

## 1 Thessalonians 2:9-16 Answers Walk in a Manner Worthy of God

**Introduction:** The main application of this section, and indeed of the whole book, is that we should walk in a manner worthy of God's calling. The theme of the whole book could be: Walk Worthy. Today we'll begin to find out what that means.

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**\*\*\*\*What did the Thessalonians 1) remember and 2) witness (2:9-12)?** The Thessalonians remembered the fact that the apostles worked night and day to be self supporting and not a burden to anyone, 2:9. Further, they witnessed that the apostles' conduct had been holy and righteous and blameless, 2:10.

**1. (Remember) Why might Paul have wanted them to remember that he had been self supporting (2:9)?** *See ahead to 5:14 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12.*

- 1) It helps prove that Paul's motives were pure and above question. Paul was quite willing to work a secular job to finance his mission work. He clearly was not in it for financial gain. He did not use religion to exploit people. He did not ask for money from those to whom he was ministering.
- 2) Evidently some in Thessalonica were so certain of the Lord's soon return that they had quit working. One reason Paul may have pointed out his own example of hard work to subtly point out what obviously was a false application of eschatology. However, these lazy bones evidently did not take the hint, for in Paul's second letter he had to confront them head on and with firmness.

**2. (Witness) According to 2:10, both God and the Thessalonians were witnesses to the fact that they apostles' conduct had been holy and righteous and blameless. Why was this fact important?** Perhaps those persecuting the church were questioning the apostles' motives in an attempt to cause them to renounce their faith. It also demonstrates part of what it means to walk worthy (2:12).

**Back in 2:7 Paul wrote that they were like a nursing mother to the church (reread it). How did he describe their ministry in 2:11?** They were like a father with his children. An effective church leader will sometimes be nurturing like a mother and other times be firm like a father.

**What verbs in 2:12 did Paul use to describe their ministry activity?** The apostles exhorted, encouraged and charged the brethren.

**According to 2:12, what was the goal of all this exhortation, encouragement and charging?** The goal was that they would walk in a manner worthy of God who had called them into his kingdom and glory.

**3. How are exhortation and encouragement different (2:12)?** The two are similar terms. Exhort is from *parakaleo*; *para* mean alongside (paramedic, paralegal, parachurch) and *kaleo* means to call. It referred to someone, such as a defense attorney, called to be alongside you to defend you against charges in a courtroom setting. His presence there would quite an encouragement. Thus it came to mean to strengthen by consolation, to comfort or to admonish. Encourage is from *paramutheomai*, to speak words of incentive or consolation.

**4. What does it mean to give a charge to someone (2:12)?** Charge is from *marturomai* (basis for martyr) and means **1) to bear witness or 2) to implore**. The NAS has imploring and the NIV urging. “Charged” has a note of severity, discipline; it is a virile, robust, firm, masculine, fatherly word (*Thru The Bible Radio*, p. 178).

**5. What does it mean to walk in a manner worthy of God (2:12)?** See 2:10, 4:3, 9-12. Like the missionaries had done, it means we conduct our lives in a way that is holy and righteous and blameless, 2:10. We are to ever keep in focus that God has called us into His own kingdom and glory.

**Application:** *Do we walk in a manner worthy of God’s call? In the way we do business? In the way we train our children? In using our free time? In the things we do with our friends? In the diligence of our studies? In our dating relationships? In our giving to the Lord’s work?*

**What did Paul mean when he made reference to God’s kingdom (2:12)?** Jesus often referred to God’s kingdom not as a place but as the active rule of God, a present reality to be realized more fully in the future. In contrast, Paul rarely wrote of God’s kingdom and when he did it usually was with reference to a place men will inherit in the future (Ernest Best, p. 108).

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**\*\*\*6. How had the church in Thessalonica imitated the churches in Judea (2:14)?** Compare 1:6-7. Most churches, especially new ones, have an interest in the practice of the early church. In fact, the new church in Thessalonica imitated (2:14) the even earlier churches of Judea. While it is a blessing to imitate the early church’s love and devotion, one area of imitation is not so pleasant: receiving God’s word with joy despite being persecuted. It was specifically in the area of suffering that the Thessalonians had imitated the churches of Judea. As we read this we must ask ourselves, *How committed are we to imitating the early church?*

**What about the Thessalonians caused the apostles to thank God constantly (2:13)?** Compare 1:4-5a. They thanked God that the Thessalonians had accepted the message of the apostles for what it really was – the word of God. Church leaders really appreciate this in people after dealing with so many people who don’t accept it as the word of God. It is so refreshing!

**7. Those who don't want to live by the Bible often claim, "The Bible was written by men" (and therefore inaccurate) or that much of it is "just Paul's opinion". What can we learn from 2:13 about the authority of the apostles' words?** Compare 2:4 and John 13:20. God approved the apostles and entrusted them with the Gospel. The words they taught the churches were in reality the words of God. Sometimes their words were delivered verbally. Other times their words were recorded in letters like this one.

**Based on 2:13, in what category of people is the word of God at work?** It is at work in believers. This implies that those who claim to be believers but reject the word of God are not actually believers, for the word of God to them is merely the word of man.

ESV **John 13:20** Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

**Paul wrote that the Judean Jews displeased God. According to 2:15, what had the Judean Jews done to displease God?** They **1)** caused the Judean church to suffer, **2)** killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, **3)** drove the apostles out and **4)** opposed all mankind.

**8. How had the Jews caused the Judean church to suffer (2:15)?** See Acts 4:21, 8:1, 9:1-2. They arrested and threatened the apostles for preaching the Gospel, stoned Stephen to death and persecuted the church so severely that the church of Jerusalem was scattered through the surrounding regions.

**9. Why did the Judean Jews kill the Lord Jesus (their own Messiah, 2:15)?** See John 8:42-44, 10:24-26, Revelation 2:9, 3:9. They belonged to physical Israel, but not spiritual Israel. Jesus said they did not believe in Him because the devil was their true father, not the God of the Israel. Rejecting the God of Abraham, they believed lies.

ESV **John 8:42-45** Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.

ESV **Romans 2:28-29** . . . no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter . . .

ESV **Revelation 2:9** I know . . . the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

ESV **Revelation 3:9** . . . the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie . . .

**10. Why did Paul mention that the Jews had also killed the prophets (2:15)?** See *Matthew 23:29-31, Acts 7:52-53*. Both Jesus and the early evangelists pointed out that those who killed Jesus were the spiritual descendants of those who had earlier killed the prophets of old.

ESV **Matthew 23:29-31** Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, saying, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

ESV **Acts 7:52-53** Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.

**11. What incident did Paul refer to when he wrote that the Jews “drove us out” (2:15)?** See *Acts 17:5-10*. This is evidently a reference to the fact that the Jews of Thessalonica had driven Paul, Silvanus and Timothy out of Thessalonica.

**12. How does 2:16 explain what Paul mean when he wrote that the Jews “oppose all mankind” (2:15)?** The unbelieving Jews opposed all mankind in the sense they did all within their power to hinder the apostles from preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles (*ethnos*). This opposition involved throwing the evangelists out of the synagogue, falsely bringing legal charges against them and manipulating the local populace to riot against them. They even followed them from city to city as part of a sinister counter-reformation.

**Perspective:** Today we think of Jews as a down-trodden and persecuted people group. However, when Paul wrote this Judaism had legal status and protection under Roman law. It was the Jews themselves who were doing the persecuting. In most of the New Testament, persecution in the early church came not from the Roman government, but from the Jews (throughout the Roman Empire).

**13. What judgment did Paul pronounce on the Jews of his day in 2:16?** Compare *Genesis 15:16*. Paul judged that by their actions they were filling up the measure of their sins and bringing God's wrath upon them. This is similar to the reason given Abraham for his descendants waiting 400 years to enter the Promised Land:

ESV **Genesis 15:16** . . . they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

**14. What wrath came upon the Jews at last (2:16)?** See *Luke 21:5-6, 20-24, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12*.

1) Paul wrote this around A.D. 50. God's wrath came upon the Jews of Judea in A.D. 70. The unbelieving Jews of Judea finally revolted against the Roman occupation. God empowered the Roman army to invade and defeat Judea, culminating with the destruction of Jerusalem. In addition, Jews throughout the Roman Empire were suppressed, freeing the church from Jewish persecution.

ESV **Luke 21:5-6** . . . while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, "As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

ESV **Luke 21:20-24** . . . when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near . . . for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written . . . there will be great distress upon the earth (land) and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

2) This could also be a reference to Jesus' second appearing, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12.

**Technical Note:** In English, Paul's statement about God's wrath is written in the present tense ("has come"). The Greek tense here is aorist, a default tense which generally indicates no sense of time or type of action at all. The "a" in aorist means "not" and "orist" is basis for our word horizon; thus, no horizon. Its tense is neither past, present nor future. It is nondescript. We don't have its equivalent in English. Here the aorist is used in the indicative, which does tend to denote past tense. The point is probably the certainty of God's wrath, not its timing. Paul did write the timing of the wrath would be "at last" (*teleos*, which can mean at last, the end of the age or eternally).

**Anti-Semitism:** God's judgment rightly fell on the generation of Jews that rejected and killed Jehovah in human form (Jesus). However, it would be wrong to cite the sins of people living 2,000 years ago to justify anti-Semitic prejudice today. Unbelieving Jews today are no more responsible for killing Jesus than are unbelieving Hindus.

### So What?

15. **If we are really committed to imitating the early church, will that mean for us? It will mean receiving the word of God with joy despite persecution.**
16. **What does it mean to walk worthy of God's calling?**
17. **Based on 2:13-16, what fate awaits those who oppose the Gospel? See also 2 Thessalonians 1:59.**

\*\*\*\* = ask this question before reading the text aloud. This is put people's minds in gear and them something to look for as the text is read. It causes focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the ESV.

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