

1 Thessalonians 2

2:10-20

Lesson 2b

“You Are Witnesses, And So Is God”

1TH 2:10 You are [our] witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly [holy, righteously, unworldly] and uprightly and blamelessly [without reproach or guilt] we behaved toward you believers [Christians];

1. “You are witnesses, and so is God” of our conduct.
 - a. They knew full well how Paul and the others with Paul behaved themselves at Thessalonica.
 - b. God certainly knew, and could testify of their pure and unselfish behavior among these brethren.
 - c. There could be no higher witness than God to their faithfulness.
2. “how devoutly [holy, righteously, unworldly] and uprightly [justly] and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers”
 - a. Their conduct had been above reproach, that is, they had not given any occasion for charges to be truthfully made against them, such as, they came to mislead and exploit the people.
 - b. This does not mean they were absolutely sinless.
 - 1) No one is sinless. (Rom. 3:10, 23; 1 Jn. 1:8, 10).
 - 2) They were very careful how they conducted themselves at Thessalonica and this was always their practice, way of life in every place.
 - c. Elders must be “above reproach” or “blameless,” (1 Tim. 3:7), but this does not mean sinless.
 - 1) No elder is sinless - not even close. See instructions about elders who sin. (1 Tim. 5:19, 20).
 - 2) Those demanding sinless elders will be greatly disappointed and will not have elders.
2. Only Jesus was sinless. (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22).
3. Their excellent conduct among believers does not imply their behavior was improper towards unbelievers.
4. It is vital that all Christians live godly lives before believers and unbelievers alike to be seen as lights in the world. (Phil. 2:15; Matt. 5:14-16).

1TH 2:11 just as you know how we were [personally] exhorting and encouraging and imploring [strongly urging] each one of you as a father would [treat, deal with] his own children,

1. “just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you”
 - a. They knew and could not deny the great and diligent effort Paul and the others had made to exhort and encourage them.

- b. The words “each one” emphasizes there was no partiality on the part of Paul and the other co-workers.
2. They had acted “as a father would [treat, deal with] his own children”
- a. A loving father seeks the best for his children, and constantly seeks to exhort, encourage and implore them to do good and be successful.
 - b. A good father obeys the commands Paul gave them. (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21).

EPH 6:4 And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

COL 3:21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart.

- c. Paul constantly sought the welfare of these Christians for whom he had deep and loving concern.
- d. Earlier their gentleness towards these brethren was compared to a nursing mother and her child. (1 Thess. 2:7).

1TH 2:12 so that you may walk [live] in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

- 1. “so that you may walk [live] in a manner worthy of the God.”
 - a. Living “in a manner worthy of God” was the purpose of “exhorting and encouraging and imploring.
 - b. They instructed them on how to exactly please God by preaching God’s word to them - not opinions, traditions, fables, etc.
 - c. They were to obey and honor God. (Matt. 7:21; Jn. 14:15).
 - d. We live “in a manner worthy of God” by surrendering ourselves to God’s will.
 - e. The Christian’s life is frequently described as a “walk” by Paul. (Rom. 8:4; 13:13; 1 Cor. 7:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 4:17; 5:15; Col. 4:5).
 - f. “Worthy” did not mean they could ever be worthy of [earn] God’s grace. (Rom. 11:6; Eph. 2:8, 9).

Rom 11:6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God;
Eph 2:9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- 2. “who calls you into His own kingdom and glory” - “calls” is translated from a present participle indicating a continuous calling of God.
 - a. They had been called out of the kingdom of darkness and shame into the glorious kingdom of God. (Col. 1:13). There was not a time lapse when they were in no kingdom, but had been delivered “from the domain [kingdom] of darkness into the “the kingdom of His beloved Son” upon conversion as the brethren at Colossae.

COL 1:13 For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

- b. Being a part of God’s kingdom was not future, but entrance into the kingdom came at the new birth. (Jn. 3:3, 5).
- c. They were, as citizens of the kingdom, submitting to Jesus, the King of kings who was reigning at the right hand of God. (Acts 2:32-36; Heb. 1:3).

Acts 2:32 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

Acts 2:33 "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

Acts 2:34 "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

Acts 2:35 UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.'"

Acts 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified."

Heb 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

- d. Believers are constantly receiving the unshakeable kingdom [the reign of God] in their hearts. (Heb. 12:28).

Heb 12:28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

- e. They were suffering for the sake of the kingdom. (2 Thess. 1:5).
 - f. As the brethren at Colossae, they were “fellow workers for the kingdom of God.” (Col. 4:11).
3. Christians are now in God’s kingdom when they receive the reign of God into their hearts, but one day they will have entrance “into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 1:11).

2 Pet. 1:11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

- a. Jesus, at His coming, will hand over those in His earthly kingdom [the church] to God. (1 Cor. 15:24).

1 Cor. 15:24 then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

- b. “Heaven” is “the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

- c. He is speaking of “His heavenly kingdom.” (2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 11:16).

2 Tim. 4:18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Heb. 11:16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

- d. Those who enter God’s kingdom and let Jesus rule their hearts will one day inherit “the heavenly” or “eternal kingdom.” (Jas. 2:5; 1 Cor. 6:9; 15:50; Eph. 5:5; Gal. 5:21).

Paul Repeats His Thanksgiving For Their Conversion Under Persecution

2:13-16

1TH 2:13 And for this reason [this is why] we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the [true] word of God, which also performs its [effective] work in you who believe.

1. "And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word [gospel] of God's message"
 - a. They were convinced Paul, Timothy, Silas spoke the words of God and received God's saving message.
 - b. Paul was very thankful for the way they were received and for their acceptance of "God's message [the gospel]."
2. "you accepted it not as the word of men" - These men recognized "the gospel" as God's word.
 - a. Some would reject the message saying it was from men, but they were sincere and received it into their hearts as the word of God.
 - b. God's word must be meekly received from the heart. (Jas. 1:22).

James 1:22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

3. "but for what it [the gospel] really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe"
 - a. They were not fooled, but had readily heard "the word of God."
 - b. "The word" had performed "its work" in them by transforming their lives.

1TH 2:14 For you, brethren [brothers and sisters], became imitators of the churches [assemblies] of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews,

1. "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea"
 - a. They had been imitators of Paul, Silas and Timothy and had themselves become examples to others. (1 Thess. 1:6,7).
 - b. They had also followed the example of God's churches "in Judea." (Acts 2:1-4).
 - 1) This has primary reference to their faithfulness and suffering for the sake of Christ.
 - 2) From this epistle it is certainly implied they were imitating the Judean churches in other ways.
 - 3) The Jerusalem church was a splendid example for them and for Christians in all ages. (Acts. 2:42).

Acts 2:42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

- c. They were manifesting the same love and loyalty for God and His word as the Judean Christians.
2. "for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews"

- a. The Judean churches suffered persecution “from the Jews.” Read Acts 9:1, 13; Gal. 1:13 and Acts 7, 8 9, etc.
- b. These Christians also suffered “at the hands of” their “own countrymen.”
- c. This came from Jews and Gentiles, but Paul is here primarily referring to the persecution of the Jews.
- d. Gentiles also frequently persecuted Christians out of jealousy and hatred.

1TH 2:15 who [the Jews] both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men,

1. “who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out”
 - a. The Jews killed “the prophets” and “the Lord Jesus” and most often persecuted the apostles and other believers. (Matt. 23:37; Acts 7:51,52).

Matt. 23:37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.

Acts 7:51 "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.

Acts 7:52 "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become;

- b. Peter charged the Jews with killing Jesus. (Acts 2:23).

Acts 2:23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you [Jews] nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men [Gentiles] and put Him to death.

2. “They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men”
 - a. Some thought they were pleasing God by these hostile actions, but nothing could be farther from the truth.
 - b. Paul once had that frame of mind. (Acts 8:3; 9:1-2; 22:4; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13, 23).

1TH 2:16 hindering [forbidding] us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.

- **They were always piling up their sins to the limit.**
- **“Utmost” is from the Greek “eis telos” and literally means “to or unto end/”**

1. “hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved” - They did not want Gentiles to be saved, and did some horrible things in their attempt to stop Gentiles from being saved.
 - a. Jesus charged the Pharisees with rejecting the kingdom, and keeping others outside the kingdom. (Matt. 23:13).

Matt. 23:13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

- b. Some, throughout the ages, have hindered the preaching of the gospel to certain races and classes of people.
 - c. They have refused to teach certain people, and have hindered or stopped others from preaching to them.
 - d. This is still practiced today by those who do not have a love for all and believe salvation is for them alone.
2. “with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins” - NIV “In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit.”
- a. God was allowing their sins to accumulate, but this made them ripe for vengeance.
 - b. This was fulfilled in part by the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
 - c. It most likely also has an eschatological meaning pointing to the punishment of the wicked at the end of time.
3. “But wrath has come upon them to the utmost” - KJV and ASV have “uttermost.”
- a. God’s wrath had come upon them in this world and would come upon them even more in the world to come.
 - b. “to the utmost” is literally “to [the] end.” This seems to mean fully and completely.
 - c. The idea may be “come upon them at last.” NIV, ESV
 - d. It could also have the idea that the full measure of God’s wrath was about to come upon them, that is, “in the fullest degree.” They would be punished by God and rejected by God.

Paul’s Interest In Thessalonica Believers

1TH 2:17 But we, brethren [brothers and sisters], having been bereft of [separated or torn away from] you for a short while-- in person, not in spirit-- were all the more eager with great desire to see your face [that is face to face].

- 1. “ But we, brethren, having been bereft of you for a short while-- in person, not in spirit--“ - They were not with them bodily, but they were “in spirit.” They were constantly in their thoughts and prayers.
- 2. “were all the more eager with great desire to see your face” - They longed to have personal fellowship with them again.

1TH 2:18 For we wanted [wished] to come to you-- I, Paul, more than once-- and yet Satan thwarted [hindered, impeded] us.

- 1. “For we wanted to come to you-- I, Paul, more than once” - They frequently wanted to visit them. but had been hindered.
- 2. “and yet Satan thwarted us” - Satan working through evil men had thwarted their efforts.
- 3. Satan constantly seeks to thwart everything good in our personal lives and in the church.

4. Here are some ways Satan hinders good things.

Discourages prayer	Tells us to wait and do it later.	Causes us to be focused only on ourselves
Tells us we are not good enough to be successful.	Creates jealousy among us.	Convinces us we cannot make a difference.
Makes us afraid of failure.	Causes division and leads us to bite and devour one another.	Uses the criticism of others to discourage us.
Stirs evil men against us.	Leads us to walk by sight and not by faith.	Makes us men pleasers rather than God pleasers.
Makes us content to be lukewarm	Convinces us we cannot do it or it will not do any good.	Encourages us to squelch our good motives.
We tried that and failed.	It is cost prohibitive	No one is interested.

1TH 2:19 For who is our hope or joy or crown [wreath] of exultation [boasting]? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?

- The idea here is that these Christians filled Paul and his co-workers with joy and made them happy.
- Paul spoke similar words to the church at Philippi. (Phil. 4:1).

Phil. 4:1 Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, **my joy and crown**, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

1. "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation?" - He immediately answers his own question.
2. "Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?"
 - a. Paul and his co-workers were so proud of this church.
 - b. They would be a great source of happiness and joy at the coming of Christ.
3. Some might have believed in the immediate or near coming of Christ, but no one including the apostles and the Lord knew the time of His coming. (Matt. 24:36).

Matt. 24:36 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

1TH 2:20 For you are our glory and joy - Paul makes it clear so there could be no doubt that these believers in this church were his "glory and joy."

1. He was so proud of these faithful believers in Thessalonica and he wanted them to know this.
2. **Praise is vital to a church as well correction.**

