

Friday: Witnesses

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. ¹¹ For you know how, like a father with his children, ¹² we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

<p>Reflect: Paul’s way of life was “holy.” This word for holy has an emphasis on living in a way that is pleasing to God (which is why He is called to be a witness). The “righteous” aspect of his life emphasizes living in an upright way before others. Since Paul’s life was observable by others, and he was without fault in his motives, he was “blameless.”</p> <p>In the Greco-Roman world the father was responsible for the moral training of his children. Far too often today parents (Dad’s and Mom’s) leave their children to be taught by popular culture. No wonder why so many teens and young adults leave “the church...”</p> <p>Have you ever exhorted someone to live for God’s glory? It certainly seems doing so is a biblical thing to do. Yet let us not lose sight of how close of a relationship Paul had with them (vs7,8,11). If your exhortations have fallen on deaf ears in the past perhaps it is because you did not have the relational rapport needed to encourage life change.</p>	<p>Respond: How many times has Paul said something similar to “you know” in this chapter?</p> <p>Has anyone ever exhorted, encouraged, or charged you in your faith? What was the result?</p> <p>How can you built relational rapport with people?</p>
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Pray: Pray for Prairie View Christian Camp; another mission New Life supports. Pray for Bob Griffin and Larry Hayes – elders of New Life. Pray the teachers at New Life will seek to live as described in v10. Continue to pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.

Saturday: Preparation

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16 ¹³ And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers....¹⁴... For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, ¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets...

<p>Reflect: We take God’s word seriously at New Life. Preaching and teaching should be seen as a “word from God.” Not because our teachers are inspired (like the authors of the NT), but because God can be trusted.</p> <p>God is always at work in the world. When you think about it, that ought to be a comforting thought – even when you are asleep He is still working to bring people to Himself. Yet when we listen to God’s word, whether read or spoken, God has a more direct opportunity to work within us. God always speaks, do we always listen (obey)?</p> <p>These verses may sound “anti-Semitic” (i.e., anti-Jewish) – but that is foolish to think on a couple of counts. For one, the Jews were intricately involved in having Jesus murdered – history proves that. Secondly, how can a Christian be anti-Semitic? After all Jesus (our Lord) was a Jew!</p>	<p>Respond: How have you seen God at work this week?</p> <p>Do you have any “racist” tendencies in you (e.g., toward African-Americans or Latinos, the wealthy, the poor, or anyone else)? What should be done if you do?</p> <p>How are you preparing yourself for worship tomorrow?</p>
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Pray: Pray for the National Missionary Convention; a mission New Life supports. Pray for Ed Asbury, Keith Krause, and Mike Haag – deacons at New Life. Pray for the last full day at the Women’s Retreat at Prairie View Christian Camp. Pray those the Holy Spirit is prompting to come to New Life tomorrow will be obedient and come. Pray our worship service tomorrow will be pleasing to God.

Can I Get A Witness?

September 20 – 26

I know of a minister who claimed so much mileage on his income tax returns it was the equivalent of driving to Canada and back every other week (from the same geographic proximity as Kansas).

I know of a Christian who thinks what he does during the week does not matter. After all, he is “in church” most Sundays...at least on most Sundays when he is in town.

I know of an Insurance Salesman who left one congregation to go to another. Why? Money. His “new” congregation had more clients than the “old” congregation.

[Relax, none of the people mentioned above live in or around Emporia. It is unlikely you will ever meet any of them this side of eternity. I.e., I was not thinking of any of you when I typed it.]

Although the previous accounts appear to be very different – in reality they are very similar. Here are a few observations.

- Lack of commitment to a local congregation...
 - **a)** taking advantage of one, **b)** misrepresenting the teaching of one, **c)** leaving one at the drop of a hat (or the sound of a check ripping).
- Personal gain is primary...
 - **a)** “stretching the truth” (i.e., lying) in order to profit monetarily, **b)** the perceived assurance of a “relationship with God” with no life change, **c)** going where a better “return on investment” could be realized.
- They all damage the gospel and make “Christianity” unappealing.
 - **a)** an audit would certainly bring this to light and many would be even more cynical about the church, **b)** another “Christian” who is “no different than us” so why bother, **c)** what if all Christian business people went where their clients were...would that not eventually lead them right out of the church? [Implicit in that is the daily potential to share Jesus with people.]

None of us are perfect – but we do not need to be (Jesus took care of that). However, we are charged to live a life that is worthy of God. It is easier said than done. Yet we always have an example (or five) to look at in the Bible. Can God get a witness? Yeah He can – He is continually refining willing hearts. Will you be one? The choice is up to you.

Monday: Background in the Bible

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. ² But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.

Reflect:
Without the historical background of a text we miss so much. Yet learning about historical background does take effort. Quite often the effort leads us to books outside the Bible. Yet what can we learn from the Bible for the background of these verses? (What follows is not exhaustive.)

If we ignore chapter and verse divisions (which is a good idea), we will see how 2:1 is a direct commentary on 1:9. In fact, though disguised by English, the word for “coming” (2:1) and “reception” (1:9) is the same Greek word. It is now plain to see that of course Paul’s efforts were not fruitless – they “turned to God from idols!”

Do you want to know what happened in Philippi? In Acts 16 we can read how Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned; illegally I might add (Acts 16:35-40). What about the proclamation of the gospel in Thessalonica? By reading Acts 17:1-10 we see immense opposition there as well (cf. Acts 17:13-14 for a glimpse of their hostility towards Paul and company later).

Respond:
Obviously sharing the gospel is central to these verses... Who was the last non-Christian with whom you shared your faith?

Is it possible you have forgotten how grateful you were when you first heard the gospel?

How will you be bold for God today?

Pray: Pray for Ryan Nelson, the newest “church planter” hired by the CEA; his work will be in the Olathe area. Ask God for a personal and corporate desire to share the faith (Jn4:34-38). Pray for God to put someone in your path today and for you to share the love of God with them (make this a daily prayer). Continue to pray for workers in God’s Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).

Tuesday: Personal Background

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:3-4 ³ For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, ⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

Reflect:
In Paul’s day philosophers were often charged with speaking out of error, impurity, and deception. It is easy for us to not put Paul in that category. However, we need to remember his abrupt departure from Thessalonica (cf. Acts17:10) certainly opened the door for such a claim by those who wanted to harm his efforts.

Verse four is not one for us to gloss over quickly. Paul does not give human evidence to back up his claims in verse three. Instead he “gives it to God.” In other words, ‘God has called me...He has tested me...I serve only Him.’ To begin to grasp this we must not forget about Paul’s past...

Paul persecuted and even murdered (at least approved of it) Christians before encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus (e.g., Acts8:1-3; 9:1ff). Soon after his conversion his life was in danger (cf. Acts9:24,29). Yet Paul was certain about the source of the gospel he preached (Gal1:12), and his motives were pure (e.g., Gal1:10). His conversion is tantamount to an American joining Al-Qaeda. Perhaps that statement can “drive home” how much he was hated by other Jews and the risk he took by not “leaving the country.”

Respond:
Read Psalm 51.

Express to God your desire to be “approved” (or tested – which implies a trial of some kind) and “entrusted” (found faithful after the test) for the sake of the gospel.

How can you please God today?

Pray: Pray for Lincoln Christian Seminary, Manhattan Christian College, and Ozark Christian College; missions supported by New Life. Pray for the Unity and Purity of New Life. Continue to ask God for someone with whom you can share your faith. Continue to pray for God’s people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).

Wednesday: Remember

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:5-7a ⁵ For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. ⁶ Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ, ⁷ but we became as infants/little children in your midst.

Reflect:
Notice how Paul appeals to the Thessalonians themselves, as well as God, for validation of what he claims. In other words, God has already tested and approved him (cf. Tuesday), and the Christians in Thessalonica know (in their hearts) any charges against Paul are false.

Verse five comments on what was mentioned in verse three. For those who use words of “flattery,” the real intent is self-interest. In Paul’s day, when people approved of an individual (and his message) they supported him monetarily.

Being an apostle means Paul could have (from a human standpoint) made demands. The phrase literally reads *although as Christ’s apostles we could have been with weight*. In other words, Paul and company could have “thrown their weight around.” Yet to act in such a way would be a stark contrast to how Jesus lived His life (e.g., Jn13). The “infant” metaphor in verse seven points to the innocence of Paul when compared to the claims being made against him.

Respond:
Has anyone ever made false claims about you or your motives? How did you respond?

Are you a good role model for another Christian to imitate (cf. 1Cor4:16; 11:1)?

Do you see any signs that New Life seeks “glory from people?” If so, have you spoken with a leader?

Pray: Pray for Shiloh Home of Hope and Emporia Christian Schools. Confess to God your desire for pure motives as you serve Him. Pray for wisdom to represent God well with your life today. Continue to pray for God’s Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).

Thursday: Personal Connections

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:7b-9 As a nursing mother taking care of her own children, ⁸ so being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. ⁹ For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

Reflect:
Paul clearly felt extremely close to the followers of Jesus in Thessalonica. The word for “affectionately desirous” has been found on tombstone inscriptions to describe the heartfelt anguish of parents at the death of a child.

Yet, as the end of verse seven shows, Paul knew they were not “literally” his children. The word for “nursing mother” means a “wet nurse” – one who nurses a child not her own. The bond “in Christ” is strong; so strong Paul was ready to share his life with them.

The wording for “night and day” indicates Paul worked whenever he had the chance during the night and during the day. It does not mean he worked “24x7.” The reason is clear; he did not want to be a financial burden. It was a good move on Paul’s part, but it is possible the Thessalonian believers would not have cared (cf. 2Cor8:1ff). Or perhaps his way of life inspired them for their own self sacrifice later.

Respond:
Paul was a tentmaker (Acts18:3), not a “preacher.” Does this have a bearing on the (false) notion the church staff is paid to do all the work?

Do you have closer bonds in the “body of Christ” than you do with your biological family?

Do you enjoy your service in God’s Kingdom?

Pray: Pray the bonds established between “house parents” and children at Cookson Hills (a Christian Children’s home and mission New Life supports) will be strong and godly. Ask God to help your service to Him to be a joy. Pray for Brent McCrory – the preaching minister at New Life. Continue to pray for open doors to share God’s Word (Col4:2-6) and the boldness to do so.