

**8 Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.**

The verse opens with *οὕτως* (*houtōs*), which carries the meaning “thus, so, in this way,” showing that it is a continuation of the previous verse, giving further explanation of how it was that Paul and his companions had “proved to be gentle among you.” The driving factor was that they had a very real and fervent desire to show themselves as servants of Yeshua and therefore to demonstrate genuine concern and care for the Thessalonian community even as Yeshua gave Himself for those He would redeem.

*...so fond an affection for you* – This phrase connects well with the previous verse in which Paul uses the metaphor of “a nursing mother who tenderly cares for her own children.” Here, once again, we see the apostolic perspective which sets the rule for us all, namely, that we should not only have a genuine desire to give the message of the gospel to those who are lost in their sin, but that we should do so with an attitude of true affection for them, recognizing that apart from receiving the gospel message with repentance and faith, they would be lost for eternity.

Here, once again, we all should be challenged by the words of our text to be ready and eager to shine the light of Yeshua to others and to do so, first for the glory of God, and then for the saving grace which the gospel message proclaims. But there is an added dimension given to us here, and it is that as believers in Yeshua, we ought to have a genuine and loving concern for those who are currently trapped in their sin and who, apart from repenting and accepting by faith the glorious message of the gospel, will perish under the righteous wrath of the Almighty. There are those, of course, who say that it’s all up to God, for He will redeem all those He has chosen. And this is true, but the wonderful and yet mysterious reality is that He has chosen to use His people to be His method of bringing all He has chosen to exercise the gift of faith and to be eternally saved by His grace.

Paul speaks of this very truth in his epistle to the Romans:

How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!” However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Messiah. (Rom 10:15–17)

While Paul's words here in Romans could be specifically applied to those who are sent out from a local assembly of believers and commissioned to give the gospel message to remote locations and peoples, the truth set forth in these verses surely applies to all believers. For the scriptures surely enjoin all believers to be witnesses to others of Yeshua and His saving work.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lamp-stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matt 5:14–16)

but sanctify Messiah as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; (1Pet 3:15)

Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.... (Phil 2:14–15)

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person. (Col. 4:5–6)

Clearly it is very easy to be utterly disgusted with the decedent ways of fallen mankind and the godless societies which are found around the world. Even in our modern era, things have come to be accepted by a large percentage of the population which would have been entirely unacceptable by the founding fathers of our nation. As a result, there are those who think it wise to “escape” from the decedent society and isolate themselves from it by living in remote regions, etc.

But consider the societies of Ancient Greece and Rome which were, by and large, marked by open and accepted idolatry, and all of the trappings that go with it. It was in such a state of paganism that Yeshua Himself lived, coming to be the light of the truth in a place of darkness, to give Himself as payment for the sins of all who would receive His gift of salvation and be transformed into His disciples, in order to be witnesses of His grace, mercy, and eternal salvation.

*... we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives –*

The word translated by the NASB as “well-pleased” is εὐδοκοῦμεν (*eudokoumen*) often used in the Apostolic Scriptures (21 times) and carries the sense of “to consider something as good and therefore worthy of choice, to consent, to determine, to resolve” as well as “to take pleasure or find satisfaction in something.”<sup>1</sup> Paul’s use of this language emphasizes that he and his colleagues had it well in their hearts that giving the message of the gospel was first and foremost motivated by a growing love for Yeshua and the salvation procured by Him at great cost. It was obedience and love to Him that was the primary motivation for giving the gospel.

The application of the message of Paul in our verse is that we who are truly believers in Yeshua ought both to be prepared to give the gospel in all manner of situations, and to do so as serving the One Who died for us, rose again to life, and Who “always lives to make intercession for us.” If we have a growing understanding of the magnitude of the salvation which has been won for us by Yeshua, then we likewise will grow in our desire to share the message of His grace with others.

But note carefully what Paul adds in this verse. He and his colleagues not only came to Thessalonica proclaiming the grand message of the gospel, but they did so even by putting their own needs and desires as less important than their top priority of proclaiming the “good news” to those in Thessalonica. Moreover, as noted in 2:2, they likewise came to Thessalonica after having been persecuted for their message in Philippi by those who were opposed to the gospel they proclaimed. In short, that they were willing to endure anything that might come their way proves beyond doubt that their motivation for coming to Thessalonica was not for self-gain or prestige but to honor the One Who deserves all honor and praise.

*... because you had become very dear to us.* – We remember that those who opposed the apostolic message, centered as it was in Yeshua and His work, were going about telling people that all Paul and his companions were doing was for the purpose of enlarging their own following and gaining support from them. But here, in this final phrase of v. 8, Paul makes it clear that yet another proof that such allegations were false, is that they had loved the Thessalonica believers in the same way that a nursing mother loves her child. As Fee writes:

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1 BDAG, “εὐδοκέω,” p. 404.

The reason the missionary trio could not have been anything like what their detractors are now saying is that the apostolic band “loved them” in the way that a nursing mother loves her own children. Such love completely disallows the kind of dissimulation [pretense] on the part of Paul and his companions that the Thessalonians’ enemies are advocating.<sup>1</sup>

**9 For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.**

Having addressed the claims of those who were seeking to discredit the gospel message which Paul and his colleagues had proclaimed, he now confronts those who were saying that the motivation for their coming was actually for personal gain, that is, “greed” (v. 5). It does this by reminding the believing community in Thessalonica that they did not come asking or even expecting that they would be financially remunerated for their teaching and proclaiming the gospel message.

Much to the contrary, for he reminds them of their “labor and hardship” and how they supported themselves without requiring or even expecting the believing community to pay them for their services. The two terms, “our labor and our hardship” (κόπον ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν μόχθον, i.e., κόπος (*kopos*) and μόχθος (*moxthos*), are commonly used to refer to work generally, though sometimes the first term stresses the fatigue associated with labor, while the second term conveys the painfulness of work.<sup>2</sup> Paul uses this same word-pair two other times (2Cor 11:27; 2Thess 3:8). As such, it seems very possible that Paul uses these two words together to represent in an emphatic way the arduous aspect of the work that he and his colleagues undertook during their original visit in Thessalonica.

...how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you – The phrase “working night and day” does not convey the idea that they were working continuously but rather that their work was conducted both in the daylight as well as after the sun had set. One could well imagine that after working in the daylight, the evenings were used as the best time to spend with the believers in Thessalonica, engaging both in teaching as well as discipleship.

The fact that Paul and his companions specifically worked to sustain their own basic needs and that he makes a point of it here in his epistle to the Thessalonians, has been used by some to suggest that it is

1 Gordon Fee, “1&2Thessalonians” in the *NICNT* (Eerdmans, 2009), p. 76.

2 Liddell, Scott, Jones. *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford 1996).

never right for an appointed teacher, elder, or overseer in a local community of believers to be financially supported. But this goes contrary to what Paul teaches us in his first epistle to Timothy as well as his first letter to the Corinthians:

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." (1Tim 5:17–18)

If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Messiah. Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. (1Cor 8:11–14)

Thus we see Paul's inspired words making it clear that those who labor in the word and teaching ought to be supported in order that they would be able to give their time and energies to preparing, teaching, and helping to shepherd the flock under their care. However, it is also evident that in Paul's teaching on this matter, it is always within the prerogative of an overseer or elder to forego being supported if he believes that to be supported might cause some to think his motives to become a teacher and pastor were not entirely upright. Thus Paul and his colleagues did not ask for or require material support nor did they accept it if offered, because there had already been launched by their opponents the false rumor that they were "greedy" and therefore were engaged in their "ministry" entirely for "self-gain."

Thus we see that Paul, Timothy and Silvanus considered the spiritual needs of those to whom they ministered as having a greater importance than being remunerated for their labors. For their opponents had begun a rumor that they were "greedy" and trying to gain wealth and notoriety by making the Thessalonians their disciples. As such, they willingly worked with their hands to supply their own needs and thus to give witness both of the high value of the gospel message as well as their willingness to honor God by proving that the claims of their opponents were entirely unfounded.

MacArthur gives a short summary of these verses as a bridge to the next section:

So Paul pictured Silas, Timothy, and himself as spiritual mothers who made the maximum effort to provide gentleness, intimate affection, sacrificial love, and hard-working provision as they proclaimed to them the gospel of God. That maternal metaphor, however, only partially describes the effective spiritual leader. Describing the spiritual leader as a father completes Paul's picture of leadership.<sup>1</sup>

**10–12 You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; 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.**

Now Paul appeals to the Thessalonian community itself as witness of how he and his companions conducted themselves while ministering to them. One can imagine that the very need for such a statement was that there were those within the community who had listened to the opponents of Paul and their degrading assessments of his ministry, and were asking questions of others in the community about such allegations.

Therefore Paul first appeals to the wider representation of the community but also emphasizes his integrity by evoking the witness of God Himself. He uses three terms to describe the sincerity and uprightness of their ministry among the Thessalonian believers. First is that they ministered among them “devoutly” (ὁσίως, *hosiōs*), a Greek adverb derived from the noun ὅσιος (*hosios*), “holy,” meaning “pleasing to God,” “without fault.” Thus in this first word describing their ministry among the Thessalonians, Paul begins with the highest of measurements, i.e., that which God approves and is in alignment with His own holiness.

The second adverb describing their ministry among the people is “uprightly,” (δικαίως, *dikaiōs*), the adverb based upon the noun δίκαιος, (*dikaios*), “holy,” meaning “being in accordance with the highest of standards,” for God Himself “sets the mark” of what is “holy” or “unholy.” Once again, Paul uses the highest standard, i.e., that which God approves.

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1 John MacArthur, *1–2 Thessalonians* in *The MacArthur Commentary* (2002), pp. 48–49.

The third adverb Paul utilizes to describe their ministry among the Thessalonians is “blamelessly” (*ἀμέμπτως*, *ameemptōs*), which in the Apostolic Scriptures is found only here and in 5:23. According to the Greek Lexicon, it carries the meaning “in the Greco-Roman world, of people of extraordinary civic consciousness.”<sup>1</sup>

... *we behaved toward you believers* – Paul has used the language of the court in this context, which requires two or three witnesses to establish the validity of a given claim. He first appeals to God as His witness, giving three actions which were evident to all. So then he offers the second witness, i.e., the Thessalonian community themselves. Having considered the entire community to be themselves a witness of the integrity of Paul and his colleagues, it seems very likely that the charges against them were being leveled by outsiders, hoping to disrupt and even damage the community of believers. And it would likewise seem reasonable to presume that there may have been a few within the community who were listening to the accusations and being persuaded to believe them.

If this were the case, or whatever may have been the source of the problem, we see here, once again, the battle that rages between the enemies of God and those who are His true children. The enemy himself and his workers will do all in their power to disrupt, divide, and try to destroy the gathered body of Messiah. But our defense is sure, for Yeshua promised that He would build His *ekklesia* and not even the power of hell would be able to gain the victory against Him.

I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My *ekklesia*; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. (Matt 16:18)

But even though the final victory is secured by the very power of God, we still must be vigilant not to give in to the flesh and allow the enemy to win even a temporary victory.

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. (1Pet 5:8–9)

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1 BDAG, “ἀμέμπτως,” p. 52.