

Session 4

An Exposition of I & II Thessalonians

I Thessalonians 2:10–12

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I Thessalonians 2:10 *Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:*

Paul lists three ways he and his companions behaved among the Thessalonians: (1) *holily* (2) *justly* (3) *unblameably*. All three reveal different aspects of proper Christian character.

Holily.

The Greek word is #3743 *hosiós*, defined as “what is sanctioned by the Lord” – properly, divinely-sanctioned and therefore worthy of reverence.”

We also see *hosiós* translated in other versions as “devoutly.” What is meant by the use of this word is that the apostles manifested lives of holy devotion.

How a man lives reveals the true character of his being. If a man is devout in his personal and everyday life, we can know his religion is pure.

The opposite of a devout and holy man is a common man. This is someone who lives his life without any respect for the sacred Scriptures, fellowship with the Lord, internal devotion, or the pursuit of holiness in his heart.

Natural men are both common and defiled by nature, having no desire to be holy. The unsaved will not sanctify God in their hearts nor have any real desire to pursue that characteristic of God that makes Him unique in creation.

Yet without both holiness and sanctification, no man will see the Lord. Practically speaking, a common man, one who lacks the holiness of God, is unfit for heaven. This is why when men do not seek holiness, they shall neither see nor experience God either on this earth or in heaven.

Hebrews 12:14 *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, Heb. 12:14

no man shall see the Lord—no man as a son; in heavenly glory (Re 22:3, 4). In the East, none but the greatest favorites are admitted to the honor of seeing the king (compare 2Sa 14:24). The Lord being pure and holy, none but the pure and holy shall see Him (Mt 5:8). Without holiness in them, they could not enjoy Him who is holiness itself (Zec 14:20). The

connection of purity with seeing the Lord, appears in 1Jo 3:2, 3; Eph 5:5. Contrast Heb 12:16 (compare 1Th 4:3). In Mt 24:30; Re 1:7, it is said that all shall see the Lord; but, that shall be as a Judge, not as their lasting portion and God, which is meant here. The Greek verb does not denote the mere action of seeing, but the seer's state of mind to which the object is presented: so in Mt 5:8 they shall truly comprehend God [Tittmann]. None but the holy could appreciate the holy God, none else therefore shall abide in His presence.

A man's religion and the God he serves is easily visible in the life he lives. So if faith is impure, it will be very apparent in the commonness its adherents live in.

This teaches us that all religions can be seen as either clean or unclean by the people who practice them. The apostle's life proved that his God was holy, because of this, he could live in no other way than pursuing holiness among the Thessalonians.

Observe as well that any religion should not be deemed as good if the people who practice it are not holy, since in truth, this is what the Lord demands of all who follow Him.

1 Peter 1:16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, 1 Pet. 1:16

Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy ... It is a great truth, that people everywhere will imitate the God whom they worship. They will form their character in accordance with his. They will regard what he does as right. They will attempt to rise no higher in virtue than the God whom they adore, and they will practice freely what he is supposed to do or approve. Hence, by knowing what are the characteristics of the gods which are worshipped by any people, we may form a correct estimate of the character of the people themselves; and, hence, as the God who is the object of the Christian's worship is perfectly holy, the character of His worshipers should also be holy. And hence, also, we may see that the tendency of true religion is to make people pure. As the worship of the impure gods of the pagan moulds the character of the worshippers into their image, so the worship of Yahweh moulds the character of His professed friends into His image, and they become like him.

Justly.

The Greek word for *justly* is “#1346 *dikaiōs* (an adverb) – judicially approved (approved by God); justly, uprightly.” For men to walk in union with the Lord, they must walk not just holy before God but also uprightly and with much integrity toward other men.

A just man will have a strict code of conduct concerning others.

It is only when we love our neighbors as ourselves that our dealings with them are fair, equitable, and generous.

None should underestimate how righteous our dealings with other men must be if we are to properly fellowship with the Lord and live lives pleasing to Him.

There is no such thing as a righteous and holy man who does not deal thoughtfully and charitably with not only the people of God but also those who are not.

Of Moses's Ten Commandments, six deal with how believers are to conduct themselves with other men (Exod. 20:1–17).

This teaches us that to walk and remain in God's will requires a righteous walk among men, simply because he who sins against his neighbor sins against God.

The life of David proved this when he realized that his sin against Uriah, taking Bathsheba to be his own and having Uriah killed, was a sin against the Lord.

Psalm 51:4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

Though David's sin might be viewed merely against people, it was really against the Lord.

Hence, if men do not conduct themselves righteously, justly, lovingly, and generously before other men, they should not think that they are in any way walking worthy of God.

Simply put, sinning against our fellow man is equal to sinning against God Himself.

Unblameably.

The Greek word for *unblameable* is #273 and #274 *amemptós*. Strong's defines it as "faultlessly – blameless, unblameably," meaning "blameless, free from fault or defect."

God's standards are higher than any human standard; thus, it shall prove very difficult to find fault in how true servants maintain themselves in their religion and interpersonal relationships.

The apostle knew that to bring others out of their sinful lives, his own life needed to be blameless.

I Thessalonians 2:11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,

First, Paul listed how he behaved while among the Thessalonians; now he lists how he behaved *toward* them. He *exhorted*, *comforted*, and *charged* every one of them.

The special role that the apostle retained among the Thessalonians was that of a father, one through whom the Thessalonians had been begotten unto Christ.

This teaches us that there should always be a special affection for those who have played a key role in our coming to the new birth and being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

I Corinthians 4:15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

Even though there can be, and often is, a high number of spiritual instructors in faith, compared to fathers, their contribution is lesser. Mere instructors also lack the level of godly affection that fathers possess for Christ's own.

Consider as well that since the new birth is the ultimate purpose in Christian ministry, helping men receive the Holy Spirit should be valued as the most important service for God. Because of this, spiritual fathers have a unique authority in Christ's church.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Cor. 4:15

For though ye have ten thousand instructors - Though you may have or though you should have. It matters not how many you have, yet it is still true that I only sustain the relation to you of spiritual father, and whatever respect it is proper for you to have toward them, yet there is a special right which I have to admonish you, and a special deference which is due to me, from my early labors among you, and from the fact that you are my spiritual children.

Instructors - Greek: *pedagogues*; or those who conducted children to school, and who superintended their conduct out of school hours. Hence, those who had the care of children, or teachers (in general). It is then applied to instructors of any kind.

In Christ - In the Christian system or doctrine. The authority which Paul claims here, is that which a father has in preference to such an instructor.

Not many fathers - Spiritual fathers. That is, you have but one. You are to remember that however many teachers you have, yet that I alone am your spiritual father.

In Christ Jesus - By the aid and authority of Christ. I have begotten you by preaching his gospel and by his assistance.

I have begotten you - I was the instrument of your conversion.

Also significant about Paul's intimate care for the Thessalonians is that regardless of his special rank or extraordinary spiritual power, none of these things tempted him to be so full of pride that he would not humbly care for these early believers as his own.

For true ministers, neither spiritual power nor Christian influence will cause them to abandon the paternal nurturing necessary to raise Christ's people.

In Christ's church, the greater a man's position, the greater he should exert himself in humbling himself to and caring for those Christ has given him responsibility over. Hence, the greater a man's rank in the body of Christ, the greater he should condescend to a position of service in ministry.

Greatness should produce greater service, simply because the more spiritual gifts a man possesses, the more they should be used for the edification and assistance of others.

Matthew 23:11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

Benson Commentary, Matt. 23:11

But he that is greatest among you, &c. — If any one among you would in reality be greater than another, let him be the more condescending, kind, and ready cheerfully to serve others in love. The words may either imply, 1st, a promise that such should be accounted greatest, and stand highest in the favour of God, who should be most humble, submissive, and serviceable: or, 2d, a precept enjoining the person who should be advanced to any place of dignity, trust, or honour in the church, to consider himself as peculiarly called thereby, not to be a lord, but a minister, and to serve others in love. Thus Paul, who knew his privilege as well as duty, though *free from all*, yet made himself *servant of all*, 1 Corinthians 9:19. And our Lord frequently pressed it upon his disciples to be humble and self-denying, mild and condescending, and to abound in all the offices of Christian love, though mean, and to the meanest; and of this he set a continual example. *Whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be humbled, &c.* — It is observable that no one sentence of our Lord's is so often repeated as this: it occurs with scarcely any variation at least ten times in the evangelists.

God's gifts are provided for the spiritual edification of His people. Whatever gifts He has endowed men with should be used in the service of others and not to inflate their own egos. This was Christ's purpose in coming to the earth, and it should be our mode of living before joining Him in heaven.

Hence, our religion is only pure when we are willing and ready to deny ourselves to strengthen and support the spiritual lack of others.

Every one of you.

The apostle possessed a specific and personal love for each and every one of the Thessalonians. Not one of them was forgotten; not one of them was beyond his loving recognition.

True ministers, therefore, must conduct personalized ministry, wherein the congregation never becomes more important than the individuals who make it up.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, I Thess. 2:11
every one of you—in private (Ac 20:20), as well as publicly. The minister, if he would be useful, must not deal merely in generalities, but must individualize and particularize.

How children are raised can directly affect what they become, and this is certainly true in raising God's people.

To a true minister, each and every member of Christ's flock is precious. Because of this, each should be exhorted, comforted, and charged so that he or she progresses toward the high calling given them through Christ.

This also teaches us that people do not need merely one element in Christian oversight to help them advance in spiritual growth. Love is not enough if saints are not exhorted to live a holier life, comforted when in need, and challenged to walk worthy of a holy God—since ultimately helping people grow closer to God is itself a great act of love.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Thess. 2:11
How we exhorted - That is, to a holy life.

And comforted - In the times of affliction.

And charged - Greek, "testified." The word testify is used here in the sense of protesting, or making an earnest and solemn appeal. They came as witnesses from God of the truth of religion, and of the importance of living in a holy manner. They did not originate the gospel themselves, or teach its duties and doctrines as their own, but they came in the capacity of those who bore witness of what God had revealed and required, and they did this in the earnest and solemn manner which became such an office.

I Thessalonians 2:12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

The reason is given here as to why the apostle *exhorted*, *comforted*, and *charged* the Thessalonians as *a father doth his children*. It was so that they might *walk worthy of God*.

Hence, if a person has been called of Christ, walking worthy of the Lord should be his greatest aim.

Grace does not dispel the need for proper Christian behavior but increases it.

The invitation to become a son of God is the highest of heavenly calls. Because of this, it is essential that men are exhorted to walk worthy of the holy God who has called them.

The call to heaven is both serious and grave and should be responded to only with the greatest effort.

As Matthew Henry once said, "Religion, if worth anything, is worth every thing."

Philippians 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Phil. 3:14

Of the high calling of God - Which is the end or result of that calling. God has called us to great and noble efforts; to a career of true honor and glory; to the obtainment of a bright and imperishable crown. It is a calling which is "high," or "upward" - (ωνᾶ *anō*) - that is, which tends to the skies. The calling of the Christian is from heaven, and to heaven; compare Proverbs 15:24. He has been summoned by God through the gospel of the Lord Jesus to secure the crown. It is placed before and above him in heaven. It may be his, if he will not faint or tire or look backward. It demands his highest efforts, and it is worth all the exertions which a mortal can make even in the longest life.

Called you unto his kingdom and glory.

The kingdom of God is that kingdom where God will rule His people through His Son, Jesus Christ. It was this kingdom that Jesus preached, was *at hand*.

Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

This kingdom which Jesus warned men could not be entered into simply by claiming belief without doing the will of God.

Matthew 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

The kingdom of heaven is the possession of the Son of God, and a man must be given spiritual right to enter it.

II Peter 1:11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, II Pet. 1:11

The empire of God which the Redeemer shall set up over the souls of his people shall endure to all eternity. The object of the plan of redemption was to secure their allegiance to God, and that will never terminate.

And glory.

Another vital reason believers should walk worthy of the heavenly call is that it gives hope of eternal glory.

The Greek word for *glory* is #1391 *dóksa*. (from *dokeō*, 'exercising personal opinion which determines value') - *glory*. 1391 /*dóksa* ('glory') corresponds to the OT word, *kabo* (OT 3519, 'to be heavy'). Both terms convey God's infinite, intrinsic worth (substance, essence).

[1391 (*dóksa*) literally means “what evokes good opinion, i.e. that something has inherent, intrinsic worth” (J. Thayer).]

At first glance, the definition of *glory* might not arouse a person’s attention, but when we realize that a man in his fallen condition has no intrinsic value or worth, or any actual glory, then the word takes on a unique meaning. This means that sinners who have fallen short of the glory of God have, in fact, lost any reason that God should think well of them. The stain of sin makes those who commit it unworthy of possessing any real heavenly value.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, Rom. 3:23

For all have sinned - This was the point which he had fully established in the discussion in these chapters.

Have come short - Greek, “Are deficient in regard to;” are lacking, etc. Here it means, that they had failed to obtain, or were destitute of.

The glory of God - The praise or approbation of God. They had sought to be justified, or approved, by God; but all had failed. Their works of the Law had not secured his approbation; and they were therefore under condemnation.

If a man falls short of God’s glory, he has no intrinsic value or worth before God. Just as Jesus said that the *flesh profiteth nothing*, before a holy and righteous God, those of the flesh are practically devoid of worth themselves.

Ultimately, for sinners to have standing or value in heaven, they must be cleansed of their sin, given a holy and new nature from God, and made partakers of Christ’s celestial body.

In short, they must be changed both by Christ’s Spirit and His power in order that they may be worthy of heaven and eternal union with God.

Ultimately, this is the purpose of Christ’s ministry, whereby through His power and cleansing blood, sinners can be made fit for heaven.

Colossians 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

Simply put, if a man is not made both righteous and holy through Jesus Christ, there is no hope of sharing eternity with God.

Heaven is for divine beings, and not those who possess as their only birth the carnal and sinful nature of Adam.

Thus, for sinners to be made fit for heaven and worthy of God, they must be transformed and made a new creature through spiritual regeneration.

II Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Ultimately, being born again and made a child of God through faith in God’s Son opens the door for heavenly glorification. Thus, spiritual adoption, whereby men are given the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ, prepares them for heavenly glory.

This teaches us that no man has any real or realistic hope of heaven, or the glory of it, who has not through the new birth been made a son of God through Christ.

Romans 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Rom. 8:17

One characteristic of the son is that he is his father's heir. So it is with the Christian. He, too, has an inheritance—an inheritance of glory which he will share with Christ. But he must not be surprised if, before sharing the glory, he also shares the sufferings.

Because of the transformative work of Jesus Christ, every child of God shall share in divine glory. Because God's adopted children have been given God's nature, it is legally fitting that spiritual inheritance should also be theirs.

Inheritance is a right because of relationship, and because Christians possess the same holy nature as Christ, they are promised to share eternally with God's only begotten Son.

Consider as well that just as there is no such thing as a partial Savior, there is also no such thing as a partial spiritual inheritance.

Benson Commentary, Rom. 8:17–18

heirs of God — Heirs of the heavenly inheritance, and by the redemption of their bodies, being made immortal like God, they shall enjoy that inheritance.

So great is the new birth, through which we are given God's divine nature, that possession of it speaks of sharing in God's immortality.

Spiritual sonship is therefore the foundation upon which immortality and glory rest.

I John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.