

Walk this Way • 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Read Vs. 9-12

B. Walk this Way

1. In 1920 in India, a native missionary found a couple of young girls being raised by wolves.
2. The missionary & his wife adopted them & named them **Amala & Kamala**.
3. They couldn't speak, but growled & whimpered like wolves. They seemed indifferent to either hot or cold, drank by lapping, & walked on all fours.
 - a. It took years to alter their behavior to make it more human.
 - b. Especially difficult was teaching them to walk-upright.
 - c. Like other feral children, Amala & Kamala went on all-fours because that's what they'd seen modeled.
4. In v. 12 Paul calls the Thessalonians to **walk worthy of God**.
 - a. Their lifestyle was to be **different** from the bestial behavior they'd known as hopeless idol-worshippers.
 - b. So far in ch. 2, Paul has reminded them of the **example** he gave them on **how** to walk.
5. We looked at vs. 3-8 last week, so let's pick it up at v. 9 this morning.

II. TEXT

A. V. 9

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.

1. Paul didn't hesitate to **remind** them how it was when he, Silas & Timothy were with them not long before.
2. He **wanted** them to recall how they'd conducted themselves because he knew the quality of their lives **amplified** their ministry.
3. This is quite different from the imposters who **don't** want people to see how they live.
 - a. Their lifestyle discredits them, so they hide it.
 - b. But Paul WANTED them to remember how they'd lived.
4. Let's review the things Paul mentioned about their example we looked at last week.
 - a. They were **faithful** to the call of God to preach the Gospel, even when it cost them greatly.
 - b. They aimed to **please God** rather than man.
 - c. They refused to use **flattery** but proclaimed an undiluted message.
 - d. They didn't claim to be **special**, choosing to **serve** rather than expecting to **be** served.
 - e. They were **gentle, warm, & humble**.
5. Then in v. 9, Paul turns to the **evidences of sincerity** in their ministry –
 - a. Because it was standard for the religious cons to take payment from their victims,
 - b. Paul's team chose instead to **earn their way** & make **no demands** on the Thessalonians.
 - c. This went far to prove the Gospel wasn't a scam.

Paul was a tent-maker by trade . . .

6. Paul was a tent-maker by trade. It wasn't difficult for him to pick up piece-work.
 - a. Silas & Timothy had their own skills as well.
 - b. If there was no work in their craft, there was always grunt work for common day-laborers.
 - c. Each day the unemployed would gather, then people would come by to hire them to help in the fields, on a construction project, or for some other need.
7. The thing is –Among the Greeks common labor was considered demeaning.
 - a. It was fit **only** for slaves & men who'd sunk so low they were **no better** than slaves.
 - b. Any work that broke a sweat was **shunned by the proud**.
 - c. Thessalonica was a thoroughly Greek city where this attitude prevailed.
8. Yet **hard labor** is precisely the kind of work Paul's team engaged in, working from sun-up to sun-down.
9. And when the **physical** toil was done, they turned to the task for which they'd come – Sharing the Gospel of Christ, which because of persecution was no less difficult.
10. While Paul's team didn't **expect or demand** support **from** the Thessalonians, that doesn't mean they **refused** support from others.

- a. In Phil. 4, Paul **thanks** the Philippians because **while they were IN Thessalonica**, they sent him aid.
- b. Years later Paul wrote Timothy, then pastoring the church at Ephesus, that those who labor full-time in the ministry ought to be supported to do so. // [cf. 1 Cor. 9:5-14, Gal. 6:6. Matt 10:10]
- 11. So while Paul wasn't **opposed** to receiving support, he knew the wisdom of not waiting for it before sharing the Gospel in Thessalonica.
- 12. He'd been called by God to **preach** the Gospel, not to earn a living by it.
 - a. So, if he had to earn his way by other means, he was happy to do it.
 - b. This strategy worked in Thessalonica because, although it was exhausting, it open the door for the Gospel.
 - c. Paul was different from the parade of religious salesmen who blew thru.
 - d. "Look at them; they're working hard & not putting demands on us. When their work is done, they don't seem to want to do anything but tell us about this Jesus-person. Maybe we should listen."
 - e. Listening, they were **convicted, saved**; then Paul's team went to work **discipling** them.

B. Vs. 10-12

¹⁰ You *are* witnesses, and God *also*,

- 1. **Again** Paul calls them to **remember** their example.
- 2. He points out that they'd not lived apart from them as though they were too good for them.
- 3. What the Thessalonians observed in them was
how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe;
- 6. Either this is **outrageous arrogance**, or **accurate**. // It's not difficult to know which.
 - a. Since he repeatedly calls them to remember how they'd lived among them,
 - b. The only way to make sense of this is that it's an **accurate** description of how they behaved.
- 7. Arrogance is an attitude of **superiority** that demands others **recognize** it.
 - a. That's the **opposite** of what Paul's team exhibited.
 - b. The proud don't serve. They expect to **BE** served.
 - c. But Paul's team had been **all about serving** because they were following Jesus' example.
- 8. What Paul writes here **isn't boastful** – it's a **humble statement** of fact.

Humility isn't putting yourself down ...

- 9. Humility isn't putting yourself down or thinking lowly of yourself. It's **self-honesty**.
 - a. Humility is having an **accurate**, realistic appraisal of yourself.
 - b. In Rom. 12:3, Paul says we aren't to think **more highly** of ourselves than we ought to think.
 - 1) The key word there is '**more**.'
 - 2) As new people IN CHRIST, we're to have an accurate view of who & what we are as the Redeemed.
 - 3) We **are** His dearly beloved, called to be His Bride.
 - 4) We are **nothing without** Him, but **destined for glory because** of Him.
- 10. There's no pride in Paul's description of how they'd lived among the Thessalonians because he knew they **could not have been** devout, just or blameless **apart from** the power of the HS.
- 11. **Devout** = **devoted**, set apart to the Lord. They were **living for God**.
- 12. **Just** = **right**; it speaks of their **integrity & character**.
- 13. **Blameless** refers to **how they treated others**.
 - a. There was nothing in their conduct that allowed anyone fix blame on them.
 - c. Think of Teflon / Silverstone coating; nothing sticks to it.
 - d. If an accusation was made against Paul, Silas or Timothy, no one would believe it because there was nothing they'd done for it to stick to.

¹¹ as you know

- 14. A **third** time he points to their reputation.
how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children,
- 15. In v. 7, Paul likened their ministry to the tender care of a **mother** for her nursing infant.
- 16. No he likens it to a **diligent father**.
 - a. In v. 9, they'd **worked hard** on their behalf.

- b. In v. 10, they'd given a **good example**.
 - c. In v. 11, they **used words** to stir them up.
17. Pastors & Bible teachers will often remark on the importance of making sure our actions follow our words.
- a. We must practice what we preach; walk the talk. Live the life.
 - b. We love to quote Francis of Assisi, who said, "Preach at all times. If necessary, use words."
18. While that's true, we can put so much emphasis on **living** that we neglect the importance of **speaking**.
- a. Don't get me wrong; being devout, just & blameless is crucial.
 - b. If your lifestyle is lacking & your behavior is more that of a **sinner**, it's best you don't run around loudly claiming to be a **saint**.
 - c. But if you are walking in the Spirit, don't neglect to **talk** of Jesus & **share** the Gospel.
19. Paul's **example** would have accomplished little if he hadn't **explained** where it came from & how the Thessalonians could enter into it themselves.
20. Explaining it was **so important**, Paul used 3 different forms to get it across.
- a. He **exhorted** them. A better translation is, he **encouraged** them.
 - 1) The word 'exhort' has a harshness to it which is nowhere in sight in the Greek word.
 - 2) This is a **warm-worded boost** that **installs courage** so that confidence grows.
 - 3) Paul came alongside the Thessalonians, put his arm around them & said, "Come on, let's do this!"
 - 4) **They'd already seen him** doing it.
 - 5) He invited them to **join him** in the grand adventure of following Christ.
 - b. He also **comforted** them. This is similar to encouragement but with a twist.
 - 1) It's **re-encouragement** following a set-back.
 - 2) Picture a dad helping his daughter learn to ride a bike.
 - 3) Before she ever gets on, he kneels next to her, puts his arm around her & says, "I know you can do this & I'll be right here to help you every step of the way."
 - 4) That's the **first word, encouragement**.
 - 5) So she climbs on the bike & with dad alongside starts to pedal. She goes 5 ft. then tips & starts to go down. But he swoops in & lifts her off of the seat.
 - 6) She's a bit scared now because the bike fell, but she's unharmed because dad protected her.
 - 7) She's leery of trying again, but this time before setting her back on the seat, her father tells her **everyone** learns this way.
 - 8) Balance is something that takes a little time to get the hang of. She's doing great. And don't forget, he's right there.
 - 9) He **re-installs** the courage she needs to try again.
 - 10) And he **KEEPS** comforting her until several tries later, she's riding on her own.
 - c. Then comes the 3rd word = **Charged**. This an **urge to action**.
 - 1) It's a **launch** word. It's when the father says to his daughter, "Honey, you don't need me to run alongside anymore."
 - 2) "It's time for you to head out on your own because you know how to ride now."
 - 3) She **wants** to ride by herself. A 7 year old doesn't want her dad still running alongside, holding the seat.

There comes a point in our growth in Christ when our spiritual mentor, the one who's provided the example on how to walk with the Lord, needs to launch us, to say –

"It's time for you to make **my** example **your** own experience.

It's time for you now to do for someone else, what I've done for you."

I want to say a word to the young people here today. It's time for you to get your own faith in God.

You can't live in your parent's spiritual shadow forever.

It's time for your own relationship with God.

Holding their hoodie isn't going to get you into Heaven. / God doesn't have any grandchildren.

21. **What** Paul encouraged, comforted & charged them to do is in v. 12

¹² that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

22. Paul led the Thessalonians to faith in Christ, then **encouraged** them to walk with the Lord.

- a. When they stumbled along the way, he didn't cast them off in frustration.

- b. He **comforted** & worked with them to learn the lessons failure taught.
- c. But when it came time for he & his team to leave, they **charged** the Thessalonians to carry on.
23. They did!
- a. Even though they only spent a month there,
- b. Because of the exemplary way he, Silas, & Timothy lived,
- c. The Thessalonians had all they needed to keep going.
- d. The 2 letters Paul wrote them reveal a healthy church.
- III. CONCLUSION
- A. Walk with the Lord
1. The Thessalonians heeded Paul's charge to **walk worthy of God**.
2. They'd seen up close & personal in Paul & his mates how to, so they were able to duplicate it.
4. This is why regular, close fellowship is important in the Body of Christ.
- a. We need the **example & encouragement** of others who are walking with the Lord.
- b. We need to **see** what **love looks like**; to **hear good counsel**.
- c. We need the **encouragement** to step out into new ventures of faith.
- d. And we need **re-encouragement** when we stumble & fall.
5. **Most of all**, we need to be reminded we don't walk alone.
6. Being a disciple means **following Jesus**.
7. The **goal** of a disciple is to be – just like the rabbi. // To that end, a disciple follows the rabbi, 24•7•365
8. Our goal is to be **just like Jesus**. // We do that by following Him, 24•7•365 // Our **walk** is with Him.
9. But let's be honest – No one wants to hang out with someone they don't care about.
- a. If we are "in love" with someone, we **want** to be **with** them.
- b. The **intimacy** of our walk with God, our closeness to Him
- Is directly proportional to our love for Him.
10. So let me ask this question: Look deep, how's your love for God today? Dipstick.
- a. If it's low, where can you go to renew, fill up, top-off that love?
- b. Let me answer that by telling a story . . .
11. I love art & heard the Getty was amazing, but had never been. // Kept saying I'd go, but delayed.
- a. Finally went & spent all day there. Absolutely mind-blowing!
- b. The **beauty** of some of those paintings & sculptures is beyond description.
- c. I wanted to just stand & stare, looking at every square inch.
- d. The more you look at a masterpiece, the **more** you see.
- e. After standing in front of one massive canvas for over 20 minutes, I realized there was something stirring deep inside.
- 1) It was a kind of ache, a longing.
- 2) Not for the painting, but for the **beauty** the painting **hinted** at, the **glory** the artist tried to capture.
12. You see, every masterpiece of art, every swelling symphony, is only a distant echo of the glory that **is** our God & Savior.
13. The longing that rises in you when confronted by beauty in whatever form was planted in us so that we would seek after the Beautiful One - Jesus.
14. It is here in His Word & Spirit that our love for Him, our desire for Him is **stoked**.
- [Pray – God, Let me love You more, then more, & more on top of that.]