

Caring and Sharing

1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

Online Sermon:

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When we follow Christ's command to go and make disciples of all nations, we do so with the glorious hope that our planting seeds of righteousness might lead to a great harvest of salvation of the lost! With many planks of sin within our own



eyes, like sheep we go amongst the wolves with the courage of knowing that “greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world!” This truth, however, does not

free our conscience to proclaim the Good News in any manner we deem fit! Like Paul we pray to the Good Shepherd that in the face of opposition we might stand firm in our faith. May our intentions be pure, centered on heralding His righteousness to find favor in His sight rather than seeking approval from those we seek to show the way, truth, and life. Now that we have explored some of the things to avoid in proclaiming the Good News let us now focus on what Paul says are the right ways to

make disciples of all nations. Apostle Paul was only in Thessalonica for between three and four weeks and yet a church was established that flourished and grew exponentially! These remarkable outcomes inspire us to follow Paul's lead, not to merely increase attendance or boast of our spiritual prowess, but with indescribable joy to witness the fruitful yield of our efforts in this challenging and diverse generation, all for the glory of His name! Today's sermon going to focus on four things believers can do to convince the people of our age to give up their many gods and bow their knees to the Creator and sustainer of all life. Let's turn in our Bibles to 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 and read it over a few times.

Witnessing by Caring and Sharing

To be effective in evangelism one must first be willing to care for others and share one's life with them! When Paul delivered the Gospel, his intentions were pure; he refrained from using flattery or deceit to manipulate others or gain financial benefit. Rather than seeking praise or personal gain, he assumed the roles of both an innocent infant and a nurturing mother among them. “Philo, the important Jewish writer, said this: “It is impossible for the greatest liar to invent a charge against infants”—same word that Paul uses—“as they are wholly

innocent.”¹ In essence, Paul was urging the Thessalonians to regard him as an innocent infant, devoid of the cunning tactics employed by Cynic philosophers.² Moving to his second



metaphor Paul says his care for the Thessalonians was like a nursing mother for her children (2:8). Unlike the Cynics who relied on flattery to deceive others,³ Paul states his love for the

Thessalonians was sincere and comparable to that of a mother looking into the eyes of her baby with deep affection!⁴ With incredible gentleness and a genuine desire to imitate the humility of Christ who freely emptied Himself to be born, live, and atone for our sins (Philippians 2:6-7),⁵ Paul looked upon the

unsaved not with condemnation but with a shared desire with God the Father that none might be lost (2 Peter 3:9). Like a mother sacrificing much to meet the needs of her child, Paul demonstrated his “selfless love”⁶ for them by working tirelessly to show them how desperately they needed the Great Physician to be born again and receive eternal life! Rather than asserting his authority over the Thessalonians (Luke 22:25-27), Paul prioritized their well-being, empathizing with their sorrows, celebrating their joys,⁷ and openly sharing his own deepest struggles and triumphs in his journey following Christ Jesus, whom he acknowledged as his Lord.⁸ Obviously Paul believed the “greatest impact one can have on young or needy believers is to love them in Christ”.⁹

Reflection. When we meet people who are clearly living their lives in opposition to God’s word it is easy to condemn them in their sins! While it’s important not to dilute the truth about the destination of hell for those on the broad path, we must also not overlook the crucial message of God’s love and grace demonstrated through sending His only Son, Jesus, to reconcile

¹ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, [NT350 Book Study: 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Logos Mobile Education (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

² Jeffrey A. D. Weima, [NT350 Book Study: 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Logos Mobile Education (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

³ Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 414.

⁴ Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 415.

⁵ Grant R. Osborne, [1 & 2 Thessalonians: Verse by Verse](#), ed. Elliot Ritzema and Danielle Thevenaz, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 44.

⁶ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, [NT350 Book Study: 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Logos Mobile Education (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

⁷ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, [NT350 Book Study: 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Logos Mobile Education (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

⁸ Grant R. Osborne, [1 & 2 Thessalonians: Verse by Verse](#), ed. Elliot Ritzema and Danielle Thevenaz, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 44–45.

⁹ Douglas Mangum, ed., [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#), Lexham Context Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 1 Th 2:7–12.

humanity to Himself by atoning for their sins. So, with gentleness and great humility that God saved wretches like us, let us speak the Good News boldly and truthfully but also gently and with the same self-sacrificial love Christ demonstrated on the cross!

Witnessing by our Labor

To be effective in evangelism one must also be willing to sacrifice one's time for the sake of others. Knowing that he was "entrusted with a message of divine, not human origin,"¹⁰ had a profound influence on how Paul presented the Gospel message! Paul "worked day and night" to ensure that no one could question his motives but also so that he might provide the Thessalonians an example of sacrificial love (2 Thessalonians 3:9).¹¹ While as an apostle Paul had the right to demand "food, lodging, and pay"¹² he chose to earn his living through leatherworking, a vocation he likely learned from his father.¹³ Even though the Philippians had sent him offerings for his daily

living expenses (Philippians 4:15-16) these funds were not "adequate to permit Paul and his companions to devote themselves entirely to evangelism."¹⁴ Between manual labor and evangelism it is no wonder that Paul in his other letters talks



about going without sleep so that he might advance the Gospel message (2 Corinthians 11:27; 2 Timothy 1:3).¹⁵

Paul believed that maintaining self-sufficiency was crucial for upholding the integrity of his ministry in Thessalonica,¹⁶ while simultaneously viewing it as a reflection of Christ's humility, where prioritizing the interests of others took precedence. Even though "labor as an artisan was generally looked down upon in the Greek-speaking world,"¹⁷ and even though some members of the Thessalonian congregation were persons of means who could

¹⁰ Leon Morris, [1 and 2 Thessalonians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 13, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 59.

¹¹ Gordon D. Fee, [The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 77.

¹² Jay E. Adams, [Romans, Philippians, I Thessalonians, and II Thessalonians](#), The Christian Counselor's Commentary (Cordova, TN: Institute for Nouthetic Studies, 2020), 195.

¹³ Gene L. Green, [The Letters to the Thessalonians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos, 2002), 130.

¹⁴ Gene L. Green, [The Letters to the Thessalonians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos, 2002), 130.

¹⁵ Gary Steven Shogren, [1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 106.

¹⁶ Mark Howell et al., [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 33.

¹⁷ Gene L. Green, [The Letters to the Thessalonians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos, 2002), 130.

have fully paid for Paul's ministry (Acts 17:5, 7, 9),¹⁸ he chose to work tirelessly to set a good example of self-sacrifice for Christ, even though it meant "stepping down the social ladder."¹⁹ After all, how could Paul expect the Thessalonians to sacrifice their hearts and lives²⁰ in service to Christ as a "work of faith and labor of love" (1:3) if he in turn was unwilling to do so? Whether in plenty or need Paul wanted the Thessalonians to know that they could do all things through Christ who strengthens His own (Philippians 4:12-13)!

Reflection. Paul's decision to accept or decline funds from a church was contingent upon their needs rather than his own. For instance, he was open to receiving support from the Philippians, but he declined financial assistance from the Thessalonians out of concern that it could raise questions about his motives. When contemplating the ministry entrusted to you by God, do you prioritize the well-being of those receiving the message, or do you solely focus on your own interests? Are you committed to tirelessly advancing the Gospel, or have you allotted only a few minutes each day to serve your Lord, Savior, and King?

¹⁸ Gene L. Green, [The Letters to the Thessalonians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos, 2002), 131.

¹⁹ Gary Steven Shogren, [1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 106.

²⁰ Mark Howell et al., [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 33.

Witnessing Through Righteous Living

The third thing one must do to be effective in evangelism is to provide an example to others of what it means to live a holy, righteous, and blameless life. The Thessalonians faced allegations of both defying Caesar's decrees and persuading numerous individuals to forsake the Roman gods (1



Thessalonians 1:9; compare with 1 Peter 1:18).²¹ Furthermore, their leaders, namely Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, were accused of

resembling Cynic philosophers, characterized by flattery and greed. Needing two or more witnesses Paul calls up the Thessalonians and God Himself to testify that he and his colleagues "walked with God in such way that His name, His will, and His kingdom were priority (Matthew 6:9-10)."²² Paul openly admitted to advising believers to refrain from participating in the civic cults that revered Roman gods and the

²¹ Gene L. Green, [The Letters to the Thessalonians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos, 2002), 133.

²² Mark Howell et al., [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 34.

emperor. However, this did not demonstrate his malevolence; rather, it illustrated his commitment as a believer who had dedicated his allegiance solely to the Lord of all creation, who provided atonement for his sins.²³ Paul calls upon God to testify that he and his colleagues indeed lived their lives in a “manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ” (Philippians 1:27) by conforming both to “divine and human laws.”²⁴ “For one who believes that God’s wrath will fall on the deceitful (2 Thess 2:10), this is risky business, if he is not sure that he is telling the truth.”²⁵ God who could see “whatever was hidden to human eyes”²⁶ does not condemn Paul and his team because horizontally, in the eyes of people, and vertically, in the eyes of God; ²⁷ they were blameless not only in their intent but in their actions as well! Paul wasn't asserting his own sinlessness,²⁸ recognizing that only the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can make such a claim. Instead, he emphasized that through grace and confession, he and his team remained focused on the pioneer and perfecter of their faith (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Reflection. I wonder how many Christians today have lost sight of the righteous boundaries the Lord has set for their lives. Although saying "take my life and let it be" is challenging, the greater difficulty lies in implementing Christ's words into both

our thoughts and actions. Living for Jesus requires submission to His will that does not come easy to those living in a culture that glorifies self-righteousness! Knowing that the world will not accept God’s ways which are higher than our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9), can tempt us to conform to the ways of the majority to gain acceptance from them. Do you possess the same boldness as the Apostle Paul, inviting the Lord each day to assess and reshape your thoughts and actions to align with His righteousness, as described in Romans 12:1-2? If you have no boundaries, then who is your master? Think about it!

Witnessing by Encouragement

The final thing one must do to be effective in evangelism is to encourage others to be holy as God is holy. After affirming his innocence like a baby to the Thessalonians, likening himself to a caring mother, Paul now shifts his metaphor, portraying his

²³ Craig S. Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 1 Th 2:12.

²⁴ Gene L. Green, [The Letters to the Thessalonians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos, 2002), 133.

²⁵ Gary Steven Shogren, [1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 107.

²⁶ Rober L. Thomas, “[1 Thessalonians](#),” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 255.

²⁷ Gary Steven Shogren, [1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 107.

²⁸ Mark Howell et al., [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 34.

relationship with them as that of a nurturing father figure.²⁹ In Paul's day after the age of five the fathers were responsible to take great pains to instruct their children, especially in regard to living in accordance with the laws of the Torah.³⁰ Paul tells the Thessalonians that he became their surrogate "father in Christ



Jesus through the gospel."³¹ Though Paul as an apostle had authority over them (2:6) he did not lord his position over them³² but as a loving father his goal was to show them how to imitate

Christ so that they might be holy, righteous, and blameless. The Thessalonians were to become imitators of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (2:7) but only to the extent that these devote men of God were living their lives worthy of the Gospel message. Paul urges them to live as individuals who recognize that this world is temporary and that their true home is elsewhere. He emphasizes that through Christ's atonement, they have been

saved from God's wrath³³ and welcomed as His children into His eternal kingdom, thus owing their very lives to Him. "God does not have one standard for us on earth and another standard for those in heaven. His standard is for those who belong to Him to walk in holiness. "So, you must be holy because I am holy," declares the Lord (Lev 11:45; cf. 1 Pet 1:15–16)."³⁴ While it may appear futile to exhort "sinners saved by grace through faith" (Ephesians 2:8-9) to live in a manner worthy of God, this is not the case for those who have been elected and reborn through water and the Spirit (John 3:5). Believers have been endowed with the ability to fulfill their calling to be "holy (2:10, 4:7), sanctified (4:3), and pleasing to God (4:1)."³⁵

Reflection. Not all of us have had good fathers so this metaphor might hit a nerve. While Paul sees himself as a fatherly figure to the Thessalonians he only does so with the intent of instructing and showing them how to live holy lives. Our Father who art in heaven loves us dearly! He created us in His image for the express purpose of us coming to know and worship Him! While He is unquestionably the sovereign judge of the living and the dead, He is also filled with grace and mercy; always ready to adopt His own who believes in His Son's atoning

²⁹ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *NT350 Book Study: 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Logos Mobile Education (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

³⁰ Daniel M. Gurtner, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Buebeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 618.

³¹ F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, vol. 45, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1982), 36.

³² Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *NT350 Book Study: 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Logos Mobile Education (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

³³ Gary Steven Shogren, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 108.

³⁴ Mark Howell et al., *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 36.

³⁵ Grant R. Osborne, *1 & 2 Thessalonians: Verse by Verse*, ed. Elliot Ritzema and Danielle Thevenaz, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 49.

sacrifice on the cross. Are you saved? Do you know Him as your Lord, Savior, and King? If you do, then you live your lives worthy of the Gospel while you wait for the glorious day when the Lord returns! If you are not saved, then God's wrath awaits you! I beg you on Christ's behalf be reconciled unto God before it is too late!

Conclusion

As born-again believers we are all called to give reasons why we have hope in the Lord! As we look out upon the world that seems to care far too much for themselves and too little for others, one that has many gods but allegiance to none, and one that is willing to persecute those who believe there is but one Way, Truth, and Life; we can't help but feel like sheep sent amongst the wolves. To make matters worse we often sin and fall short of God's glory and as a result feel like Moses is talking to us when he says, "they are a stiff-necked people" (Exodus 32:9) and feel like Apostle Peter is warning us to no longer live like the pagans (1 Peter 4:3). Is it possible for our light to be seen amongst this crooked generation when we ourselves are sinners saved by grace through faith? Thankfully the answer is YES. We are ambassadors of Christ whom by the Spirit of God Himself has eternally sealed to do more than we could ever ask or imagine. We are like sheep but at the same time He who lives in us is more than capable of taking the seeds of righteousness we plant in others and despite being flawed

image-bearers our God-given words can pierce the most obstinate, stony heart, molding and reshaping it back into the glorious image in which it was formed. Therefore, we endeavor to live lives characterized by holiness, faithfully proclaiming the message of reconciliation through Christ. With the confident assurance that the same grace that rescued us from depravity can extend to others, we persist in sharing the hope that saved us, trusting in the redemptive work of the One who can transform even the most hardened souls.