

Christians Must Live Lives Worthy of God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 March 2011

Preacher: Alex Cowie

[0 : 00] 1 Thessalonians 2 1 Thessalonians 2 And we'll continue in our study here And our subject today is Christians must live lives worthy of God And he tells us that Particularly in verse 12 That you would walk worthy of God Who calls you into his own kingdom and glory But we're going to look together at verses 10 to 12 Because it's in the context of this same thing We've been looking at How he's had to bring to the attention of the Thessalonians That he and his fellow missionaries Were utterly noble and straight

In coming in among them to preach the gospel And this is really a continuation of it But he appeals to them And he appeals to God's witness too So we're just reminding ourselves here in this passage That Christians must live lives worthy of God They're to walk worthy of God And wherever there are those professing the Christian religion Whatever the denomination Such people are bound to the apostolic doctrine And worship and practice And every deviation from these things Is to be resisted And when we discover our deviations We are to be either brought back Or we come back ourselves We are governed in what we believe And what we do in the life of faith

By the Bible's teaching By what we call the apostolic doctrine Worship and practice And that's important to us Because we are always to make an assessment of things On the basis of the Bible And not of our own perverse tendencies To judge others somewhat harshly As was happening in Thessalonica By those folk who were trying to discredit Paul And his fellow missionaries We know that often times People understand the words of the Saviour Judge not that you shall not be judged And they say you're not allowed to speak anything negative about anybody That's simply not true It is that we're not to be harsh And wholly negative in our critical assessment

We are bound to make assessments We are bound to make moral assessments And spiritual assessments too But we're to be careful how we do that And these folk who had tried to discredit Paul And his fellow missionaries Were not at all biblical In the way they approached the matter And their judgments were harsh They were critical in the most negative way And Paul teaches the Thessalonians here That they are to be directed in assessing right and wrong By the Bible's teaching With a sensitivity With a carefulness And so here again The apostle finds himself Appealing both to the Thessalonians To make a right assessment Of what they knew about Paul and his fellow missionaries And he calls upon God To witness to the same Verse 10

You are witnesses And God also How devoutly and justly and blamelessly We behaved ourselves among you who believe In other words His focus here is on The Thessalonians Making a decent and honest assessment Of what they knew of Paul and his fellow missionaries And in this particular study We just want to focus on how How Paul uses this To actually help the Thessalonians To see their duty in the Christian life He appeals to them To take note and to remember How he and the other missionaries Behaved among them And he does that in such a way That then he turns the owners back on them To live lives worthy of God

[5 : 04] You see And that's a very useful way of doing things Putting their assessment To practical use In themselves They were to consider the quality Of the practice of Paul and his fellow missionaries And then They were to go and do the same And I want us therefore To consider The three things that Paul highlights In verses 10 to 12 So that by The Spirit's grace working in us We will be able to apply them And the first point I want to look at Is how the missionaries' Behaviour was impeccable Their behaviour was impeccable Look what he says He says You are witnesses And God also How devoutly And justly And blamelessly We behaved ourselves He calls upon them

As we've seen before To take stock Of what they had already experienced Of Paul and his fellow missionaries And they were to continue In making that assessment In this case On how they behaved And he calls it Devout And just And blameless But he obviously Has God in the frame To your witnesses And God also Paul was always Stressing this Wherever he went That we live And to God We are monitored In our hearts In our lives By God That's what matters And when that matters To us You see The difference Will be seen In our lives Whenever we Begin To absorb Ourselves With ourselves God Is put into

The background And so what Paul does In introducing Them to These These Ways in which They could assess him And his fellows He Calls upon them And upon God As witnesses Make Right assessments Don't be like Those hypocrites Who are pouring Scorn On what we've done See What we were really Like among you And be the same And so the first thing He describes here In looking at their Behavior He says How devoutly I think the old Version had How holily And Whether it is How holily Or piously Or devoutly As it is here The actual word In the original

Behind this Really has to do With How merciful We were We sing For example In the psalm Psalm 12 Verse 1 Help Lord For the godly Man Ceases From among The children Of men And that word Godly There Is In the original Is Hasid Is from Chesed The merciful Man And In It Translates The word We're looking At here When you think About the Old Testament Hebrew Bible Translated Into the Greek The Septuagint The word That's used To translate The godly Man The Hasid It is Merciful And That's The focus Really That's In Paul's Mind Here We Were Merciful Among You You

Are Witnesses How Merciful We Were You See When We Come Into The Enjoyment Of God's Mercy What Did Paul Say About Himself What Was The Thing That Touched Him Most For All That I Was He Said An Arrogant An Insolent Man A Blasphemer And So On I Obtained Mercy And That Sense Of The Wonder Of Having Received Mercy From The Lord Affected Him Tremendously And It Made Him A Merciful Man And Wherever The Work Of God Goes On In Us My Friends We Will Be Merciful People And Paul Is Concerned To Tell Them That That's What We Were Like Judge It For Your Selves Make A True Assessment When

[10 : 08] When We Come To Enjoy The Experience Of God's Mercy To Us We Want To Exhibit It To Others Did Did Did Did Did Our Lord Say Be Merciful As Your Father Is Merciful It's It's The Stamp If You Like Of The New Birth Of Being Born Of God Be Merciful As He Is Merciful And Paul Was Concerned In The First Place To Emphasize This So When You Read How Devoutly Or If You Read In The Older Version How Holily You Think There About A Tag On If You Like How Merciful We Were Among You We Exhibited Not The Spirit Of Those Who Were There To Make The Most They Could Out Of It For

The Least Effort But We Were There To Pour Ourselves Out We Read It Again Today And We Had A Sermon On It We Had You Were So Dear To Us Verse Eight That We Were Willing Not Just To Impart The Gospel To You But Our Own Souls Our Very Life That's How Paul Speaks About Himself Not In An Arrogant Way But In A Realistic Way Having Obtained Mercy We Were Merciful To You And Again Our Saviour Said That We Are To Be Merciful As Our Father In Heaven Is Merciful Blessed Are The Merciful For They Shall See God And Paul Brings That Out In The First Place And He Asks Them To Judge It Sensibly Make An

Assessment That That's Honest And True And You Have To Agree Our Behaviour At That Level Was Impeccable Secondly He Says Righteously Or Justly As It Is Here Righteously The Standards We Applied Among You Were In Accordance With God's Word When Scripture Says That The Man Of God Works Righteousness And That He Is Righteous It Doesn't Mean That By His Own Efforts He Has Secured A Standing With God That That Entitles Him To Salvation And Acceptance On The Basis Of His Own Righteousness That That That That's That's That's That's That's Self-Righteousness In The Bible It Has Nothing To Do With Practicing Righteousness And Being Righteous Not At All To Be Righteous In The Biblical Sense

Is To Have Obtained From God The Spirit Of Grace And Of God To Empower Us To Do Things The Right Way We Are Saved Not By Our Own Righteousness But we are saved by the grace of God and to practicing right standards.

I think I may have told you before about one of my relatives who was a businessman and he was a Christian by profession and notorious for being a bit of a playing fast and loose with people I suppose in short a bit of a cheat and when he was confronted with that as being inconsistent with a Christian profession he was somewhat irate and described himself as a righteous man but to be righteous in that sense to practice righteousness is to have no track with things that are wrong cheating and swindling and so on deceiving the man was kidding himself on he was deluding himself no the godly man is to use right standards the word righteous means straight no twists and turns you most of you here grew up in the days when you described so and so as straight as I die you know the turn of phrase so and so straight as I die and that comes from the idea in the word righteous straight and God's people are empowered by the spirit to be straight and when they're not straight they're sinning they're doing wrong and we were singing in those psalms about the character of the godly psalm 119 the first section and the second section blessed are those who are undefiled and straight are in the way they're straight and and policy tells us that's the way he and his fellows behaved they they did justly there's an interesting passage when we studied some time ago 1st John in 1st John 2 at the end of the chapter verse 29 we know that those who practice righteousness are born of God they're righteous as he is righteous in the sense they understand the straightness of God and because they're born of God by the spirit they themselves live right standards and those right standards come about in us as those who are created anew in Christ

[16 : 25] Jesus to do things God's way to be straight and it's important for us to see it like that to know that we are in the faith that we do justly that we are straight and Paul appeals to the music that our character was like this we were upright we were straight and it affected the way we dealt with you and so he can most happily appeal to that but thirdly he says and blamelessly we behaved ourselves you notice at the beginning we said that we would consider the missionaries impeccable behavior he's calling upon them to bear witness to it we were merciful and just and blameless it's a big thing to say these things about yourself but that's what he does by the spirit we manifest a true

Christian character you couldn't fault the way we behaved among you you couldn't fault our efforts among you we did everything in our power for you and not for ourselves and just as a wee aside that's what you need to pray for in our ministers and our elders and deacons and that we're in this for you and as what Paul was saying you see that what we were doing was for you in a blameless way what we spoke was wholesome what we did was wholesome and he says if you like examine what we were among you and you'll have to admit we were blameless we did nothing for self advantage our motives were transparent and they were as clear as the spring flowing from the mountain and when you bring these together friends these are things we must aim at in our own lives by the grace of

Christ to be merciful people to be straight people and to be blameless in our walk and you know and you heard it in prayer too we have to blame ourselves before others will blame us if we look at ourselves and we fault ourselves when we go wrong we are careful to go back to the Lord and get the thing dealt with so that we will not go on like that we are to have a carefulness to be to be what we profess and these are mighty high standards that Paul puts before us but they're worthy of our assessment and of our imitation by God's grace you are witnesses and God also how mercifully and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe the second thing we want to look at is to consider the missionary's fatherly instruction verse 11 as you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you as a father does his own children of course the point in this is that the father in the frame in

Paul's mind was a father who took what God laid upon him seriously and we're living in a day when I'm afraid fatherhood is is is despised because so many are thoroughly bad fathers they've abnegated their responsibilities they've gone and sown their wild oats everywhere and and and fatherhood is is is at a low premium in people's minds but when Paul spoke these words he was thinking about fathers who took seriously what they were to be before God who took seriously that they were to care that they were to admonish their children that they were responsible before

God for their duty in their family that's what he's thinking about here and what this brings up is an interesting thing before we go on further is this that Paul went from house to house he wasn't a long time in Thessalonica but when he was there he went not just to the assembled gathering like here today but he went in and out among them and he admonished them as a father he was concerned to that extent he was there directing them away from what was unhelpful to their spiritual lives and telling them what was downright harmful to their lives and endeavouring as we've just looked at how to live merciful and just and blameless lives and he talked to them as a father as a good father as a father in the

[22 : 54] Lord to them and there's a sense you see in which the pastor is involved in that very thing it's not just about the pulpit ministry it's about bringing fatherly admonitions to us seeking to bring the word to bear seeking to talk closely with the people this is something that is laid upon the pastor to be a father to the flock and he says there you see we exhorted and comforted and charged or adjured every one of you as a father does his children and therefore it's in our own best interest to receive these things not to be resisting not only are we to receive the comfort but the exhortation and also the charge from a biblical viewpoint

Paul sees it like this the father's business is to know the children he's working with to seek to win their trust yes but to seek to help them to move on in the spiritual life he's there to promote their spiritual well-being and sometimes you and I need more than the comfort word we need a challenging word we need to be exhorted and we need to be charged admonished and the pastor fails in his duty if he doesn't administer a word of admonition from time to time we are to be counseled and corrected when necessary and comforted too and it's on a fatherly model as

Paul sees it this is how we're to receive the admonitions as well as the comforts and Paul shows us in that sense that he was a real pastor to the people I've lived long enough in the Christian life and I've been around the block quite a long time and I've listened to many a sermon and it's always perplexed me a little when people like sermons that they're interesting but they're speculative they're quite deep and they're speculations and they're intriguing but they don't get to the point they don't get to the nitty gritty they don't apply the word the Bible is there to instruct us to encourage us to admonish us to rebuke us to correct us to bring us on and the men who are responsible for to expound in that word and pastoring us in a fatherly way have to do their business not in bringing in speculations and intriguing us intellectually but the word has to come home and it has to have application to the life and in that way you see then we want to discuss the word not in a speculative way that's easy bit human nature being what it is lives a mystery

I'm looking to see who's smiling who reads those mystery novels and so on human nature lives a mystery but the word of God is not there to make us spend our time on mysteries the mystery is gone in Christ the mysteries are opened up their mysteries no longer in Christ and our interest therefore under the fatherly instruction of the ministry is this we want to be listening to what the Lord has to say to us even when it cuts deep and gives us a bit of a telling off it's not the minister you're to blame for that you see it as the Lord bringing something to you chances are and I can say this because I know it very well the minister hasn't a clue what is coming home to people and it's not about how did he find that out who told the minister it's not about that at all it's about the spirit of

God directs to us and John Calvin here in talking about this kind of fatherly ministry he says it is a lively preaching of the gospel when persons are not merely told what is right but are pricked by convicted by the exhortations and they are called by that to the judgment seat of God that they might not fall asleep in their vices that's John Calvin on this kind of fatherly ministry to the people and Paul says that was the ministry we brought in among you and my experience is that we're not too keen on that kind of ministry that's a general comment it's not part of the road in particular it's a general comment we're not too keen on it we don't like it it cuts too deep but my friends that's the way it should be we should learn to feel the conviction that the word brings and the rebuke it brings as well as the calming effect of the comforting word

[29 : 51] Paul says you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you as a father does his own children and lastly and briefly the missionary's God glorifying aim that you would walk worthy of God you see Paul was totally devoted and so was his fellow missionaries totally devoted to the promotion of godliness in those to whom they went what was our aim that God would be glorified in your lives that you would walk worthy of God in other words that their lives would be a fragrance of Christ by that I mean simply they would live Jesus lives that people would say about what makes so and so different what is it it's that

Jesus is there and they're living Jesus lives by the grace of God and you see for Paul and he talks about that early on in chapter one Paul knew that these folk had been called sovereignly by the Lord the spirit had worked in them savingly had brought them into new life they had experienced the reality of becoming children of the kingdom of God and Paul's great desire for them is that they would be walking worthy of that God who called them into his own kingdom and glory remember what Jesus said to Nicodemus Nicodemus except you're born again you can't you can't experience the kingdom of God you need that work of the spirit to make you alive into

God and says Paul that's what happened to you and he said we want now this is our great aim that God is glorified in you that you'll walk worthy of him whenever I need a good rebuke on this one on walking worthy of the Lord no I do it's not all that spiritual I have to say but it's practical and visual I look at better not mention certain football teams here but I look at the football supporters of the followers of this club or that I see their total devotion I listen to their cries I think about the money they spend following and it gives me a real rebuke I listen to those who chat about spending a fortune going to this place or that place in following and I get my fix that takes me back to the

Lord and makes me want all the more to walk worthy of him who called me into his kingdom and glory now I'll agree with you it's not a very spiritual way of shaking yourself but it works it helps because you can see these devotees and hear them and know the money they're spending on following and we have one who is infinitely of more value and more worthy to be followed with heart soul mind and strength when we consider what he has bestowed upon us how can we hold back I've quoted you before Leon Morris who was one time principal of Ridley

College in Melbourne a very fine evangelical college it was and he says this we must serve him with all our powers nothing less can be offered to him who gave his son for us let's lay to heart what is said as we consider how Paul uses this appeal actually in defense of his own ministry and that of his fellows to be teaching that will bring these folk on in their own faith and our own prayer for you is that you may walk worthy of the Lord fully pleasing to him being fruitful in every good work and increasing by his grace in his knowledge

[35 : 28] Amen to him him and he good for