

As we read on we note the deep love Paul and his companions had for the new converts to Christ in this Macedonian city. They were foreigners to Paul who was raised in Tarsus in Asia Minor. These differences in nationality and culture did not blunt his love for them at all. Nor did he try to conform them to his culture. Believers sometimes get these kind of priorities in the way of God's priorities and fail to distinguish what they view as an obvious need for moral or cultural reform from the need of sinners for a Savior. Rather than repentance and trust in Christ's shed blood, alienation from Christ occurs, and a sinner remains unconvinced, antagonistic and lost. What a shame! Yet we still see instances of this attitude in believers cynically reported frequently nowadays in the news media. Christ is dishonored, souls are turned off, and Satan retains his dominion over their rebellious hearts.

Notice how Paul and his companions approached the lost, heathen people in Thessalonica. They presented the gospel to them with a clear, genuine earnestness and concern for their souls. They were obviously seeking to obey and glorify the gracious God that had sent them. A God hitherto unknown to the Thessalonians. Locally their persecutors were unintentionally giving witness to the sincerity of the gospel. Their selfless desire for the salvation of their hearers was evident. Their persistence despite contentious resistance on the part of the local Jews tended to authenticate the message.

They did not mince words regarding sin and the peril their hearers were in. It was clear they were not merely seeking to gain a following for some financial gain or personal glory. How many times do these selfish human motives get mixed into our thinking when seeking souls. We don't seek more members. We don't seek the approval, much less applause, of fellow believers for the numbers of souls we report as new converts. But don't we all rejoice to tell of any one making a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus as their Savior and Lord! Don't we all rejoice to hear this good news.

As we see from Paul's letter to the Thessalonians his labor of love has just begun when the soul comes to the Savior. This letter is an example of the follow up needed to confirm and establish new believers. It also shows us the great capacity the newborn believer has for the truth. As we proceed try to notice the breadth and scope of what Paul mentions he had taught them in the very brief few weeks he had with them. They had received not only doctrinal but moral instruction, topped off with strong encouragement. So his letter is a follow up to reinforce what they had already heard, more than the introduction of new material. Before going into detail Paul reminds them further of the attitude they had seen in him and his companions. An attitude of self sacrifice and loving personal care. Christlike. They took great pains not to be a burden on their converts. They worked part time night

and day to provide for all of their personal needs, food, shelter, and clothing. (This was of course the norm for Paul as we see from other epistles.) They were Apostles of Christ, with authority and rights to receive support from their converts, but by God's wisdom and grace they consciously chose not to. This later provides a firm base from which to issue a strong rebuke to one of the local believers who refused to work (for what ever reason, we aren't told). Paul's obvious self support while among them effectively prevented any sort of defensive retort from the idle one. A preacher has no business seeking or receiving support from those he is bringing the gospel to. Traveling servants of the Lord are commended by the Apostle John (John 3) as taking nothing from the nations. Nothing discredits the message of grace like the messenger receiving support from the lost he is seeking to reach.

Paul now reminds them of the conduct the Thessalonians had seen in their visitors. He uses words like "piously," "justly," "unblameably" to describe their behavior while among the Thessalonians. How Christlike they were. What a lovely example for them to have seen. Now it is further reinforced by this reminder. They would thereby be encouraged to adopt a similar attitude and conduct among themselves. We are too. For we are to walk worthy of God. After all, He has called us to His kingdom and glory. Shouldn't we walk as those soon to reign with the Christ when He appears? Not only are we encouraged to walk worthy, we are enabled and expected to. But note, **not** commanded to. The Spirit engages our hearts with Christ to this end. There is no coercion, threats or punishments stated or implied. We follow Him. In His footsteps, suffering before He reigns, we with Him. Paul will give us much more on this topic later in these two letters. Persecution is endured in the light of future glory.

But we must return to two comments Paul makes about his loving care for them. No one would dare make this statement if it were not only true but clearly obvious to those he is speaking to. How often do we hear "what you do speaks louder than what you say." But Paul and his companions' conduct more than supported what they said to them. Do you know anyone like this?

2:7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: 8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,

See the marks of a true servant of God. How like Christ! How they graced the message they brought. How they drew the hearts of those they loved so unreservedly. Ours too.