

# What Kind Of Minister Can You Trust?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Our main text for the morning is going to be verses 9 through 12. I think it will be helpful for us to start reading at verse number 1. I'm not going to work through all those verses, but 9 through 12 really is just kind of a portion of a larger argument in the text.

And I've kind of chopped it up into three or four different sections. I want us to, at least in the reading here at the front end, to kind of bring all of it back together so we have a good understanding of context.

And then we'll spend our time really focused in on verses 9 through 12. 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 1. For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain.

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.

For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive. But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak.

[ 1 : 11 ] Not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed, God as witness.

Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

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.

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 proclaim to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.

For you know how, like a father with his children, 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.

[ 2 : 29 ] Amen. Well, I think all of us would probably agree that one of the most difficult, challenging things to do in this life is to determine who you can trust.

Determine who you can trust. Unfortunately, it's all too common for people, for us, to be failed by, hurt by those whom we should be able to trust the most.

First, a spouse may abandon you for another lover. A parent may abuse you rather than protect you.

A doctor may fail to give you adequate care. A spiritual leader, pastor, may turn out to be a total fraud. And to experience that kind of betrayal is devastating, isn't it?

It's hurtful, it's devastating, it's infuriating in many cases, and it can quickly drive us to an unhealthy kind of cynicism that begins to hold everyone else accountable for the sins of those who have hurt us.

[ 3 : 38 ] So that we build up walls, and we refuse to really give any real trust to anyone else because of the trust that has been betrayed by other people that shouldn't have betrayed us.

You know what I mean. But at the end of the day, we all know that you can't really function in life without trusting people on some level. We have to. Every day of our lives, we're putting our trust in someone for something.

And that may be a guarded trust, it may be a cynical trust, but we have to do it, right? We have to do it. It's one of the curses of living in a fallen world. We are created to exist in community, but no part of that community is exempt from sin's corruption.

No part of it. And this certainly includes the Christian church. And you don't have to look very far to find people who are turning away from Christianity, they're turning away from the gospel, not necessarily always because they find that it's untenable or not credible, but because they've been hurt by Christians and spiritual leaders who were supposed to love them, who they should have been able to trust.

And we long for it to be different than this. We long for a world that isn't like this. We long for a life that isn't like this. And those of us that know and believe the gospel, we actually do have hope in this, don't we?

[ 5 : 11 ] We live daily in the hope that Jesus is going to return and that when he returns, he's going to right all wrongs.

He is going to rid us of indwelling sin. He's going to usher in an eternal kingdom that is everything that Eden was meant to be.

It's coming. The day will come. He will return at just the right time. And we will live, those of us who know him, will live eternally in a place that we long for now in this place and in this world.

But in the meantime, we by necessity must endure the brokenness of this world. Including the reality of betrayal, even by those in the church whom we should be able to otherwise trust.

That brings up a question. Is there actually a way for us to recognize and discern and identify spiritual leaders or gospel ministers, pastors, disciples, whatever it may be.

[ 6 : 24 ] Is there a way for us to actually identify which of those people we can actually trust? And I would say, yes, the scripture gives us the criteria for such discernment.

And this passage, particularly verses 9 through 12, takes up that very issue. There was a problem in cities like Thessalonica during Paul's day.

It involved itinerant philosophers and religious teachers who preyed on people for personal gain.

They sold people lies in many cases, manipulated them in order that they might personally accrue wealth, notoriety, power.

It's not very different today. And understanding the prevalence of such charlatans as we would categorize them, having possibly even been accused of being one himself in Thessalonica.

Paul wrote here reminding the Thessalonian Christians of the authentic nature of his ministry to them. Which defending the credibility of the gospel in this way was always utmost of importance for Paul when he wrote these kinds of things.

[ 7 : 45 ] But there is another actually major reason why he does this here in this text in the context of 1 Thessalonians. And it is this. He did this in order that he might comfort and reassure suffering Christians.

Why is he focused so much on his ministry to them? Well, part of that is, and maybe primarily, is even just to help defend the gospel itself more so than to defend himself.

But there's another piece here and I'm going to explain why. It's that this was a suffering group of Christians who no doubt were beginning to have questions about whether or not they should continue in this faith.

And Paul writes this about the authentic nature of his ministry in order that he might comfort them, in order that he might strengthen them in those moments. At least 10 different times, just in 1 Thessalonians, Paul uses some variation of the phrase, as you know, or for you know, which is unlike any of his other letters.

This is unique to 1 Thessalonians. You can pull up his other letters. Sometimes he never uses this phrase at all. Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, once or twice he uses a phrase like this.

[ 8 : 58 ] But in this short letter in 1 Thessalonians, at least 10 different times he uses a variation of it. More than half of those times it has to do with his character as a minister.

Three of those times happens in verses 9 through 12. Just set your eyes on them. Look, verse 9. For you remember. Verse 10.

You are witnesses. Verse 11. For you know. Why is he doing that? Why is he using this phrase? We have to ask that question because it's so different from his other writings.

Well, clearly Paul wanted them to recall what they knew to be true of him. And his reason for that I believe was to strengthen their faith in affliction. Because suffering tends to create a pathway to doubt.

We understand that. Suffering sets us very quickly on the pathway to doubt. And it's reasonable for us to conclude that because of the persecution that they faced for their faith, the Thessalonian

Christians might have been tempted to question the validity of Paul's ministry and thereby forsake the gospel itself.

[ 10 : 13 ] So whether he was being accused of being one of these charlatans or else he just understood the possibility and potential of being grouped in with them, Paul reassured these believers by reminding them of the authenticity of his ministry.

And as a result of that the Lord has graciously given us in this text a set of criteria. Criteria for discerning the kind of minister we can trust.

The kind of pastor you can trust. But before we examine the three characteristics that are in these verses we need to understand that the foundation for a trustworthy minister is always a commitment to faithfully proclaim the gospel of Jesus.

If it's nothing else it is the faithful proclamation of the gospel. This is at the heart of Christianity itself and it should be at the heart of everything a Christian minister does.

constantly bringing those under his care back to the reality of the gospel not only as he evangelizes the lost but as he encourages and strengthens and edifies and exhorts the saved.

[ 11 : 34 ] A constant focus on the gospel. The apostles including Paul were hyper focused on gospel proclamation as apostles as sent ones.

That's actually what Jesus sent them to do to proclaim the gospel. Just look here in the first two chapters of 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 5 Our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

Chapter 2 verse 2 We had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much affliction. Chapter 2 verse 8 We were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but our own selves.

Chapter 2 verse 9 While we proclaim to you the gospel of God Do you see this? As Paul is writing as he's reflecting on the nature of his ministry over and over and over he relates the heart of his ministry to the proclamation of the gospel.

That's what a faithful minister does. That's what a faithful Christian does. Everything focused the heart of the gospel message. But what is that gospel?

[ 12 : 49 ] If that's what a faithful minister does if that's what faithful Christians are to do what is the gospel that they are to proclaim? Most of you probably know gospel itself it means good news.

The gospel is the good news of what God has done to save sinners through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Let me just say that again. The gospel is the good news of what God has done to save sinners through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

You want to know what a faithful minister looks like? It starts and ends with faithful proclamation of the gospel. The good news that God saves sinners and that he saves sinners through the sacrifice of his own son.

See all of us are not only by action but by nature sinners. We have rebelled against God. It's in our nature to do so. In our sinful condition it separates us from fellowship with our creator.

[ 14 : 03 ] It destines us for God's judgment. But in his love not by our request but on his initiative and in his love God made a way for us to be forgiven so that we might be reconciled to him.

And he does that through his own son. Jesus co-equal and eternal with the Father and the Spirit comes to earth as we'll spend the next month focusing on in the incarnation.

He lives the life that we were meant to live. He perfectly fulfills the law as the second Adam but then he was crucified as an atonement for us.

He lived the life that we were meant to live and then he died the death that we deserved to die. And then God raised him from the dead to prove that his sacrifice was sufficient.

that it appeased the wrath of God against sinners and then he turns and he looks at sinners and he says you don't have to carry the burden of the law anymore.

[ 15 : 14 ] All of the righteousness you're working for hoping to get back into favor with me. Lay down that burden. Jesus has done it on your behalf and he took your death on your behalf and then Jesus turns and he says now just come to me.

Come to me. And believe. Come and believe the gospel. Receive my righteousness. Believe in my atonement.

Not in any atonement you might give for yourself. And God says all who will come and believe will be forgiven, will be reconciled to God, will be at peace with God and will be given eternal life with

God.

loved ones, this is the gospel. It's the gospel. It's what Paul gave his life to share. It's what the Thessalonians endured such persecution for.

And the fact is that you cannot trust someone whose fundamental objective is anything except declaring to you the gospel of Jesus.

[16:24] Jesus. And with that in mind we can then look at these three characteristics that come to the surface here. The first one that we find here in verse 9 is that a trustworthy minister labors diligently for the gospel.

A trustworthy minister labors diligently for the gospel. Look with me again at verse 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 proclaim to you the gospel of God.

So what's the focus here in verse 9? The heart of it as we've just said is the proclamation of the gospel. And how is it that Paul and Silas and Timothy supported the opportunity to preach that gospel?

Well they worked night and day so they wouldn't be a burden to anybody else. They diligently labored for the gospel's sake.

Now this particular verse it is a call to remember that's the first phrase right? For you remember he's recalling to their memory it corresponds to an issue that he actually brought up in verse 5.

[17:43] Just put your eyes on verse 5 again. He says we never came to you with words of flattery as you know nor with a pretext for greed he says. This is corresponding back to that.

Remember all of this is one argument we're just kind of chopping it up as we study it together. It's one argument it's corresponding back to verse 5. So that there were some people who were coming to Thessalonica and they were trying to gain influence in the city as a pretext for greed in order that they may influence people to gain for themselves to get money.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy did not do that. Instead they worked hard so as not to receive compensation from those to whom they ministered the gospel. So not only did they diligently labor to preach the gospel message itself but they diligently labored to support that gospel ministry through their own trade.

Acts 18 tells us Acts 18 1-3 tells us that Paul was a tent maker by trade and that he often used his craft to finance his gospel work.

This is one of the many ways that Paul distinguished himself from the charlatans of the day. If there was any doubt in the minds of the Thessalonians about the authenticity of Paul's ministry as it related to the potential of greed all they had to do is remember about the nature of his ministry while he was there and what is it that he calls to their mind?

[19:13] Hey, just remember we didn't come greedy we didn't in fact we didn't take anything from you and so those who might have been tempted to doubt maybe questioning maybe listening to unfounded accusations that came against the apostle and then wondering whether or not they believed a lie because they were deceived by a charlatan oh now they just think back and recall no you're right he didn't come that way what a comfort this would have brought to their hearts in that moment to remember that unlike many others he took nothing from them trustworthy ministers serve the purposes of the gospel unfaithful ministers use the gospel to serve their own purposes you see in Thessalonica's case it was charlatans coming in with deceptive things but there are those who will come in with a truthful message but still have a pretext for greed that's not a faithful minister that's not someone you can trust that's someone who inevitably unless the

Lord graciously calls them to repentance of that inevitably they're going to fail you they're going to betray you because their fundamental objective is not the preaching of the gospel the fundamental objective is to gain for themselves and they're using the gospel to do it Paul says we didn't come that way that was not our behavior but this raises an important question for us doesn't it maybe it's a question you're asking there in your seat now and it is the question of if or how pastors and missionaries and evangelists and other vocational ministers should be compensated for their gospel work do we come to a text like this and say well this indicates that really no gospel minister should ever receive compensation for this isn't that what Paul's saying when it's worth us at least taking a moment to consider that question in this moment now it's noteworthy that Paul was describing his practice in Thessalonica he was not prescribing something for all gospel ministers here we understand that in the context of what he's saying he's saying remember what I was like while I was with you that doesn't say anything about a command or an instruction it doesn't even

say anything about other points in Paul's ministry it just says when I was with you in Thessalonica I didn't take anything from you we labored hard night and day so that we wouldn't take anything from you so we need to keep that in mind Paul himself even received material support from other churches while he was in Thessalonica we learn that in Philippians chapter 4 and verse 16 on two separate occasions the church in Philippi who was also a suffering church but the church in Philippi on two separate occasions sent material goods to Paul in order to support his ministry in Thessalonica and Paul willingly and graciously accepted that gift and accepted that compensation for the gospel work so we can look at this and say okay Paul's describing something about his ministry in Thessalonica but even while he's there he's receiving help and support from other people so that brings in some nuance to the question doesn't it but then we find in other writings that Paul not only affirmed that it's permissible for pastors to be paid for their work but that it's actually the duty of congregations to supply the needs of their elders 1st Timothy chapter 5 verses 17 and 18 this is on the screen for you to see let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor this is the context of financial help especially those who labor in preaching and teaching for the scripture says you shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain and the laborer deserves his wages Paul clearly has in mind their material compensation for gospel work and he's saying congregations need to be responsible for this they need to care for the elders in their church in order that the elders may give their time to the ministry of the work in that congregation let me show you another passage 1st Corinthians chapter 9 I would encourage you to go back and read the entire paragraph here but just verses 13 and 14 for now Paul says do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings in the same way the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel okay so there Paul's actually saying no this is it's not only permissible it's good it's good and churches should care about this so when we come back to 1st Thessalonians chapter 2 the issue here is not about whether it is right for ministers to be paid but whether a minister is willing to continue faithfully proclaiming the gospel when compensation is either impossible or unhelpful and in the case of the Thessalonian church it might have been both both impossible and unhelpful faithful ministers are not motivated by money they do not use the ministry as a means to accrue wealth and as they are given this qualification in 1st Timothy 3 and Titus 1 they manage their homes well so that they do not enter into temptation for greed or unnecessarily burden the people that they serve that's what a faithful minister does so is ministerial compensation good yes is it always right no and there's three reasons that Paul gives for why he did this in his ministry the first reason he gives is that it was not to burden others the idea here is an unnecessary burden laying a weight that's attached to the gospel laying a weight on the shoulders of people the gospel lifts burdens it is not meant to add burdens and Paul says when we came to you right there in 1st [ 25 : 38 ] Thessalonians 2 9 we work night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you we didn't want the gospel to come in there we didn't want to come in guns ablaze and making demands of you and adding a burden to you when the gospel is not meant to bring a burden the gospel is meant to bring blessing we might consider Acts chapter 20 verses 33 to 35 Paul says there to the Ephesian elders he said I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel you yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me in all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus how he said this it is more blessed to give than to receive now that's an important statement there why is it that Paul is saying that when he went to Ephesus he didn't receive compensation that he worked hard he said because from his perspective it was actually generous of him not to do that in Ephesus it would have been a burden to those Christians it would have been a burden to that church that was not necessary for them to carry and he says so I didn't burden you that way he says the same thing to the Thessalonians it wasn't possible and it wasn't helpful I didn't want to burden you so I worked hard the second reason he gives is that he might provide an example for others to follow would you just flip over to second Thessalonians verse chapter three second Thessalonians chapter three what we find here is that there was an issue in the churches in the church in Thessalonica some people were intentionally not working not because they couldn't work but because they were basically mooching off the church so Paul sets an example for them and he confronts it look with me in second Thessalonians chapter three let's start actually in verse six now we command you brothers in the name of our

Lord Jesus Christ that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us idleness laziness intentionally not working in order that they might be a leech on others okay that's the idea here of the idol person what's the tradition that he's passed on the tradition is his own example right his own example and his command verse seven for you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us because we were not idle when we were with you nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it but with toil and labor we worked night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you now look at verse nine it was not because we do not have that right but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate so first he says I didn't take anything from me because I didn't want to be an unnecessary burden to you and then he says but you also needed an example of hard work because there's people still in your congregation

Paul says who are walking in idleness and they need to look at us and they need to imitate what we did for the gospel sake and not be a burden to other people and not stand in the way in the gospel but actually work and help and serve third reason Paul did this so that he would not become an obstacle to the gospel so that he would not present an obstacle to the gospel first Corinthians chapter nine again we read a portion of this a moment ago but verse 12 is where I want to read now Paul says if others share this rightful claim on you this is that's compensation do we not even more nevertheless we have not made use of this right we have not received from you what we could have received from you we have not made use of this right but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ in other words he says to the church in Corinth if I had done this it would have been an obstacle to the gospel people would not have taken the gospel seriously they would have just thought I was a charlatan like everybody else this what everybody else does he says we didn't come that way he tells the

Thessalonians we didn't come that way to you and what do we learn from that we learn that a trustworthy minister a pastor you can trust is somebody who is not manipulated and motivated by money and personal gain they work diligently for the gospel even if that means that they have to work diligently in order to support their gospel ministry that's where their heart is it's in the gospel secondly a trustworthy minister conducts himself with integrity a trustworthy minister conducts himself with integrity look at verse 10 you are witnesses and God also how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers so Paul calls on the Thessalonians as eyewitnesses here and what are they eyewitnesses to his integrity while some in Thessalonica were using flattery and deceit to prey on people Paul and

[ 30 : 57 ] Silas and Timothy behaved honorably but notice the specificity of his conduct toward believers that's what he says we were holy righteous and blameless in our conduct toward you believers what does he mean by that why does he make that distinction what doesn't mean that he lacked integrity with unbelievers but he was appealing to those who knew him best among whom he lived and served the people that he spent his time with the people that he lived with and lived among which gives us another insight into what a faithful minister does he's actually with the people that he served so that they might observe his life Paul was with them he lived with them he was among them and he appeals to them now to just recall just remember you yourselves know you were witnesses of of how we conducted ourselves and what he says is there was no pretense here there was no pretense with

Paul and Silas and Timothy they weren't one way in public and another way in private they acted with integrity in all things and the Thessalonian Christians knew it well let's think about these three adjectives he uses here first he says we our conduct was holy holy and this is not the typical word that we think of with holiness that's hagios which is a reference to moral quality that's not actually the word that Paul writes with here he writes with a slightly different word husios or husios which is more the sense of devout so he says you understand what our conduct was like among you you saw our lives we were truly devout we were truly devoted to God and the gospel in other words he wasn't a showman he was authentically a devoted Christian I've been around a lot of pastors in my life it would be shocking and some of you probably already know this would be shocking for you to know how many people stand in pulpits Sunday by Sunday but Monday to Saturday are not truly really devoted to

God in their Christian life Paul says that is not how we were we were truly devoted to God and you saw it you saw our devotion secondly he says we were righteous meaning that they wronged no one as they ministered in Thessalonica Thessalonica they didn't take advantage of people they

didn't mistreat people for personal gain they did what was right even when it may have been more advantageous for them not to they were righteous third they were blameless they gave no occasion for the gospel to be reproached they didn't flirt with ethical boundaries so as to cause suspicion about their ministry if the people in Thessalonica rejected the gospel it wouldn't have been because Paul's conduct was disingenuous or questionable they were blameless in their ministry so then they were holy in terms of their relationship to God they were righteous in terms of their dealings with others they were blameless in terms of the observation of the watching world that's what a faithful minister is like hey can we just say that's what a faithful

Christian is like Christians don't get off the hook just because he's describing a pastoral ministry no this this is what our lives are to reflect holiness genuine devotion righteousness blameless Christians in Thessalonica knew that Paul and his team acted with integrity but did you notice in verse 10 there's a greater witness here you see what he says they knew it was true more importantly God knew it was true now why would he say that he's already said it a couple of times in this whole section hasn't he God is witness God who tests our hearts he knows even if the Thessalonian Christians doubted his intentions Paul appealed to God who knows our hearts here again we find that Paul's ultimate motivation and his ultimate desire was to glorify God it wasn't about his reputation just for his reputation sake no he did what he did and he lived the way he lived because he wanted to honor God and at the end of the day even if the Thessalonians doubted or questioned his motives for any ways he makes his appeal to God and he understands that in the end it is before God that he will stand it is to God that he will finally answer and Paul says the God who knows all things was a personal witness to his integrity now let me ask you this is your life and ministry and if you're a

Christian we all have a gospel ministry in some way is your life and ministry carried out with this kind of integrity to those who know you best would they affirm that you are truly devoted to God righteous in the way that you deal with people blameless before the watching world would your kids testify that that guy I see on Sunday morning is not the guy I see on Sunday afternoon would a co-worker be surprised that you spent the better part of your morning in worship but even greater than that will God who knows your heart will he give witness to your integrity everyone will stand before God unbelievers will stand there in judgment so will believers but a different kind of judgment our works the Bible says will be exposed it will be made open by the God who knows us better than anybody else and when that that's what Paul's appealing to here when that moment comes and you stand before God will the one who actually knows you say holy righteous blameless third a trustworthy minister lovingly instructs others to glorify

[ 38 : 04 ] God lovingly instructs others to glorify God verses 11 and 12 you know how like a father with his children 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 glory this final note he brings in to focus the character and content of his instruction to them and he gives three words three characteristics here that that he exhorted them means that he instructed them as one having authority to do so but not as a distant authority but as someone who was coming alongside of them John Piper says this this particular word for exhortation he in in his words he said it is full of partnership so it is authority that's coming with you in the process not cold demands but journeying with you on the way Paul says that's how that's how we instructed you encouragement underscores an emotional element to the instruction truth is living as a Christian is not easy it's quite difficult actually

Paul was coming alongside struggling Christians in Thessalonica and he was encouraging them to press forward you can do this the Lord is with you let me show you stay with me follow me as I follow Christ that he charged them introduces solemnity gravitas to the instruction the connotation with that one is that Paul implored them as someone who had been there and understood truly what was at stake he was imploring them to do what walk worthy now all of this exhortation encouragement charge is colored by the idea that he treated them like a father with his children now your experience that may not be very positive Paul speaking generally here the faithful father that's how we minister to you how is exhortation and encouragement and charging of a father different from other authorities faithful father is with you he desires your good he's not hateful doesn't exasperate his children he encourages them he may be firm with them but it's all for the good of their own benefit

Paul didn't instruct them as an impersonal authority but as a loving father who cares for them and desires their ultimate good such as a faithful minister of the gospel he does not lord over people for

his benefit he lovingly instructs them for theirs you say how can I how can I find a pastor a minister a disciple or a Christian who I can really trust well would they really care about you glorifying God or being able to add you to the list of people that they successfully disciplined what's it about here are they lording over your life or are they coming alongside you to lovingly instruct you that may be firm that may even be confrontational but it's colored by this idea of a father with his children we're almost done faithful pastoral instruction isn't just about manner and sincerity though is it we know that many people are sincerely wrong leading people astray even with what appears to be good intentions and genuine care the content of one's instruction is of utmost importance and the summary of Paul's instruction was that the Thessalonians walk worthy of God he didn't mean that they needed to live lives that needed to reach a measure of holiness so that God would accept them that's not what he means by that worthy here is being used in the sense of fitness he urged them to live in a manner that was fitting of someone that already belongs to God he said that's how we instructed you that was the objective there it wasn't to do things for us it was no we were pushing you to follow God to live worthy of him to exalt him to preach his gospel that's what we were urging you to do of course all of this instruction is grounded in the gospel of Jesus which is the significance of the very last phrase there in the New Testament call here which is what Paul says in verse 12 this God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory the New Testament call usually is referring to an individual salvation we think of call in terms of like being commissioned to a task the New Testament very rarely actually uses the term that way it's almost always in relationship to the call of God to salvation through the preaching of the gospel

God effectually calls us into his kingdom and out of sin and unbelief let me just give you a verse that you might know well that helps us kind of wrap our brains around that 1 Peter 2 9 you are a chosen race a royal priesthood a holy nation a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light it's the call to salvation typically when call is used that's the way it's being used in the New Testament now what's interesting about the way Paul uses it in 1 Thessalonians 2 12 is that it's in the present tense not the past tense did you notice that?

he says we urged you to walk worthy of God and he doesn't say who called you into his kingdom and glory no he said who calls you presently calls you into his kingdom and glory but why did he do it that way?

[ 44 : 21 ] why did he say it like that? oh this is so helpful he's reminding us that God continually calls his people to walk worthy of their identity as citizens of his kingdom representing his glory his beauty his gospel his perfections in this world this instruction is the urging to pursue greater holiness in sanctification but let's color it just with another verse in 1 Thessalonians just flip over to chapter 5 and look at verses 23 and 24 in closing out the letter Paul says now may the God of peace himself do what?

sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ now notice verse 24 he who calls you present tense he who calls you is faithful he will surely do it now what's the significance of this?

God continually every day he's calling you walk worthy of me live as a citizen of my kingdom display my glory in the world that's why I've saved you is to display my glory in the world and Paul says and we've come alongside you like a loving father and this is what we're urging you to do walk worthy of God live for his glory live as if you really are a citizen of his kingdom for if you're in Christ that's exactly who you are and then when he gets to the end of the letter what is it that he says?

he says look the one who calls you he's faithful he will do this in you this is amazing God calls us to salvation through the gospel he calls us to live worthy of our new identity in Christ and then by his spirit God enables us to do it he actually gives us the power to do it so a trustworthy minister like a loving father will implore you to walk worthy of God and he will encourage you with the fact that God himself is with you and enables you to walk worthy of him because sometimes we hear an instruction like that and we think I can't do that I just don't have it in me to live like that to have that kind of boldness and I just I fall in so many ways and I sin all the time and Paul's coming alongside these other Christians who had sin in their lives even he's come alongside them he says listen walk worthy of God he is with you he's gonna do this in you lean on him trust in him follow him he will do this work he's faithful he'll do it and one day he'll complete it he'll complete it loved ones

I implore you walk worthy of God if you're in Christ he's called you into his kingdom that's the reality of your identity now you belong to him if you're a Christian and that will never change now live like it

live like it put off the deeds of the flesh live in genuine devotion to God and his gospel don't be a casual Christian be truly devoted be righteous in your conduct don't mistreat people always do what's right even if it hurts you to do it always do what's right walk blamelessly why?

[ 47 : 58 ] because you've been called into his kingdom and as a citizen of his kingdom it's our responsibility to display his glory in this world he has chosen us for that task and he enables us in that task so do it do it for his glory and in his power well what a reassurance this must have been for the Thessalonians maybe they were in a moment of doubt maybe they were really struggling maybe the accusations of enemies if that was happening maybe those accusations were starting to get to them as they faced another beating or as they faced another form of persecution from their enemies maybe they thought maybe these guys are right is this worth it maybe Paul was really messing with us here and then he writes and he says he says just remember remember how we came to you you were different than those other guys and you know it you're with us you saw it that would have been comforting right wouldn't it have strengthened their faith in the gospel their resolve to continue in faithfulness and then what a help it is for us isn't it to see biblical criteria for ministers that we should follow notice there's nothing here about charisma there's nothing here about personality if that's what it takes you're in trouble no we see here that the kind of the kind of people that we need to follow through the text

God tells us what to look for in spiritual leaders and getting closer and closer inevitably to seeing men in our church who potentially one day will serve as elders here in the church and how do we evaluate that we use passages like 1 Thessalonians 2 and then we see here what standard we need to hold them to what standard do you need to hold me to but God also allows us to be instructed by Paul himself here doesn't he his instruction wasn't only good for the Thessalonians it's good for us this text it's not just for those in vocational ministry each of us we're all called to minister the gospel with these same characteristics diligent labor and biblical integrity and loving instruction and we can't leave the text without giving an honest examination of ourselves to see if we're walking worthy of God and if we're not we need to confess that we need to turn in his grace determined to be faithful and by God's grace that's what we'll do for better