



1 Thessalonians

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...as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, 1 Thessalonians 2:11

Paul is continuing the thought of the previous verse which started with, "You *are* witnesses, and God *also*..." From there, he has been explaining how his conduct, along with those with him, was when they arrived at Thessalonica. And so continuing, he says, "as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you."

Here the beginning word "as" is emphatic. It is an adverb which indicates "just as," or "even so." Further, he now goes from the plural address when speaking to the whole, to speaking to each individual by saying "every one of you." Not a single person is passed over, and so each person individually could receive this letter as his own. Each one of them was instructed to remember how he was personally exhorted, comforted, and charged.

The church is a group of people, and so certain things are done collectively in it, but it is a group of individuals, and so there should be an attention given to each member as well. Paul not only did this when in person, but he is continuing that pattern in his letter to them. It is a beautiful touch from the Apostle's heart. So much so that he tells them his care for each was given "as a father *does* his own children."

He changes the metaphor here from the nursing mother of verse 7 to a caring father. Paul treated the church as a family, and he treated each person within the church as an individual family member who should be given special attention.

Again, he could not have written this to them unless it was true. If it were not so, they would have simply laughed at the letter and tossed it in the fire. But it was received, it was treasured, and it has been passed down to us as a reminder of the care given by Paul, and those with him, towards the church at Thessalonica.

τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων

Life application: Paul's use of the family metaphors in this epistle should remind each of us that the church we attend is, in fact, like a family. As this is so, we should attempt to treat the other members of this family in that manner. Let us carry one another's burdens, and let us treat them with respect and care.

...that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

1 Thessalonians 2:12

This verse reads differently than Galatians 1:6 –

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel...”

As you can see, that is in the past tense – “who called you.” For this reason, the translators of some versions, such as the KJV, erringly changed this verse in 1 Thessalonians to “hath called.” They probably did this to clear up a seeming theological inconsistency, but that results in an incorrect translation. The verb here is a present participle, active. It should read “calls” or “is calling.” There is not any inconsistency. Paul was telling the Galatians that they had been called into the grace of Christ, and they stood in that grace which they were then turning away from.

Here in 1 Thessalonians, he is telling the congregation that though they have been called into God's grace, they are still here in this life and must live it out until that grace is fully realized in their being gathered together to Him. Thus, they needed to (right now and continually) “walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” As you can see, there is no contradiction. There is the calling which is already granted, but it is not yet actualized. It is sad that translators will often change what the literal reading is because of misunderstandings about theology. Translators are to translate, not presuppose and then translate.

The purpose of this life in Christ is not merely to be called and then sit around waiting for Jesus to swoop us up and out of here, but to work out our calling daily. We are to tell others about Christ, and do that in a spirit of grace and in a manner worthy of God. He has called; we have received; now we need to act in accord with that. Someday we will enter into his kingdom and glory, and so let us not now act in a manner which will bring regret, but in a manner which will show that we are truly thankful for having been called out of darkness and into His marvelous light.

Life application: Reading several translations of the Bible is always wise. The translators of the King James Version knew this and said as much in their preface remarks. They say that a

“variety of Translations is profitable for the finding out of the sense of Scriptures.” Let us be wise and discerning, and let us not get captivated by one, fallible, translation of Scripture.

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. 1 Thessalonians 2:13

The words “For this reason” refer to the godly instruction and careful labors that Paul and those with him exerted in their evangelism of those in Thessalonica. It is “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing.” It is evident, even from these words, that their labors were not in vain. Instead they were a source of rejoicing. As he says, “because when you received the word of God which you heard from us.”

Here, the Greek reads in a different order, more accurately saying something like, “when you received the word *of your* hearing from us, even the word of God.” The reception of the word into the ear is directly equated with the word of God. In other words, they heard the word of God, and they understood it to be the word of God. This then is explained by the next words, “you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men.” When the Thessalonians heard the word, it was as reasonable and obvious a presentation of the word of God as it could be. In hearing the gospel, it made such sense that it was, without a doubt, not something men had conjured up. Rather, Paul notes, “but as it is in truth, the word of God.”

It was understood, based on the conduct and labors of Paul and his associates, that they were transmitting a truthful message. The two things – the efforts of the evangelists, and the soundness of the message – made it perfectly clear that it was the word of God and not of men which they had been presented. It is this message as Paul says, “which also effectively works in you who believe.” The words “effectively works” are referring to the word, not to God. They are in the middle voice, and as is the case when used by both Paul and James, this middle voice is only of things. In this case, the thing is the word of God.

The word had effectively worked in Paul and his associates, and once it was heard and received by the believers in Thessalonica, it then effectively worked in them as well. This will be further explained by Paul in the coming verses. The word will be shown to have changed them into new people with a new direction. Instead of being enemies of God, they had become people pleasing to Him.

Life application: Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. People’s conduct will never be directed to that which is pleasing to God without them being presented the gospel message. There are people all over who do “good stuff,” but without a conversion to Christ, the wall of enmity remains. Only in Christ is that removed. The church age seems to be ending.

The world is taking a terrible path into utter wickedness, and many will be eternally separated from God unless they hear and receive the message of Christ Jesus. Speak and share while there is time!

For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans, 1 Thessalonians 2:14

Paul just spoke of the favorable reception of the gospel message by those in Thessalonica, receiving it as the word of God. In that reception, they then spiritually joined together with the church in a sobering way. He explains this beginning with, "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus." Paul is showing that there is a spiritual bond which has arisen between these Gentiles and those Jews who first received the gospel in Judea and who established churches there.

However, he is careful to note that they are being compared to the churches in Judea which are "in Christ Jesus." The word "church" in Greek is *ekklésia*. It simply means an assembly or a congregation. To a Greek who had never heard of Jesus, it wouldn't carry the meaning of "church" at all. And so for Paul to say *ekklésia*," but to not include the term "in Christ Jesus," could mean pretty much any assembly in Judea, even a synagogue.

He is specific with his words to ensure that those in Thessalonica understand that their actions imitate the actions of the Christian churches of Judea. He then next explains what that imitation is by saying, "For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans."

The book of Acts precisely details the ill treatment of the Jews who received Christ Jesus. They were made to suffer in various ways because of this newly found faith. Even Paul persecuted the churches, probably more than anyone else. It is this persecution by one's own countrymen that Paul highlights as a bond of imitation between the church in Thessalonica and that in Judea.

The word he uses to describe the countrymen of those in Thessalonica is *sumphuletés*. It is a word used only this once in the Bible, and it indicates "of the same tribe." Those who were close and of the same stock persecuted them in the same manner as the Jews who followed Christ were of the same stock as those by whom they were persecuted.

But there was an underlying truth which is often seen in the book of Acts. It was originally the Jews of the surrounding areas who spurred the Gentiles on to persecuting their own countrymen. In other words, the persecution normally originally stemmed from the Jews

because of their hatred of the message of Christ. They would rile up the Gentiles to persecute their own countrymen, just as they themselves did to their own countrymen in Judea.

Life application: It is often the case that the most vehement resistance which Christians face, either directly or indirectly, comes from one's own closest relatives. If you are facing this type of hatred, or even persecution, remember that it has been going on since the beginning of the church. Pray for them, don't be contentious with them, and know that you are in the company of 2000 years worth of saints who have done likewise. It is to be an expected part of the life of faithful believers in Christ Jesus.