriptures which has been shown to you by your own pastor.
(Verses 10-12)

“You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would have a walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” 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 verse 10 of our text, in the original Greek, is *οσιως* 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 into non-existence 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. My brethren, this 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 is often, 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 they 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. Theirs 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 were preached to them were true; and they compared their lives with the life of the Lord Jesus, and the others who they read about in the Word of God. They saw that they practiced what they preached, and that they lived manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, and the mature discernment of those who could be called “fathers” in the faith.

The thing that should be appreciated about the pastor/people relationship in the local church is that in having a pastor you have someone who will do the same thing that the apostle and his helpers did for the church in Thessalonica. You have one to exhort you; someone to comfort you, and someone who will implore you as a father does his children, to walk in the ways of God. This is a very precious thing, or it should be, to all the people of God. For if the pastor is walking devoutly and justly and blamelessly among you who believe, it will be his continual prayer and hope that every single believer in the congregation will walk worthy of God. Let us think in closing of this fact that for those who have believed, we have been called into His own kingdom and glory. We are partakers of those things now; from the first moment that we have believed in Christ. So why should we live for the world when we this much spiritual glory has been and is being revealed to us, Sunday by Sunday in the preaching of the world, and day by day to us in our abiding in His word?

No, let us live as those who truly are living in the spiritual kingdom of God. Our life is hidden with Christ in God. Let us cultivate this hidden spiritual life together as a people who have been called of God in His kingdom and to behold His glory. “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God!” “Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not him.” Let it be of great satisfaction with you dear believer, that the world does not know you; does not know the secret of your strength. But let other believers know, and your pastor know, that the secret of your strength and all of your joy is found in Christ.