

# Servants of God, Walk Well

*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: 18 January 2024

[ 0 : 0 0 ] start being generated. It's like, wow, what is God going to do here? How amazing is this going to be? I'm going to have some stories to tell. I'm telling you, I'm going to write some prayer letters, and I'm going to give some updates, and it's going to be amazing what God has done.

And then all of a sudden, you are just ripped away from this place that you've been ministering, and things are exciting, and things are happening. And he writes this letter, and he says, you remember what the goal was the whole time? It was that you would walk worthy of God. It was not that he would build a huge ministry there. Ministry success, as we might determine it by, you know, attendance, or finances, or buildings, or influence, or platform, or any of those things, that just did not go into Paul's equation. That was not the goal. Because when that becomes the goal, you start using things that are going to be outlined in this chapter as a means to the wrong end, right? Because he's going to talk about care. He's going to talk about character. He's going to talk about speaking the gospel. He's going to talk about all these things. And he says, I did all of this so that you would know how to walk with Jesus. And that's really the goal. That's the whole thing. He's not saying,

I did all this stuff so I could get a big ministry going here. I did all this stuff so that I could have success, right? So I could have numbers, or so I could have whatever, so that my dreams could be fulfilled. He says, I did all this because I care about you, and you knowing Jesus. And that is enough.

When we get the wrong end in minds, we start using maybe care as a means to get ministry success, instead of realizing that care for people, that is the ministry, right? We use maybe teaching to get ministry success when we forget that people knowing God's Word and knowing how to live God's Word, that is the ministry. Is it not? Like that's the whole thing, is people knowing God's Word and being able to share it. Sometimes we do the opposite of what the Thessalonians did. You remember what Paul wrote and said about them? He said, you left idols to serve the living and true God. When we get the wrong objective in mind, we leave serving the living and true God to pick up an idol. We go backwards.

We go the wrong way. And so he says, listen, no, no, no. We want people to walk worthy. And so if that's the end goal, what must you do? Here's number two. You and I, we must embrace a life. This is your second, your next big heading there. Embrace a life of walking worthy of God. You have to get a hold of that life. What is that life? How do I live that life? What does it look like? How does it feel?

[ 2 : 47 ]     How do I interact with people? How do I speak to people? How do I think? What matters to me? What are my values? And so that's what he does with the bulk of this chapter. Let's start off in verse number one. And let's start walking through. And I want to walk through four sketches of what this life looks like. Now, I didn't come up with these. I, you know, found some in a commentary. Wiersbe, he says there's three. There was another guy that said there were four. I kind of like the four. I like four points tonight. So we'll go with four. Here's the first one. When we open up in verse number one, he's going to begin talking about viewing his ministry, his life as a stewardship, as a steward, the steward, one who has been entrusted with something of great value. Let's go back there to verse number one, and let's walk through some of these verses together. He says, for yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you that it was not in vain. But even after that we had suffered before and were shamefully entreated, as you know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. So he looks and he says, y'all know that when we came to you, our entrance, when we came to your city, we came having faced some real opposition. He talks about the shameful treatment at Philippi. If you go back into Acts chapter number 16, you'll find out that in Philippi, there were some people who got saved.

There was a miracle that took place where there was a young woman who was demon-possessed and was being exploited as like a fortune teller, right? There are some people that's like, hey, here's a good business opportunity. Let's take this lady. Let's get... She's demon-possessed, like literally demon-possessed. Let's take her and get her to tell fortunes and do all this stuff, and we'll make money off her. They cast the demon out of that woman, and then they're brought before the rulers, the civic leaders of Philippi, and they're beaten, imprisoned. And that's the story where you get Paul and Silas singing in the middle of the night, sitting in jail. God miraculously opens the doors, frees them. They see the Philippian jailer get saved. And then when it's time to leave the city, those same people who had them beaten, they realized that they had really broken Roman law.

See, they had beaten Paul, who was a Roman citizen, and he hadn't been properly tried, and he hadn't been condemned. And so they come, and they're like, hey, Paul, can you please walk out of our city?

Can we take this little mistake here and sweep it under the rug, and let's send you on your way. Please, please go out from our city. Because they didn't want to face the accountability for their shameful mistreatment of Paul. And he says, we were shamefully entreated, but we continued to speak the gospel. Man, that's one of those things about Paul that's like, he knows what he's been given.

He's been given the word of God to take it to the Gentiles. And he's going from one place to the next place to the next place, continuing to speak boldly, even though it doesn't go very well for him.

[ 5 : 52 ]     Right? He has scars that show how he's been mistreated, and he's been beaten, and he's been rejected. But he says, I'm going to be bold. When we go down to verse number three, he says, for our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile. But as we are allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. There's one of those instances where he looks up and he says, okay, what I'm doing, the way I'm living my life, it's all about honoring God. Because God is the one who tries my heart.

And what he says is, we handled the word with character. We weren't in it to trick you. We weren't in it to get something from you. Here's your next two blanks. We weren't seeking gain for ourselves. And then after that, we weren't seeking glory for themselves. Right? They weren't trying to become somebody or get something. They just said, we're here. We've been given the gospel.

And this gospel is not ours. This message is not ours. We're stewards. And the idea of stewardship is that the owner has given you a job to do. And you are responsible and accountable to the owner for whether or not you do the job well. And so he says, I'm going to carry the gospel and speak the gospel in a way that honors God. I'm not tricking you. I'm not out to manipulate you. I just want you to know about Jesus. When we get down to verse number five, he says, for neither at any time use we flattering words as you know, nor cloak of covetousness, God is witness, nor of men sought we glory, neither of you nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ. So he says, hey, as a steward, I'm going to take what God's given me and I'm going to go do with it what I'm supposed to do. And I'm going to honor God in the way I do it. Because the way that we share Christ, the way that we teach the Bible, that matters. We got to be very careful that we do it from pure motives. Really like kind of a key word there is character, character in the way that we carry the gospel. When you get down to verse number seven, this is where he changes gears.

Because if you notice, he says all the things that we didn't do, we didn't do this. We didn't treat you that way. We didn't talk this way. We weren't in it for ourselves. We weren't in it for money. We weren't in it for influence. We were just there to share the gospel with you. He transitions to what he did do. Let's go to the next one. Here's the next one. The nursing mother. Now this is a really strange one when you think about that. Paul the apostle. He says, Paul the nursing mother. How's that?

How's that for a big shot? How's that for the apostle Paul? He says, no, listen. He says, but we were gentle among you, in verse seven, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls because you were dear unto us. He says, we fed you and we gave you exactly what you needed.

[ 8 : 58 ] And we bore with the newness of you. Okay? You know, think about it. When you have a new little human baby being, right? Okay. They don't know how to do a whole lot of things. They don't know how to control their emotions. I'll tell you. They're just like, every time they want something, they will let you know in the most grating way possible that, hey, I need you to pick me up and pay attention to me and take care of me. And you look at what he says. He says, we were gentle, right? Even when we think about somebody who's a new Christian, right? Because this time was three weeks of ministry, a whole bunch of new Christians, and a whole bunch of new Christians, they don't always know the right things to do. But he says, we were gentle and we gave you what you needed and we were there for you and we cared about you and we loved you. They loved these people intensely. He said, it was gentleness with the new ones, the little ones who, they're crying, they're needy. Your next blank is they had deep affection, deep affection for those ones that God has placed into their lives. And they were willing, willing to give, ready to give, willing giving, giving the gospel. But you notice the other thing it said? They gave themselves. They gave themselves to them. They're like, here I am. I'm here for you. I'm giving my life literally for you, for your good. You know, those of you that have had little children and, you know, you have, have a mom that is, you know, up in the middle of the night and a dad that is up and changing diapers and all of these things. Like, you know the, the intense, I don't even know what you're saying, the intense investment, the intense giving, the intense working, like being up at all hours of the night. Like, you are on call all the time. You don't clock out of being a mom, right? That is the kind of life that Paul said, that's how I lived among you.

I'm here for you. I'm ready to give of myself to you. Now, here's the hard thing. We get off course sometimes because that feels like too much to do. That feels like too much to do for somebody. Because think about it. Paul's shown up in town. He's ministered to them. These people were total strangers just to, you know, just what, a couple weeks before, a couple days before. But he says, I'm here. I'm ready to give of myself whatever you need. I'm here for you. Total strangers. And, you know, that's something that is even hard for us, right? That you would give of your time. You'd give of your, your life. You'd give your energy. You'd pay attention to somebody. You know, there's sometimes where, you know, I confess my own weakness that, like, sometimes it's like, you know, I don't want to meet anybody else. Like, I got enough people that I know and that I'm trying to keep up with and there's, there's already enough going on. I just don't really want to get to know somebody else and hear their story. Is that too honest? Some of you are like, oh man, we got problems. Is anyone with me?

It's hard to keep up with the people who are already in my life. It's like, adding some more people on top. It's like, but that is what it is to be a Christian, is to care about the people that God has brought into your life. Every relationship is providential and it's difficult. It's hard. It's, it's a labor. It's, it is sacrifice, but that is walking worthy of God to allow people into our hearts and lives, to allow ourselves to love deeply. He says the nursing mother, but then he also goes on, he says the faithful friend in verse number nine. Would you read with me verse nine? He sort of transitions and he says, for your member brethren, brothers, our labor and travail for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you. We preached unto you the gospel of God.

He talks about his work, the way that he did not take anything of them. You see the Thessalonians, they knew a whole lot about typical pagan priests. Here's what one man wrote about pagan priests in their day. The Thessalonians were all too familiar with the vileness of pagan religion, the trickery, the lust, the greed, and dishonesty of pagan priests. That was the religious climate. It was not holy.

It was not self-sacrificing. It was not loving. It was dead gods being proclaimed and being pushed upon people. And that these dead gods were really, they're out to control these people's lives.

[ 13 : 32 ] That's what they're doing. That's the religious climates. That's the pagan environment that they lived in. And so for someone to come and say, you know what, I don't want a thing from you. I'm not going to take anything from you. No offerings, no worship, no gifts, no tips. You know, isn't that so funny? Lauren showed me a real last night where it's like, hey, you know, honey, I did this thing for you. I made dinner.

How about a tip? Right? It's like, everybody asks for a tip nowadays. Or how I did this thing. I fold the laundry and put it away. How about a tip? She's like, maybe I should do that. I'm like, oh man, hey, everything I have is yours. All right. You're just tipping your own money here. Come on.

But he says, man, that's not how we treated you. We were working night and day. And it's amazing. They were preaching the gospel and they did live of the gospel. Because the book of Philippians tells us that the Philippian church sent two offerings while they were in Thessalonica.

That's a pretty incredible thing. Even that short time, the Philippians were helping Paul and his crew. But he says, to make up the lack, to make up the difference, I worked, I labored night and day because I didn't want to take a single thing from you. And this comes into play also in 2 Thessalonians chapter number three, where he said, look at my example. Look at how I came and ministered unto you. Because there were some people that were looking for the coming of Christ. And they said, man, if Jesus is coming back soon, why do I need to work? Why do I need to, you know, why do I need to go out there and dig, dig, dig, I can't speak, dig ditches or do all this other labor? Why do I need to do that? And he says, that's not how Christians act. That's not what it is to walk worthy of God. We labor, we work, we, so that we can provide for ourselves and so that we can have something to give. And he says, that is the life that we lived. The faithful friend laboring alongside the brothers, not a taker. Finally, the loving father. We've got three minutes and I need to give you four more blanks. So here we go. You ready? The loving father. When we get down to verses 10 through 12, let's read these. It says, ye are witnesses in God also how wholly and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe. As you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you as a father doth his children. And here's our verse, that ye would walk worthy of God who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. And so what is the picture of the father?

What do we learn? What do we pick up from that? Here it is. An exemplary life. An exemplary life. You notice there in verse number 10, he says, you are witnesses. You saw, and God is a witness.

[ 16 : 10 ] God knows the holy, just, unblameable behavior that they had. He said, he's going back to that idea of character. Character is crucial in the Christian life and ministry. You can't, that's, what is it? Like, what's in Monopoly? Don't pass go. Don't pass 200, don't collect \$200. Like, you got to get character. And he said, that is how we lived among you. Speaking with balance.

Speaking with balance. That's your next blank. Do you notice what he said there? He said in verse number 11, how you know how we exhorted you, comforted you, and charged every one of you.

You know, sometimes dads are unfortunately known for being a little harsh. Maybe they, you know, they bark at the kids or they're, you know, critical or they're like, hey, get in line or, you know, all these things. He says, no. He said, there's, there's, there's three things he lays out there. He says, exhorting, which is to earnestly encourage a desired course of action.

He's like, I'm going to get in there with you and I'm going to talk to you and I'm going to encourage you. Here's how you should walk with God. I'm going to nurture you. I'm going to train you. That's our next blank. Aiming for nurture in training. That is exhortation. Comfort. We're familiar with that term. Comforting. Getting down there with them and saying, hey, you're struggling.

You're having a problem. I'm here with you. Let me teach you about the Lord and about how he's going to give you strength through this. And finally says, charging. Charging was the idea of that. That's the more solemn things. The, uh, the solemn assertion. I was going to say ascertainment.

[ 17 : 45 ] That's not the right one. Assertion. Psalm assertion of this is what's true. And this is the way for you to walk with God. And so he says, as a loving father, I'm going to live an exemplary life before you. I'm going to speak with balance. I'm going to aim for nurture in training. Friends, we get off course when we forget that this is the way that a Christian walks. This is a way, the way that a Christian encourages others. And this is the way that Christian speaks the gospel and shares the gospel. These things cannot be overlooked. When we forget that we're stewards and that we, and we think of ourselves as Lords, that's when we start doing all of those awful things that he outlines. He says, we weren't covetousness, but if we think that we're the Lord and that God's, instead of being stewards, like I'm the Lord, instead of being a steward of what God's given me, that's when we start to use people and misuse what God has given us.

Can I give you one last thing as we close out? Thinking back on that idea of a nursing mother, of just giving and giving and giving for your children. Two things that come to mind.

Three things actually. Okay, here we go. First thing, it is, that is a choice that we would love those who are not our own, right? We'd love those who are not our flesh and blood. That's a choice.

And that's something that God works in us. I love that passage in 1 John. If we say that we love God, but we don't love our brother, something's wrong. He says, that love is, that's something that comes from God, from our relationship with God. The second thing, when we think about, you know, parenting and the investment that that is and the work that that takes and the, you know, it's just like, it takes everything from you to parent well.

And we're even just talking about meeting physical needs or decide on school stuff and, or getting people to where they need to go. You know, there's a whole, there's just a thousand things that parents do. That same type of intensity, we can't forget that that's kind of like the same way that we should be ministering spiritual things to our kids. There's a lot of material things that they need, but there's a lot of spiritual things that they need too. And those need to be imparted from parents to the children. And finally, the third thing, what do you do when it just all feels like too much?

[ 20 : 06 ] Right? Because to, to, to like, this almost feels like sometimes an impossible stare, standard. You're telling me I need to have unblameable character. I need to love people that I don't even really know that well. Right? I need to be imparting my, my life, my soul, giving myself to these people. I need to be, you know, having an exemplary life and I mean, teaching and doing all these things like, man, that's too much. There's a song that I, that stands out in my mind. It's called One Pot of Oil. And it talks, it talks, it uses the, the, the story of the, the widow who had one pot of oil. She had a debt to pay and there's like no way that she's going to pay it. And the prophet comes to her and says, hey, go to all your neighbors and get a whole bunch more pots.

Right? This math doesn't work out. If you got one pot of oil and then you get 10 more pots, you ain't going to fill them up. Right? But you remember what happens? The miracle that God does, she's pouring oil into the one pot and it fills up. It's like, oh, that's interesting. I guess we keep going. Let's pour into the next one. And it fills up. We pour into the next one. It fills up.

It's like, she keeps going down and then all the pots of oil, all the empty pots get filled with oil. It's an incredible thing. And, and the, the, the writer of this song, listen to this, uh, listen to this chorus. It says, pour out your life freely now. See what the master can do. Though it seems unbelievable. He can use me. He can use you. Though all you have seems weak and poor, he sets before you an open door. One pot of oil becomes so much more when you pour it out to the Lord. You know, our lives being lived to share the gospel and live to love and to care for others and to help them walk with God. That's a work that God blesses. And that's a work that God strengthens us for. And so when it's like, man, I don't got any more to give. I think that's when we need to go to the Lord and say, uh, Lord, I'm depending upon your strength to minister to these people, to help people around me, the people that God's put into my life. Would you bow with me?

As we close out this time of, you know, studying God's word together, I really want to encourage you. Take a look at your life. You know, you might not consider yourself a preacher like Paul, but you are a witness. If you're here tonight and you're saved, you are a Christian. You do carry that name. You know, I pray that the ministry of this church would always be that you and I, we would be helped to walk worthy of God. Friend, are you embracing that life?

Are there areas of your life that are not defined by being called a child of God? If there are, it's time to submit those to the Lord and to come to him and allow him to guide you and to teach you in the life that honors God and that makes the gospel look beautiful, that makes the gospel look wonderful. You know, our lives, they can't hinder the gospel. And may that never be so.

[ 23 : 06 ] So, you know, as a church, what are we going to be known for? Are we going to be known as a place that is in it for notoriety or fulfilling our dreams or, you know, having buildings or programs or all these things? Or will we stay focused on the key, the core, that we want to help people walk worthy of God, that they know how to live for Jesus? It might be this evening that you're not saved, that you've never believed in Jesus, you never trusted Jesus as your Savior. Tonight is the time to call upon him in faith and he will save you. Father, we come to you. We thank you for your word.

Thank you for how it teaches us and it helps us. Lord, I pray that you'd guide us and you'd reveal to us where we need to walk well, we need to walk worthy of the gospel. Lord, may this always be a place where people are helped to live for you. Lord, help us to keep our focus simple and focused on you. Praise things in Jesus' name. Amen.