

COOPERATING WITH THE HEAVENLY MINISTRY OF THE ASCENDED CHRIST

(Friday—Evening Session)

Message Three

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

MC Hymns 910

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

- Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent word to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.
- Acts 20:18 And when they came to him, he said to them, You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you all the time,
- Acts 20:19 Serving the Lord as a slave with all humility and tears and trials which came upon me by the plots of the Jews;
- Acts 20:20 How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you and by not teaching you publicly and from house to house,
- Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.
- Acts 20:31 Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears.
- Acts 26:16 But rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you;
- Acts 26:17 Delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles, to whom I send you,
- Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.
- Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,
- 2 Cor 11:28 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.
- 2 Cor 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?
- 2 Cor 12:15 But I, I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved less?
- 1 Thes 2:1 For you yourselves know, brothers, our entrance toward you, that it has not been in vain.
- 1 Thes 2:2 But having suffered previously and having been outrageously treated, even as you know, in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much struggle.
- 1 Thes 2:3 For our exhortation is not out of deception nor out of uncleanness nor in guile;
- 1 Thes 2:4 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.
- 1 Thes 2:5 For neither were we found at any time with flattering speech, even as you know, nor with a pretext for covetousness; God is witness.
- 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 Thes 2:7 But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children.
- 1 Thes 2:8 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.
- 1 Thes 2:9 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.
- 1 Thes 2:10 You are witnesses, as well as God, how in a holy and righteous and blameless manner we conducted ourselves toward you who believe,
- 1 Thes 2:11 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,
- 1 Thes 2:12 So that you might walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

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.

- Heb 13:20 Now the God of peace, He who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant,
- John 10:11 I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.
- John 10:14 I am the good Shepherd, and I know My own, and My own know Me,
- John 10:15 Even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.
- 1 Pet 2:25 For you were like sheep being led astray, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.
- 1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
- Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent word to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.
- Acts 20:18 And when they came to him, he said to them, You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you all the time,
- Acts 20:19 Serving the Lord as a slave with all humility and tears and trials which came upon me by the plots of the Jews;
- Acts 20:20 How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you and by not teaching you publicly and from house to house,
- Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.
- Acts 20:31 Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears.
- Acts 26:16 But rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you;
- Acts 26:17 Delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles, to whom I send you,
- Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.
- Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,
- 2 Cor 11:28 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.
- 2 Cor 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?
- 2 Cor 12:15 But I, I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved less?
- Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
- Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

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.
- John 5:19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing, for whatever that One does, these things the Son also does in like manner.
- John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.
- Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the

bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.

Phil 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.
Phil 1:22 But if I am to live in the flesh, if this to me is fruit for my work, then I do not know what I will choose.

Phil 1:23 But I am constrained between the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for this is far better;
Phil 1:24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.
Phil 1:25 And being confident of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith,
Phil 1:26 That your boast may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my coming again to you.

Acts 20:18 And when they came to him, he said to them, You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you all the time,
Acts 20:19 Serving the Lord as a slave with all humility and tears and trials which came upon me by the plots of the Jews;
Acts 20:20 How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you and by not teaching you publicly and from house to house,
Acts 20:21 Solemnly testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance unto God and faith in our Lord Jesus.
Acts 20:22 And now, behold, I am going bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what will meet me there,
Acts 20:23 Except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in city after city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.
Acts 20:24 But I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God.
Acts 20:25 And now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will see my face no more.
Acts 20:26 Therefore I testify to you on this day that I am clean from the blood of all men,
Acts 20:27 For I did not shrink from declaring to you all the counsel of God.
Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.
Acts 20:29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.
Acts 20:30 And from among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them.
Acts 20:31 Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears.
Acts 20:32 And now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who have been sanctified.
Acts 20:33 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing.
Acts 20:34 You yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my needs and to those who are with me.
Acts 20:35 In all things I have shown you by example that toiling in this way we ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Matt 7:17 Even so every good tree produces good fruit, but the corrupt tree produces bad fruit.
Matt 7:18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, neither can a corrupt tree produce good fruit.
Matt 12:33 Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt; for by the fruit the tree is known.
Matt 12:34 Offspring of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.
Matt 12:35 The good man, out of his good treasure, brings forth good things, and the evil man, out of his evil treasure, brings forth evil things.
Matt 12:36 And I say to you that every idle word which men shall speak, they will render an account concerning it in the day of judgment.
Matt 12:37 For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.

- 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.
 John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it
 abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
 2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.

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:

- 1 Tim 1:16 But because of this I was shown mercy, that in me, the foremost, Jesus Christ might display
 all His long-suffering for a pattern to those who are to believe on Him unto eternal life.
 1 Tim 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be a pattern to the believers in word, in conduct, in love,
 in faith, in purity.
 Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.
- 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.
 Acts 26:16 But rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to
 appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me
 and of the things in which I will appear to you;
 Acts 26:17 Delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles, to whom I send you,
 Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of
 Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among
 those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.
 Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,
 Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be
 My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost
 part of the earth.
 Acts 23:11 But in the night following, the Lord stood by him and said, Take courage, for as you
 have solemnly testified to the things concerning Me in Jerusalem, so also you must
 testify in Rome.
 Acts 20:20 How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to
 you and by not teaching you publicly and from house to house,
 Acts 20:31 Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease
 admonishing each one with tears.
- 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.
 Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the
 bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
 Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame,
 but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body,
 whether through life or through death.
 Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...
 Phil 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,
 Phil 2:6 Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider being equal with God a treasure to
 be grasped,
 Phil 2:7 But emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men;
 Phil 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even
 unto death, and that the death of a cross.
 Phil 2:9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is
 above every name,
 Phil 2:10 That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on
 earth and under the earth,
 Phil 2:11 And every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God
 the Father.
 Phil 2:12 So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but
 now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

- Phil 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.
- Phil 2:14 Do all things without murmurings and reasonings
- Phil 2:15 That you may be blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine as luminaries in the world,
- Phil 2:16 Holding forth the word of life, so that I may have a boast in the day of Christ that I did not run in vain nor labor in vain.
- Phil 3:7 But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ.
- Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
- Phil 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,
- Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
- Phil 3:11 If perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.
- Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.
- Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,
- Phil 3:14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.
- Phil 4:11 Not that I speak according to lack, for I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content.
- Phil 4:12 I know also how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to lack.
- Phil 4:13 I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me.
- 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.
- Gal 5:16 But I say, Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh.
- Gal 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.
- Gal 6:8 For he who sows unto his own flesh will reap corruption of the flesh, but he who sows unto the Spirit will of the Spirit reap eternal life.
- 2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
- 1 Cor 2:15 But the spiritual man discerns all things, but he himself is discerned by no one.
- 2 Cor 2:13 I had no rest in my spirit, for I did not find Titus my brother; but taking leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia.
- Rom 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers,
- Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.
- 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.
- 2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.
- 2 Cor 4:1 Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart;
- 2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
- 2 Cor 3:8 How shall the ministry of the Spirit not be more in glory?
- 2 Cor 3:9 For if there is glory with the ministry of condemnation, much more the ministry of righteousness abounds with glory.
- 2 Cor 5:18 But all things are out from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

- 2 Cor 5:19 Namely, that God in Christ was reconciling the world to Himself, not accounting their offenses to them, and has put in us the word of reconciliation.
- 2 Cor 5:20 On behalf of Christ then we are ambassadors, as God entreats you through us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God.
- 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.
- Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
- Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- 1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.
- 1 Cor 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.
- 1 Cor 12:14 For the body is not one member but many.
- 1 Cor 12:15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
- 1 Cor 12:16 And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
- 1 Cor 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be?
- 1 Cor 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.
- 1 Cor 12:19 And if all were one member, where would the body be?
- 1 Cor 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.
- 1 Cor 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.
- 1 Cor 12:22 But much rather the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.
- 1 Cor 12:23 And those members of the body which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely members come to have more abundant comeliness,
- 1 Cor 12:24 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,
- 1 Cor 12:25 That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another.
- 1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.
- 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
- Eph 4:1 I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called,
- Eph 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love,
- Eph 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:
- Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
- Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism;
- Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
- Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

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:

- 1 Thes 2:1 For you yourselves know, brothers, our entrance toward you, that it has not been in vain.
- 1 Thes 2:2 But having suffered previously and having been outrageously treated, even as you know, in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much struggle.

- 1 Thes 2:3 For our exhortation is not out of deception nor out of uncleanness nor in guile;
- 1 Thes 2:4 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.
- 1 Thes 2:5 For neither were we found at any time with flattering speech, even as you know, nor with a pretext for covetousness; God is witness.
- 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 Thes 2:7 But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children.
- 1 Thes 2:8 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.
- 1 Thes 2:9 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.
- 1 Thes 2:10 You are witnesses, as well as God, how in a holy and righteous and blameless manner we conducted ourselves toward you who believe,
- 1 Thes 2:11 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,
- 1 Thes 2:12 So that you might walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.
- 2 Cor 1:23 But I call on God as a witness against my soul that to spare you I have not yet come to Corinth.
- 2 Cor 1:24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but we are fellow workers with you for your joy; for by faith you stand.
- 2 Cor 2:1 But I determined this for myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow.
- 2 Cor 2:2 For if I cause you sorrow, who then is the one who makes me glad, except the one who is made sorrowful by me?
- 2 Cor 2:3 And I wrote this very thing to you that when I come I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all.
- 2 Cor 2:4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you through many tears, not that you would be made sorrowful but that you would know the love which I have more abundantly toward you.
- 2 Cor 2:5 But if anyone has caused sorrow, he has not caused me to sorrow, but in part (lest I lay too heavy a burden) all of you.
- 2 Cor 2:6 Sufficient for such a one is this punishment by the majority,
- 2 Cor 2:7 So that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with excessive sorrow.
- 2 Cor 2:8 Therefore I exhort you to confirm your love toward him.
- 2 Cor 2:9 For to this end also I wrote, that I might know your approvedness, whether you are obedient in all things.
- 2 Cor 2:10 But whom you forgive anything, I also forgive; for also what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, it is for your sake in the person of Christ;
- 2 Cor 2:11 That we may not be taken advantage of by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.
- 2 Cor 2:12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and a door was open to me in the Lord,
- 2 Cor 2:13 I had no rest in my spirit, for I did not find Titus my brother; but taking leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia.
- 2 Cor 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ and manifests the savor of the knowledge of Him through us in every place.
- 2 Cor 11:28 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.
- 2 Cor 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?
- 1 Cor 9:22 To the weak I became weak that I might gain the weak. To all men I have become all things that I might by all means save some.
- Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.
- 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.
- 1 Thes 1:5 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.

- 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.
- 1 Thes 1:6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit,
- 1 Thes 1:7 So that you became a pattern to all those who believe in Macedonia and in Achaia.
- 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:
- 1 Thes 1:5 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.
- 1 Thes 1:9 For they themselves report concerning us what kind of entrance we had toward you and how you turned to God from the idols to serve a living and true God
- 1 Thes 2:1 For you yourselves know, brothers, our entrance toward you, that it has not been in vain.
1. The apostles were struggling and speaking the gospel to the Thessalonians in the boldness of God—v. 2.

1 Thes 2:2 But having suffered previously and having been outrageously treated, even as you know, in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much struggle.
 2. The apostles were free from deception, uncleanness, and guile—v. 3.

1 Thes 2:3 For our exhortation is not out of deception nor out of uncleanness nor in guile;
 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; Psalms 26:2; 139:23-24; 2 Cor. 1:12; 6:6; 7:3.

1 Thes 2:4 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.

Psa 26:2 Examine me, O Jehovah, and try me; / Test my inward parts and my heart.

Psa 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; / Try me, and know my anxious thoughts;

Psa 139:24 And see if there is some harmful way in me, / And lead me on the eternal way.

2 Cor 1:12 For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in singleness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and more abundantly toward you.

2 Cor 6:6 In pureness, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in a holy spirit, in unfeigned love,

2 Cor 7:3 I do not say this to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts for our dying together and our living together.
 4. The apostles were never found with flattering speech or with a pretext for covetousness—1 Thes. 2:5:

1 Thes 2:5 For neither were we found at any time with flattering speech, even as you know, nor with a pretext for covetousness; God is witness.

 - a. To have any pretext for covetousness is to peddle or adulterate the word of God—2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2.

2 Cor 2:17 For we are not like the many, adulterating the word of God for profit; but as out of sincerity, but as out of God, before God we speak in Christ.

2 Cor 4:2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every conscience of men before God.
 - 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.

1 Tim 6:5 Perpetual wranglings of men corrupted in mind and deprived of the truth, supposing godliness to be a means of gain.

Titus 1:11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who overthrow whole households, teaching things for the sake of base gain, which they ought not to do.

- 2 Pet 2:3 And in covetousness, with fabricated words, they will make merchandise of you, for whom the judgment of old is not idle, and their destruction does not slumber.
5. The apostles did not seek glory from men—1 Thes. 2:6a:
 1 Thes 2:6a Nor did we seek glory from men, neither from you nor from others, ...
- 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.
 1 Sam 15:12 Then Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning. And it was told Samuel, saying, Saul went to Carmel and has now set up a monument for himself, and he has returned and passed on down to Gilgal.
- 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.
- Ezek 28:13 You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, diamond, chrysolite, onyx, jasper, sapphire, carbuncle, and emerald, with gold. The workmanship of your tambourines and your pipes was prepared with you on the day that you were created.
- Ezek 28:14 You were the anointed cherub who covered the Ark; indeed I set you, so that you were upon the holy mountain of God; you walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.
- Ezek 28:15 You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you.
- Ezek 28:16 By the abundance of your trading they filled your midst with violence, and you sinned. So I cast you out as profane from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.
- Ezek 28:17 Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness. I cast you to the ground; I presented you before kings that they may look at you.
- Isa 14:12 How you have fallen from heaven, / O Daystar, son of the dawn! / How you have been hewn down to earth, / You who made nations fall prostrate!
- Isa 14:13 But you, you said in your heart: / I will ascend to heaven; / Above the stars of God / I will exalt my throne. / And I will sit upon the mount of assembly / In the uttermost parts of the north.
- Isa 14:14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; / I will make myself like the Most High.
- Isa 14:15 But you will be brought down to Sheol, / To the uttermost parts of the pit.
- Matt 4:8 Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.
- Matt 4:9 And he said to Him, All these will I give You if You will fall down and worship me.
- Matt 4:10 Then Jesus said to him, Go away, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve."
- 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.
- John 7:17 If anyone resolves to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.
- John 7:18 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of Him who sent Him, this One is true, and unrighteousness is not in Him.
- John 5:39 You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify concerning Me.
- John 5:40 Yet you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.
- John 5:41 I do not receive glory from men.
- John 5:42 But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.
- John 5:43 I have come in the name of My Father, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him.

- John 5:44 How can you believe when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that is from the only God?
- John 12:43 For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.
- 2 Cor 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.
6. The apostles did not stand on their authority or dignity as apostles of Christ—1 Thes. 2:6b:
- 1 Thes 2:6b ... though we could have stood on our authority as apostles of Christ.
- 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 preferred not to use his right (1 Cor. 9:12).
- John 13:4 Rose from supper and laid aside His outer garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself;
- John 13:5 Then He poured water into the basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.
- 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.
- 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.
- Matt 20:20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, worshipping and asking something of Him.
- Matt 20:21 And He said to her, What do you want? She said to Him, Say that these two sons of mine will sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your kingdom.
- Matt 20:22 But Jesus answered and said to them, You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup which I am about to drink? They said to Him, We are able.
- Matt 20:23 He said to them, My cup you shall indeed drink, but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.
- Matt 20:24 And when the ten heard this, they were indignant concerning the two brothers.
- Matt 20:25 But Jesus called them to Him and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them.
- Matt 20:26 It shall not be so among you; but whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant,
- Matt 20:27 And whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave;
- Matt 20:28 Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.
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:
- 1 Thes 2:7 But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children.
- 1 Thes 2:8 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.
- Gal 4:19 My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you,
- Isa 49:14 But Zion has said, Jehovah has forsaken me, / And the Lord has forgotten me.
- Isa 49:15 Can a woman forget her nursing child, / That she would not have compassion on the son of her womb? / Even though they may forget, / Yet I will not forget you.
- Isa 66:12 For thus says Jehovah, / I now am extending to her / Peace like a river, / And the glory of the nations / Like an overflowing stream; / And you will nurse, you will be carried on the hip, / And you will be bounced on the knees.
- Isa 66:13 As one whom his mother comforts, / So will I comfort you; / And you will be comforted in Jerusalem.
- 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.
Eph 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church,
8. The apostles not only imparted the gospel of God to the Thessalonians; they also imparted their own souls—1 Thes. 2:8:
1 Thes 2:8 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.
- 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.
1 Thes 2:3 For our exhortation is not out of deception nor out of uncleanness nor in guile;
1 Thes 2:4 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.
1 Thes 2:5 For neither were we found at any time with flattering speech, even as you know, nor with a pretext for covetousness; God is witness.
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 Thes 2:10 You are witnesses, as well as God, how in a holy and righteous and blameless manner we conducted ourselves toward you who believe,
1 Thes 2:7 But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children.
1 Thes 2:8 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.
1 Thes 2:9 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.
1 Thes 2:11 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,
 - 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.
2 Cor 12:15 But I, I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved less?
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:
1 Thes 2:11 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,
1 Thes 2:12 So that you might walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.
- a. As worshippers of idols (1:9), the believers were in the kingdom of Satan (Matt. 12:26).
1 Thes 1:9 For they themselves report concerning us what kind of entrance we had toward you and how you turned to God from the idols to serve a living and true God
Matt 12:26 And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?
 - 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.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE APOSTLES' ENTRANCE

First Thessalonians 2:1 says, "For you yourselves know, brothers, our entrance to you, that it has not been in vain." 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.

The apostles came to the Thessalonians with the gospel in such a way that the Thessalonians were convinced. The apostles' entrance was not in vain. 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.

SPEAKING THE GOSPEL IN MUCH STRUGGLE

Verse 2 continues, "But having suffered before and having been outrageously treated, even as you know, in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much struggle." 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 verse 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.

HONEST AND FAITHFUL

In verse 3 Paul says, "For our entreaty was not of deception, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile." *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 *entreaty* 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.

APPROVED BY GOD

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).

The word *approved* in 1 Thessalonians 2:4 implies being tested. God tested the apostles before He approved them. Based upon this approvedness, God entrusted them with the gospel. God did this in a careful way, for He knows our hearts.

According to our opinion, since God already knows everything, it is not necessary for Him to test us. Yes, before we were born, He already knew what kind of person we would be. Why, then, does God test us? God's testing is not mainly for Himself; it is primarily for us. God knows us, but we do not know ourselves. Because we do not know ourselves adequately, we may think that we are upright, honest, and faithful. However, when we are put to the test, we shall see what we really are and discover that in ourselves we are not honest, faithful, or trustworthy. God's testing, therefore, proves us to ourselves. Only after God proves us in this way shall we have approvedness.

I would encourage the young people not to have confidence in themselves, for they have not yet been tested. I have the assurance that God will use the young people. But God's using of them will come after His testing of them. God cannot entrust anything to us until we have the approvedness that comes from His testing. God's entrusting is based on our approvedness. But we cannot approve ourselves. Only after God has tested us will He grant us approvedness. Then He will entrust something to us and begin to use us.

It was in this way that God entrusted the apostles with the gospel. Because the apostles had been entrusted with the gospel, they spoke not as pleasing men, but as pleasing God, who proves our hearts. Their speaking was based on God's entrusting. Because He had entrusted them with the gospel, they spoke as pleasing God.

In verse 4 we see that we must be approved and then have something entrusted to us. Then we need to speak as pleasing God, the One who proves us. This indicates that we need to pass through testing, approving, and entrusting. Then we shall have something to preach and teach.

NO FLATTERY OR PRETEXT

Verse 5 says, "For neither at any time were we found with a word of flattery, 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).

According to 1 Thessalonians 2:5, the apostles were never found with a word of flattery. We all must avoid flattery, never speaking in a way to flatter others. In this verse Paul also says that the apostles did not have a pretext, a cloak, for covetousness. They did not have an evil motive that was covered in some way. Because they did not have any pretext or pretense, they did not peddle the word of God or adulterate it. To adulterate something is to mix it with an inferior material, for example, to mix gold with copper or wine with water, and then to sell it as if it were pure. Throughout the centuries, many preachers and teachers have adulterated the word of God in this way. They preached under a pretext in order to make gain for themselves.

From verse 5 we learn to avoid flattery and a pretext for covetousness. In our Christian work we must give no place to such unclean things. No servant of the Lord should use flattery or have some kind of pretext for covetousness. May the Lord have mercy on us and purify us from all these things. May we be able to say that God is our witness that we do not speak words of flattery or have any pretext for covetousness.

NOT SEEKING GLORY FROM MEN

In verse 6 Paul goes on to say, "Nor seeking glory of men, neither from you, nor from others, when we might have stood on our dignity as apostles of Christ." To seek glory of men is a real temptation to every Christian worker. Many have been devoured and spoiled by this matter.

The Greek words rendered "stood on our dignity" 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.

NOT STANDING ON THEIR DIGNITY

First Thessalonians 2:6 indicates clearly that the apostles did not stand on their dignity 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. They were not to assume any standing or dignity.

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 is not a dignitary; he is a slave. As an elder, he has been appointed to serve the church as a slave. We all should have this attitude.

Paul's statement, "We might have stood on our dignity as apostles of Christ," indicates that even in the early days there was the temptation of assuming dignity. 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.

CHERISHING THE BELIEVERS

In verse 7 Paul says, "But we were gentle in your midst, as a nurse would cherish her own children." The Greek word rendered "nurse," *trophos*, sometimes means a mother; hence, it may denote a nursing mother (see Gal. 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.

IMPARTING THEIR OWN SOULS

In verse 8 Paul continues, "Thus, yearning 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.

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 verses 3 through 6 and 10, and to love the new converts, even by giving our own souls to them, as described in verses 7 through 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.

THE APOSTLES' CONDUCT

First Thessalonians 2:9 says, "For you remember, brothers, our labor and hardship: working night and day so as not to be burdensome to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God." 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.

In verse 10 Paul continues, "You are witnesses, and God, how holily and righteously and blamelessly we conducted ourselves with you who believe." *Holily* refers to conduct toward God, *righteously* to conduct toward men, and *blamelessly* 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.

A FATHER EXHORTING HIS CHILDREN

Verse 11 says, "Even as you know how we were to each one of you, as a father his own children, entreating you and consoling 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.

WALKING WORTHILY OF GOD

Verse 12 says, "That you should walk worthily 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 (v. 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 worthily 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, in contrast to that in verses 1 through 11, 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.

A GOOD PATTERN

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.

If you consider the situation among believers today, you will realize that many Christians have no sense of direction. The reason for this lack of direction is that they do not have a proper pattern. We need to be a pattern to others and foster them, cherishing them as mothers and exhorting them as fathers to walk worthily of God. As we have pointed out in a foregoing message, to walk worthily 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. 97-105)