

WEEK 3 — OUTLINE

The Pattern of the Apostle Paul in Cooperating with Christ's Heavenly Ministry to Shepherd People for the Building Up of the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: Acts 20:17-20, 28, 31; 26:16-19; 2 Cor. 11:28-29; 12:15; 1 Thes. 2:1-12

« DAY 1 »

- I. Paul was a pattern of cooperating with Christ's heavenly ministry to shepherd people for the building up of the Body of Christ (Heb. 13:20; John 10:11, 14-15; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4; Acts 20:17-20, 28, 31; 26:16-19; 2 Cor. 11:28-29; 12:15; Eph. 4:11-12, 15-16).
- II. The apostles were a pattern of the glad tidings that they spread—"you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake" (1 Thes. 1:5b):
 - A. In the church the most important thing is the person; the person is the way, and the person is the Lord's work; what you are is what you do (John 5:19; 6:57; Phil. 1:19-26; Acts 20:18-35; Matt. 7:17-18; 12:33-37).
 - B. We need to follow the pattern of the apostles to pay more attention to life than to work (John 12:24; 2 Cor. 4:12).

« DAY 2 »

- III. Paul was a pattern to the believers of living and ministering Christ as the Spirit in his spirit for the building up of the Body of Christ (1 Tim. 1:16; 4:12; Rom. 8:16):
 - A. The Lord appeared to Paul to make him a minister and a witness of the things in which Paul had seen Him and of the things in which He would appear to Paul (Acts 26:16-19; cf. 1:8; 23:11; 20:20, 31).
 - B. Paul took Christ as everything—as his living, pattern, goal, and secret (Phil. 1:19-21a; 2:5-16; 3:7-14; 4:11-13).
 - C. Paul lived by the Spirit, walked by the Spirit, sowed unto the Spirit, and ministered the Spirit as a spiritual man who lived and served in his spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25; 6:8; 2 Cor. 3:6; 1 Cor. 2:15; 2 Cor. 2:13; Rom. 1:9; 8:16).
 - D. Paul was infused with God to shine forth God in the ministry of the new covenant, which is the ministry of the Spirit, the ministry of righteousness, and the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:1; 3:6, 8-9; 5:18-20).
 - E. Paul lived and did everything in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:1-6, 15-16; Col. 2:19).

« DAY 3 »

IV. The best way to shepherd people, to cherish and nourish them, is to give them a proper pattern; Paul fed his spiritual children with his own living of Christ (1 Thes. 2:1-12; 2 Cor. 1:23—2:14; 11:28-29; 1 Cor. 9:22; Acts 20:28):

- A. The apostles not only preached the gospel but also lived it; their ministering of the gospel was not only by word but also by a life that displayed the power of God, a life in the Holy Spirit and in the assurance of faith (1 Thes. 1:5).
- B. The saints in Thessalonica became imitators of the apostles; this led them to follow the Lord, to take Him as their pattern, thus making them a pattern to all other believers (vv. 6-7).
- C. The apostle Paul stressed repeatedly the apostles' entrance toward the believers; this shows that their manner of life played a great role in infusing the gospel into the new converts (vv. 5, 9; 2:1):

« DAY 4 »

- 1. The apostles were struggling and speaking the gospel to the Thessalonians in the boldness of God (v. 2).
- 2. The apostles were free from deception, uncleanness, and guile (v. 3).
- 3. The apostles were first tested and approved by God and then were entrusted by Him with the gospel; hence, their speaking, the preaching of the gospel, was not of themselves to please men but of God to please Him; God proved, examined, and tested their hearts continually (v. 4; Psa. 26:2; 139:23-24; 2 Cor. 1:12; 6:6; 7:3).
- 4. The apostles were never found with flattering speech or with a pretext for covetousness (1 Thes. 2:5):
 - a. To have any pretext for covetousness is to peddle or adulterate the word of God (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2).
 - b. It is also to pretend to be godly for the sake of gain (1 Tim. 6:5; Titus 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:3).
- 5. The apostles did not seek glory from men (1 Thes. 2:6a):
 - a. To seek glory from men is a real temptation to every Christian worker; many have been devoured and spoiled by this matter (cf. 1 Sam. 15:12).
 - b. Lucifer became God's adversary, Satan, because of glory-seeking; anyone who seeks glory from men is a follower of Satan (Ezek. 28:13-17; Isa. 14:12-15; Matt. 4:8-10).
 - c. How much we will be used by the Lord and how long our usefulness will last depend on whether we seek glory from men (cf. John 7:17-18; 5:39-44; 12:43; 2 Cor. 4:5).

« DAY 5 »

6. The apostles did not stand on their authority or dignity as apostles of Christ (1 Thes. 2:6b):
- a. To assert authority, dignity, or right in Christian work damages that work; the Lord Jesus, while on earth, gave up His dignity (John 13:4-5), and the apostle Paul preferred not to use his right (1 Cor. 9:12).
 - b. If we follow this pattern, we shall kill a deadly disease germ in the Body of Christ, the germ of assuming a position (Matt. 20:20-28).
7. The apostles cherished the believers and yearned over them as a nursing mother would cherish and yearn over her own children (1 Thes. 2:7-8; cf. Gal. 4:19; Isa. 49:14-15; 66:12-13):
- a. To cherish people is to make them happy, to comfort them, to make them feel that you are pleasant to them, easy to be contacted in everything and in every way.
 - b. To cherish people in our natural humanity is not genuine; we must cherish people with the Lord's presence as the charming factor, as the reality of resurrection.
 - c. Cherishing includes nourishing; to nourish people is to feed them with the all-inclusive Christ in His full ministry of three stages (Eph. 5:29).

« DAY 6 »

8. The apostles not only imparted the gospel of God to the Thessalonians; they also imparted their own souls (1 Thes. 2:8):
- a. To live a clean and upright life (vv. 3-6, 10) and to love the new converts, even by giving our own souls to them (vv. 7-9, 11), are the prerequisites for infusing them with the gospel.
 - b. Paul was willing to spend not only what he had but also himself, his very being, on behalf of the saints (2 Cor. 12:15).
9. The apostles considered themselves as fathers in exhorting the believers to walk worthily of God, to have a walk that will enable them to enter into the kingdom of God and usher them into the glory of God (1 Thes. 2:11-12):
- a. As worshippers of idols (1:9), the believers were in the kingdom of Satan (Matt. 12:26).
 - b. Now, through the salvation in Christ they were called, and they have believed into the kingdom of God, which is the sphere in which they can worship and enjoy God under the divine ruling with the view of entering into God's glory.

« WEEK 3 — DAY 1 »

Morning Nourishment

Phil. 3:17 Be imitators together of me, brothers, and observe those who thus walk even as you have us as a pattern.

2 Thes. 3:9 Not because we do not have the right, but in order that we might give ourselves to you as a pattern that you might imitate us.

The service of the elders has to do with the person of the elder. It does not depend on the method but on the person. In the New Testament it is very difficult to find out what is the method or way to serve. Some places seem to speak about the method or the way, but actually the emphasis is still the person himself. The person is the way, and the person is the Lord's work. (Messages Given during the Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry, vol. 1, p. 59)

Today's Reading

If God does not gain a person, He will have no work, and He will have no way. A way is a course that a person takes. If God does not gain man, He will have no course to take. Man thinks that the most important thing to do is to find a good way. However, God's work does not involve giving us the ways but is a matter of gaining the persons. If God can gain two or three brothers here, He will have a way. Even if I present to you the best way to be an elder, it will be useless if the person is wrong. We, the person, should be gained by God. We have to learn to be the proper person more than to learn to do the proper things. It is meaningless for things to be done properly without the person being a proper one. What you are is what you do. You cannot serve God beyond what you are as a person. Hudson Taylor said in his book *Union and Communion* that what we are is more important than what we do. This word left a deep impression on me. We should know how to help the brothers and sisters properly.

What God cares for is whether or not you have been touched by Him. The measure we yield ourselves to the Lord determines the measure we are able to serve Him. If you have been dealt with in your temper, you can help others with their temper. If you have been dealt with in the way you dress, you will be able to help others in the way they dress. The church is not a worldly society. The church is a body (Eph. 1:23). A body is a matter of life...Life can meet man's present need. This should cause every servant of God to come before God again. (Messages Given during the Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry, vol. 1, pp. 59-60)

Margaret Barber was a great example to Watchman Nee in the one matter of paying more attention to life than to work. He realized that God cares for what we are more than what we do, and his work was according to this principle.

Watchman Nee...always took pains to restrict himself in the function of his gifts and the use of his knowledge in order to insure that his work was fully in life, of life, with life, and was life itself. As long as he had the assurance that his ministry was the outflow of life, he was satisfied.

After he had been in his ministry for over six years, the number of saints in the Lord's recovery at that time was still so small. However, he was not disappointed; rather, he was strongly encouraged because he realized that that small number was the issue of his ministry. Praise the Lord! Because Watchman Nee was not interested in the outward work, the life-issue of his ministry has flowed throughout the whole earth. That part of his ministry which has flooded today's Christianity through his books was not his work but rather the very life that issued from his work. To him work did not mean much; life meant everything. In my whole life, he is the only person I have known who paid more attention to life than to work. (Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, pp. 85, 87)

Further Reading: Messages Given during the Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry, vol. 1, chs. 10, 33; Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, ch. 11

« WEEK 3 — DAY 2 »

Morning Nourishment

2 Cor. 12:14-15 ...For the children ought not to store up for the parents, but the parents for the children. But I, I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls...

Eph. 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.

Paul took Christ as his life and lived by Christ. This Christ, who lived in him as life and who has the law of life and is the very law of life (Rom. 8:2), ruled and regulated him that he might be legitimately, legally, rightfully, and duly subject to Christ. Therefore, Paul was within a higher and better law, being subject to the law of life. (1 Cor. 9:21, footnote 2)

[In Philippians 3:16, the Greek word] *stoicheo*, meaning “to walk orderly,” [is] derived from *steicho*, which means “to range in regular line, to march in military rank, to keep step, to conform to virtue and piety”...It is different from the word *walk* in verses 17 and 18, which means “to live, to deport oneself, to be occupied with, to walk about”...By this word the apostle charged us to walk and to order our lives—whereunto we have attained, at the state to which we have attained—by the same rule, in the same line, in the same path, in the same footsteps. Whatever state we have attained to in our spiritual life, we all must walk, as the apostle did, by the same rule, in the same path; that is, we must pursue Christ toward the goal that we may gain Christ to the fullest extent as the prize of the upward calling of God. (Phil. 3:16, footnote 4)

Today's Reading

[Paul's word in 2 Timothy 4:1] proves that, in his life and work, Paul took the Lord's appearing and His kingdom as the incentive and goal. The Lord's appearing will be for judgment, to reward each one of us (Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12), and His kingdom will be for His reigning with His overcomers (Rev. 20:4, 6). The apostle not only took these two matters as the incentive and goal for himself but also by these two matters charged Timothy, who was under his leading, to faithfully fulfill his ministry of the word. (2 Tim. 4:1, footnote 2)

We need to contact and take care of others, sinners and believers, as the apostle Paul, the top apostle, did in contacting people and taking care of people's need (2 Cor. 1:23—2:14). In 2 Corinthians 11:28-29 Paul said, “Apart from the things which have not been mentioned, there is this: the crowd of cares pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?” This unveils the care of a proper shepherd.

Our attitude may be that everyone is weak but we are not weak. We may have the feeling that we are strong ones. In 1 Corinthians 9:22 Paul said, “To the weak I became weak that I might gain the weak.” This means that we should come down to the weak one's level. To a sick person we come down to the level of a sick person. This is the way to shepherd people by visiting them. Paul also said, “Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?” [2 Cor. 11:29]. This is to burn in sorrow and indignation over the cause of the stumbling of all the fallen ones. This shows the pattern of Paul as a good shepherd, taking care of God's flock.

Acts 20 says that while Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, he sent word to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. He told them that they should shepherd God's flock, which God purchased with His own blood (v. 28). The shepherding of God's flock was on Paul's heart. Many think that Paul was a great apostle doing a great work as a great career. But Paul considered what he did as shepherding the flock of God. We have to be revolutionized in our logic and consideration. We should not think that we are going to do a great work for Christ like certain spiritual giants. These so-called giants actually did not accomplish much for God's interest. Instead, they only made a name for themselves with little result for the building up of the Body of Christ. (The Vital Groups, pp. 61-62)

Further Reading: The Vital Groups, msg. 7

« WEEK 3 — DAY 3 »

Morning Nourishment

1 Thes. 1:5-7 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, even as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became a pattern to all those who believe in Macedonia and in Achaia.

The apostles not only preached the gospel; they lived it. Their ministering of the gospel was not only by word but also by a life that displayed the power of God, a life in the Holy Spirit and in the assurance of their faith. (1 Thes. 1:5, footnote 1)

The imitators of the apostles (1 Thes. 1:6) became a pattern to all other believers. (1 Thes. 1:7, footnote 1)

Today's Reading

First Thessalonians 2:1-12 shows us how we should conduct ourselves as a pattern for new believers. In order to be a proper pattern, we need to be pure in our motives, especially concerning money. Much of what is written in these verses is related to money, greed, and covetousness. If we are not pure concerning money, if we are not sincere, honest, and faithful regarding it, we may be among those who adulterate the word of God and peddle it. Furthermore, this motive may cause us to use flattery and to have a pretext for covetousness. All these are serious matters. Therefore, if we would be a proper pattern for young saints, our greed must be dealt with, and money matters must be under our feet. We should never speak words of flattery, we should never have any pretext, and we should never seek glory for ourselves. Moreover, instead of trying to please man, we should do our best to please God. Then other believers will have a good pattern to follow.

To give the new believers and young ones a lot of teaching is not the proper way to take care of them. The proper way to foster them is to show them a pattern. By showing them a pattern you water them, supply them, nourish them, and cherish them. This is fostering. If you find that your experience is somewhat lacking, point the new believers to different people in the Bible, for example, to ones such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and David in the Old Testament and Peter, John, Paul, and Timothy in the New Testament. We can present the lives of Bible characters in such a way as to foster the growth of the young ones.

If we give too much teaching to new ones and young ones, we shall damage them. Every mother knows that one of the most important matters in the raising of children is proper feeding. Caring for children is ninety percent a matter of feeding and ten percent a matter of teaching. This also should be our practice in caring for new believers in the church....Feeding involves the presenting of patterns either from the Bible or from church history. By reading the biographies of saints throughout the ages, we nourish ourselves and experience a kind of fostering. The point here is that the best way to feed others and foster them is to give them a proper pattern....Only by having a pattern can we feed others.

In the book of 1 Thessalonians Paul was not preaching himself. Rather, he was feeding his spiritual children with his own living of Christ. This means that Paul's way of living was used to feed his spiritual children. This was the reason he emphasized his coming to the Thessalonians, his preaching, his way of handling the word of God, and his manner of living.

The apostle stresses repeatedly their entrance to the believers (1:5, 9). This shows that their manner of life played a great role in infusing the gospel into the new converts. It was not only what the apostles said but also what they were....They were a pattern of how to believe in the Lord and follow Him. Because many came to believe in the Lord Jesus through the apostles, a church was raised up in less than a month. This happened not mainly as a result of preaching and teaching but through the kind of entrance the apostles had among the Thessalonians. (Life-study of 1Thessalonians, pp. 104-105, 110, 97)

Further Reading: Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, msg. 13

« WEEK 3 — DAY 4 »

Morning Nourishment

1 Thes. 2:2-4 ...We were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much struggle. For our exhortation is not out of deception nor out of uncleanness nor in guile; but even as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who proves our hearts.

In the preaching of the gospel, the apostles experienced God. They enjoyed Him as their boldness in the struggle for the gospel. They were bold not in themselves, but in God, even after they had been outrageously treated by the Philippians. Suffering and persecution could not defeat them because they were in the organic union with the Triune God. According to 1 Thessalonians 2:2, they spoke the gospel of God in much struggle. This indicates that while they were preaching, they were fighting, because persecution was still going on. Hence, they were struggling and speaking the gospel to the Thessalonians in the boldness of God. (Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, p. 97)

Today's Reading

[In 1 Thessalonians 2:3] deception refers to the goal, uncleanness to the motive, and guile to the means. All three are of and by the subtle and deceiving devil. The word exhortation includes speaking, preaching, teaching, instructing, and exhorting. Paul's exhorting was free from deception, uncleanness, and guile. The apostles were not greedy, and they had no intention of making a gain of anyone. Their coming to the Thessalonians with the gospel was altogether honest and faithful.

Verse 4 says, "But even as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who proves our hearts." God's entrusting depends on His approval by His testing. The apostles were first tested and approved by God and then were entrusted by Him with the gospel. Hence, their speaking, the preaching of the gospel, was not of themselves to please men, but was of God to please Him. He proves, examines, and tests their hearts all the time (Psa. 26:2; 139:23-24).

First Thessalonians 2:5 says, "For neither were we found at any time with flattering speech, even as you know, nor with a pretext for covetousness; God is witness." The Greek word rendered "pretext" also means "pretense, cloak." To have any pretext for covetousness is to peddle or adulterate the word of God (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2). It is also to pretend to be godly for gain (1 Tim. 6:5; Titus 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:3).

In 1 Thessalonians 2:6 Paul goes on to say, "Nor did we seek glory from men, neither from you nor from others, though we could have stood on our authority as apostles of Christ." To seek glory of men is a real temptation to every Christian worker.

The Greek words rendered "stood on our authority" also mean "asserted authority." A literal translation would be "been able to be in weight," that is, been burdensome (see v. 9; 1 Cor. 9:4-12). To assert authority, dignity, or right in Christian work also damages it. The Lord Jesus, while on earth, gave up His dignity (John 13:4-5), and the apostle would rather not use his right (1 Cor. 9:12).

Apparently, seeking glory from men is not as evil as covetousness. However, it is more subtle. The fall of the archangel was due to the seeking of glory. He became God's adversary because of his glory-seeking. Even though he was a leading angel with a very high position, he was still seeking glory. That was the cause of his fall. According to the New Testament, anyone who seeks glory of men is a follower of Satan. The seeking of glory is a trap spread by Satan to snare Christian workers. Therefore, it is very important that all Christian workers learn to avoid the snare of glory-seeking. However, not many have escaped this trap.

How much we shall be used by the Lord and how long our usefulness will last depend on whether we seek glory of men. If we seek glory, our usefulness in the hand of the Lord is finished. The seeking of glory for the self always kills one's usefulness. Therefore, may we all, especially the young, be warned never to seek glory in the Lord's work. (Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, pp. 98-101)

Further Reading: Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, msg. 12

« WEEK 3 — DAY 5 »

Morning Nourishment

1 Thes. 2:6 Nor did we seek glory from men, neither from you nor from others, though we could have stood on our authority as apostles of Christ.

1 Cor. 9:12 If others partake of this right over you, should not rather we? Yet we did not use this right, but we bear all things that we may not cause any hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

To seek glory from men is a real temptation to every Christian worker. Many have been devoured and spoiled by this matter. (1 Thes. 2:6, footnote 1)

First Thessalonians 2:6 indicates clearly that the apostles did not stand on their authority as apostles of Christ. They did not assume any standing or dignity. They had to forget that they were apostles and serve God's people as slaves. They were not to remind others of the fact that they were apostles of Christ. Instead, they were to keep in mind that they were brothers serving believers. (Life-study of 1Thessalonians, p. 101)

Today's Reading

Those who are believers and also those who are not believers may consider the leading ones, the elders, or the apostles as dignitaries. However, in the local churches there are no dignitaries. Instead of being dignitaries, we are slaves serving one another. Nevertheless, I know of certain ones who did not assume anything when they did not have a position or title. But as soon as they were given a position, perhaps in a service group, they began to assume dignity. This is shameful. We should learn of Paul never to stand on our dignity or assert authority.

A sister whose husband is an elder should not assume dignity because she is the wife of an elder. An elder's wife is not the "First Lady." She is simply a little sister serving the church. Furthermore, her husband...as an elder...has been appointed to serve the church as a slave. We all should have this attitude.

People were the same in Paul's time as they are today. Then as well as now, there was the temptation to assume some kind of dignity or standing. Paul, however, did not stand on his dignity as an apostle in order to claim something for himself. By refusing to stand on his dignity or assert authority Paul is a good pattern for us all. If we follow this pattern, we shall kill a deadly disease germ in the Body of Christ, the germ of assuming a position.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:7 Paul says, "But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children." The Greek word rendered "nurse" (in KJV), *trophos*, sometimes means a mother; hence, it may denote a nursing mother (see Galatians 4:19). Cherishing includes nourishing. Therefore, this word not only includes nourishing but also includes tender care.

Even though Paul was a brother, he considered himself a nursing mother. Surely, he had no thought of position, dignity, or authority. The thought of being a nursing mother is very different from the thought of dignity or position. What position does a nursing mother have? What rank, dignity, or authority belongs to her? Her dignity consists in nourishing and cherishing her children, in taking care of them in a tender way.

The word cherish is lovely, a word of utmost tenderness. Paul regarded himself as a cherishing one, not merely as one who serves. He certainly did not control the believers. Neither did he merely serve them. Rather, he cherished them. His care for them was full of tenderness.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:8 Paul continues, "Yearning in this way over you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved to us." The word yearning indicates being affectionately fond of, affectionately desirous of, like a nursing mother affectionately interested in her child whom she nourishes and cherishes. This was what the apostles did with the new believers. (Life-study of 1Thessalonians, pp. 101-102)

Further Reading: The Vital Groups, msg. 10

« WEEK 3 — DAY 6 »

Morning Nourishment

1 Thes. 2:8-9 Yearning in this way over you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved to us. For you remember, brothers, our labor and travail: While working night and day so as not to be burdensome to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

The apostles not only imparted the gospel of God to the Thessalonians; they also imparted their own souls. To live a clean and upright life as portrayed in 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6 and 10, and to love the new converts, even by giving our own souls to them, as described in verses 7-9 and 11, are the prerequisites for infusing others with the salvation conveyed in the gospel we preach.

Paul's word in verse 8 about imparting their own souls to the Thessalonians can be compared to his word in 2 Corinthians 12 about being spent for the sake of the believers. Paul was willing to spend not only what he had, but was willing to spend himself, his very being. The apostles were willing to impart what they were into the believers. This can be compared to a nursing mother giving herself to her child. (Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, pp. 102-103)

Today's Reading

The apostles did not want to be a burden on the Thessalonians. Therefore, they labored night and day in order to proclaim to them the gospel of God [1 Thes. 2:9].

In verse 10 Paul continues, "You are witnesses, as well as God, how in a holy and righteous and blameless manner we conducted ourselves toward you who believe." Holy refers to conduct toward God, righteous to conduct toward men, and blameless to all—God, men, and Satan. In order to conduct himself in this way, Paul had to exercise strict control over himself. Verse 10 reveals that the apostles were those who practiced self-control.

Verse 11 says, "Just as you know how we were to each one of you, as a father to his own children, exhorting you and consoling you and testifying." The apostle was strong in stressing what or how they were (1:5), for what they were opened the way to bring the new converts into God's full salvation.

In 2:11 Paul likens himself to a father exhorting his children. In cherishing the believers as their own children, the apostles considered themselves as nourishing mothers. In exhorting them, they considered themselves fathers.

Verse 12 says, "So that you might walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." God's calling is according to His selection, and it follows His selection (1:4). As worshippers of idols (1:9), the believers were in the kingdom of Satan (Matt. 12:26). Now, through the salvation in Christ, they are called and have believed into the kingdom of God, which is the sphere for them to worship and enjoy God under the divine ruling with a view of entering into God's glory. God's glory goes with His kingdom.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:12 Paul exhorts the believers to walk in a manner worthy of God. If he himself had not walked worthily of God, how could he have exhorted others to do so? In this matter also, he set an example for the believers to follow.

Verse 12 indicates that walking worthily of God is related to entering into His kingdom and being ushered into His glory. The thought here...is quite deep. Here we have a matter often neglected by Christians. Not many believers are taught to have a Christian walk that will enable them to enter into the kingdom of God, a walk that will usher them into God's glory. Many Christians have never heard such a word. Nevertheless, this is included as part of Paul's teaching to young believers.

To walk in a manner worthy of God is actually to live God. Only a life that lives God is worthy of God. When we live God, we walk worthily of Him. Such a walk will lead us into the kingdom and usher us into the glory of God. This is the goal of God's calling. God has called us to enter His kingdom and glory. (Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, pp. 103-105)

Further Reading: Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, msg. 12

« WEEK 3 — HYMN

Hymns, #1246

1

We give ourselves to follow the churches,
Oneness in Christ display;
Follow His move in all of the churches,
Stand fast as one this way.
We must follow the Spirit
In all simplicity.
In our spirit is Jesus—
He follows perfectly!

2

We give ourselves to follow the followers,
By this we truly learn;
Never desiring to be the leaders,
But to the Spirit turn.

3

We give ourselves the flock's steps to follow,
Knowing the Shepherd's care.
Now in the churches Jesus is leading
And He is speaking there.

4

We give ourselves to Thee, O Lord Jesus,
Never to turn aside;
Where'er the Lamb goes, there we would follow,
Follow whate'er betide.

5

We give ourselves to enter the kingdom,
That marriage feast, with Him;
Come persecution, suffering, and trials,
Still we will enter in.

6

Christ wants some followers here in the churches,
Followers of whom to say:
“These saw My purpose, followed Me wholly”—
May we be those today!