

*...just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.*

Paul continues to emphasize the true motives and purpose for coming to Thessalonica in light of the fact that there apparently were those who were seeking to discount the integrity of Paul and his colleagues, claiming that their motivation for coming was for personal gain. He therefore appeals to what was clearly demonstrated and known by the Thessalonians, namely, that along with Timothy and Silvanus, they exhibited true love and caring for the Thessalonian believers and the community in which they fellowshiped.

*...just as you know* (καθάπερ οἴδατε, *kathaper oidate*) – There was no need for Paul to give an exhaustive list of things that characterized their true motivation for ministering to the Thessalonian assembly, for their time with them had fully demonstrated their true motives and thus were well known by the community as a whole. One could wonder, then, why he was burdened at all to answer the false accusations against himself and his colleagues if such accusations were so obviously wrong. But here we see the wisdom of Paul, for even if the majority of the Thessalonian community fully recognized that the accusations were false, there is always the possibility that such accusations against leaders and teachers may be used of the enemy to foster questions and even divisions within the local assembly. We therefore see the wisdom Paul displays in our text, openly to confront the false accusations and to do so with the primary motivation of establishing the truth and thereby seeking to maintain and encourage unity within the believing community. For surely one of the primary tactics of the enemy is to foster division among the community of believers with the hope of diminishing their effectiveness and even disbanding the community altogether.

*... how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children* – In the Greek text, the word order is a bit different: the phrase “each one of you” (ἕνα ἕκαστον ὑμῶν) is put first in the clause, giving it emphasis. The point is that their ministry among the Thessalonian community was very much directed to each individual of the community and not merely to the leaders only. And this opening emphasis (“each one of you”) sets the stage to demonstrate what should be the perspective and motivation for all leaders and teachers in the local assembly of believers, namely, that each person who makes up the local community of believers should be strengthened, guided, taught, and encouraged to be true witnesses of God’s saving grace in Yeshua.

In the Greek text itself, the phrase “...each one of you as a father would his own children” is put next in the clause, followed by “*exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you...*”. The fact that Paul uses the metaphor of a father with his own children and puts it at the beginning of the sentence, once again gives it special emphasis. For previously he has used the example of a mother nursing her children to exemplify the tender care by which he and his colleagues ministered to the Thessalonian believers. Now, in our verse he compares himself to a father as one who instructs his children.

Paul likewise uses this same metaphor in his first epistle to the Corinthians.

For if you were to have countless tutors in Messiah, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Messiah Yeshua I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me. (1Cor 4:15–16)

In these texts, Paul gives a strong encouragement and exhortation to all who fill the role of leaders & teachers within the local assembly of believers. For though there is an obvious sense in which elders/pastors and deacons must view the entire community as requiring their leadership, care, guidance, and teaching, it is likewise important to recognize that there will always be a need to minister to individuals, and to do so with care, patience, and true concern, even as a father cares for his own children. Surely wisdom and integrity must prevail, but the emphasis we see exemplified in Paul is that of genuine caring for people, including encouraging, exhorting, and helping, even on an individual basis.

... *exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you* – The three participles used here should be seen as offering a collective emphasis rather than individual nuances or emphases. The first participle, “*exhorting*” (*παρακαλέω, parakaleō*), is a favorite of Paul, being found 54 times in the Pauline corpus, eight of which are in 1Thess.<sup>1</sup> It can carry the general sense of “*exhort, implore, appeal, and encourage,*” and in our context, most likely should be taken as “*implore*” or “*appeal.*” Having utilized the metaphor of a father, Paul urges or implores the Thessalonian believers to maintain a fervency for growing strong in the faith, caring for each other, and shining as lights even in a world where being persecuted for one’s faith could occur.

The second participle, “*encouraging*” (*παραμυθέομαι, paramutheomai*),

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1 1Thess. 2:12; 3:2, 7; 4:1, 10, 18; 5:11, 14.

is found one other time in 1Thess, in 5:14.

We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. (1Thess 5:14)

We find this same verb twice in the Gospel of John:

...and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother. (Jn 11:19)

Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. (Jn 11:31)

Its cognate noun, *παραμυθία* (*paramuthia*) is found in 1Cor 14:3, which also uses the noun form of *παρακαλέω*, *parakaleō*, “to exhort.”

But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. (1Cor 14:3)

Thus, the primary emphasis of this second participle is that of “encouraging” and “consoling.” Taking into consideration the same two words used in 1Cor 14:3, Gordan Fee notes regarding our text in 1Thess:

The second participle occurs only here and in 5:14 in the entire corpus although the two noun equivalents occur together in 1 Corinthians 14:3 as well, as the proper goal of true verbal Spirit gifting in the believing community. This latter passage, therefore, serves to verify that the point of such language is building people up, in this case by comforting them in times of difficulty, all of which is in keeping with the “father and his own children” imagery with which the sentence began.<sup>1</sup>

The third participle in our verse, (*μαρτύρομαι*, *marturonai*), carries the sense of “to affirm something with solemnity, to testify, bear witness, to affirm, insist, or implore.”<sup>2</sup> In our current context of 1Thess, it seems clear that the meaning Paul has in mind is “to implore.” This likewise

1 Gordan Fee, “1Thess” in the *NICNT* (Eerdmans, 2009), p. 82.

2 *BDAG*, “μαρτύρομαι,” p. 619. This word is found four other times in the Apostolic Scriptures: Acts 20:26; 26:22; Gal 5:3; Eph 4:17.

fits well with the metaphor of a father properly loving, leading, and training his children. The sense of “training” and “imploring/encouraging” fit nicely together, for one could imagine the example of an athletic coach involved not only in training but also imploring those he trains to give all of their efforts to win the race.

This picture of a father who coaches and helps train his children fits well with the role of elders/overseers in a local assembly of believers. The ultimate goal is to see those who are being taught are more and more being able to “run the race” and to finish well. The metaphor of a “race” is used by the author of Hebrews to denote the life of a believer in Yeshua.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Yeshua, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:1–2)

It is this ultimate goal that Paul has in mind when he pictures himself as a “father” who teaches, exhorts, and encourages those he serves. And he therefore exhorts all who are given the responsibility to teach, lead, and care for God’s people in a local assembly of believers, to do so with full integrity, teaching the truth of the word and caring with genuine concern for all who are members of the assembly. The final goal for all who are truly believers is to hear those words of our Lord and Savior Yeshua, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt 25:23).

...so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God Who calls you – Here, once again, we see the Apostle Paul setting the pattern which all teachers and leaders in the *ekklesia* of Yeshua should strive to emulate, namely, to teach, encourage, and lead the people under their care to walk even as Yeshua walked, that is, to become more and more like Him. And the ultimate motivation for leaders in the *ekklesia* to fulfill this mission is that God would receive all the glory (*Soli Deo Gloria*).

Clearly throughout the Scriptures, the verb “to walk” (הלך, *hālak*; περιπατέω, *peripateō*) is used to describe how one lives or the very pattern of one’s life.

Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people’s representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do. (Ex 18:20)

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (Gal 5:16)

The manner of one's life (walk), who professes to have been born again to a new life in Messiah, is the ultimate proof of having been gifted with saving faith. In our verse, Paul uses the expression "to walk worthy of God" (τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ). What does Paul intend us to understand by this phrase? First, the fact that he uses the word "worthy" (ἀξίως, *axiōs*) means that there is a standard by which something is deemed acceptable or unacceptable. As Weima notes:

The use of "worthily" (*axiōs*) as a qualifier suggests a life that is equivalent to or in agreement to some standard. This standard is itself further explained as "of God" (τοῦ θεοῦ). The resultant phrase "worthily of God" is one that occurs in Hellenistic religion to describe the conduct of priests and other followers who were required to live in a way that corresponded to the character and demands of the particular god that they worshiped.<sup>1</sup> By analogy, therefore, the Christians in Thessalonica must conduct themselves in a manner that corresponds to the character and demands of their God.

Secondly, that standard is for one's life to become more and more conformed to the very life of Yeshua Himself, and it is through the inspired and divinely guarded Scriptures that we are enabled to know the life of Messiah and by the ongoing work of the Ruach in our lives as we submit to Him, that we are enabled to "walk as He walked."

The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. (1Jn 2:4–6)

... *Who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.* – Here is one of Paul's repeated themes throughout his epistles, namely the sovereign and effectual "call" of God to draw to Himself those whom He has chosen unto eternal life.

In Paul's epistles, the doctrine of the efficacious call of God to

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1 See the inscriptions from Pergamum and Magnesia cited by Milligan 1908: 26 and Frame *1Thess: ICC*, 1912: p. 105.

those He intends to save becomes a common theme. The cognate noun of the verb *καλέω* (*kaleo*), *κλητός* (*kletos*), “one who is called or invited” becomes synonymous with those who are saved. For instance, Paul addresses the believers in the assembly of Rome as those who are “the called of Yeshua Messiah”:

... we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake, among whom you also are the called of Yeshua Messiah; to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua Messiah. (Rom 1:5–7)

And in Rom 4:17 Paul describes God as the One Who “... gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.” Thus, the call of God in this sense is that which brings forth a new creation.

In Rom 8, those who are the called are those who are eternally saved:

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Rom 8:28–30)

That this calling is the efficacious, inward call that always results in eternal salvation is clear, for all who are called are justified and glorified. They are those who are “called according to His purpose,” that is, God’s intention is to save them eternally.

In Romans 9, the calling of God is that which brings about His purposes in the lives of those who are called (v. 11), and extends beyond ethnic boundaries to include both Jews and Gentiles (vv. 24–25). The efficacious nature of God’s calling is also emphasized in Paul’s statement regarding God’s purposes for Israel when he states: “... for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom 11:29).

For Paul, this efficacious calling of God results in the holiness of those who are called (1Cor 1:2), fellowship with God (1Cor 1:9), and a growing life of faith and righteousness (1Cor 1:24–26; Eph 4:1–4; 1Thess 2:12; 4:7). The call of God brings about one’s initial exercise of faith resulting in

salvation (1Cor 7:17–22) and presents the promise and hope of eternal life (Eph 1:18; 1Thess 5:24; 2Thess 2:14; 1Tim 6:12). It also establishes covenant relationship between those who are called so that they become vitally united together in Yeshua (Col 3:15).

The other Apostles likewise speak of this efficacious calling of God upon those who are saved. The author of Hebrews refers to his readers as “partakers of a heavenly calling” (3:1). Peter speaks of those who are saved as having been called “out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1Pet 2:9). Peter notes that this calling results in following in the footsteps of Yeshua, which may inevitably involve suffering (1Pet 2:21) as well as inheriting a blessing (1Pet 3:9) and obtaining eternal glory in Messiah (1Pet 5:10). Peter also admonishes his readers to “be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you” (2Pet 1:10), by which he means that one who is truly called and chosen will evidence this divine work through a life of righteousness.