



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, October 30–November 5 (A) – 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13

Focus: *Be a Witness*

word of life

“... lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.” 1 Thessalonians 2:12 (NRSV)

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13

Paul is a preacher, but he is also a pastor. His letter to the Thessalonians reflects both of these aspects of his relationship to this beloved congregation. It is interesting to see him switch roles within the same letter and even the same chapter. (See chapter 2)

Chapter two begins with a defensive posture. He does not see his work in their community as being in vain, without fruit. Despite all the opposition, Paul perseveres to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. In addition, Paul reminds the Thessalonians of his own physical labor. We sometimes forget Paul was not a full-time preacher; he made a living as a tentmaker. Paul believes his manual labor adds authenticity to his preaching. He was not taking advantage of the hospitality of his audience.

1. *How might Paul have juggled work, missionary trips, and preaching?*
2. *Do you think Paul's manual labor increases his credibility or not? Explain.*

Paul challenges the Thessalonians to be a witness to his own actions. He writes, “You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers.” (1 Thessalonians 2:10 NRSV) Paul is sometimes perceived as boastful and centered on himself. On the other hand, Paul is not in Thessalonica to defend himself against those who are questioning his motives and sincerity. Paul wants the Thessalonians to remember his actions and serve as witnesses on Paul's behalf.

3. *Would Paul's words have been enough to motivate you to be a witness on his behalf?*
4. *Do you have any doubts about Paul's motives to preach? Explain your answer.*

In a surprising shift, Paul refers to himself as a father, viewing the congregation as his children. (vs.11) Many congregations today perceive themselves as a family, but not all view the pastor as a parent. Consequently, it may take a moment to grasp the profound implications of Paul's reference.

5. *What might it mean for Paul to be the father of the Thessalonians?*
6. *Is this a helpful reference? How so?*

With all the love of a parent, Paul proceeds with a fatherly chat. Paul reveals his hand. He is deeply invested in the Thessalonians. They are not like strangers, but rather as family, connected to him like a parent to a child. So, Thessalonians, be ready. Take a breath. Here it comes. Paul urges, encourages, and pleads like a parent who is highly invested in his or her children.

7. *Does this personal relationship fit with your perspective of Paul?*
8. *How might this personal language help people listen more or less to Paul?*

In many ways Paul's plea is quite simple, “... lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.” (vs.12) But in reality, his words place followers of Jesus on a pathway which lasts a lifetime. We are left asking, “What does it mean to lead a life worthy of God?”

9. *What does it mean to lead a life worthy of God?*

word among us

Pastor Joe was a former football star, Marine, and police officer. His booming voice needed no sound system in the sanctuary. His sermons included a few resounding pounds on the pulpit.

But when it came time for a children's sermon, it was precious to see this towering man sit on the floor among the children and gently whisper to them. The children loved Pastor Joe and his gentle ways. Often, they would lean their head on his arm and listen to his stories.

One man—two styles of preaching. Pastor Joe assessed his audience and adjusted accordingly to the listener.

1. *When do you appreciate hearing a pastoral sermon?*
2. *When, if ever, do we need to hear a “pulpit-pounding, rattle-our-inners” sermon?*

In 1 Thessalonians 2: 1-13, Paul defends his preaching, calls upon the congregation to agree with his own assessment of being an authentic preacher, reminds them of his gentleness, and then stirs them with a loving father's compelling words. Paul presses on with his message. He varies his words depending on his audience, but courage runs through his preaching. (See 1 Thessalonians 2:2 NRSV)

3. *In your assessment, do preachers need more or less courage today? How so?*
4. *What if a congregation prayed for courage for their pastor? How might that change the preaching? (If you decide to start praying for the courage of Paul for your preacher, you might want to forewarn your pastor.)*

Paul uses family language to reach the Thessalonians. Like a loving parent, Paul urges, encourages, and pleads.

5. *Why do parents urge, encourage, and plead?*
6. *What is Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians and all Christians?*

faith practice in daily life

Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed.

Paul desires the Thessalonians and all followers of Jesus to “lead a life worthy of God.” It may take us our lifetime to figure out what that means. We try and fall short. We try again and fall short. But Paul has set the goal for each Christian. From baptism until death, we are set on a course in this life to “lead a life worthy of God.”

7. *How do you remind yourself each day to lead a life worthy of God?*

Proclaiming the good news of God in Christ through word and deed provides latitude to respond. Not all of us are called to preach from a pulpit. Not all of us have children to instruct. Yet, we all have opportunities to share the good news of God in Christ.

To live a consistent life worthy of God is both an invitation and commission.

Prayer

Creator of the universe, create in me a life worthy of you. Amen

last word

Pray constantly this week to lead a life worthy of God.

