

ARE YOU WALKING WORTHY OF GOD?

INTRO

Question: Why doesn't God immediately take us to heaven after we get saved? I think you'd agree that one reason is that He wants us to be a **witness** to others. He needs laborers in His harvest field; He uses saved people—not angels—to share His Word with the unsaved. If we were immediately snatched up to heaven, who would be sharing the gospel with the lost?

Another question. Can you **prove** to someone that you will go to heaven after you die? We can't, can we? But we can prove to someone that our life has **changed** and that the power of sin in our life has been broken and that we are no longer slaves to it like we once were. People can disagree with what you **say**, but it is difficult for them to argue with what they can **see**—especially if they have known you for a while.

A couple of weeks ago in the afternoon service we looked at how different Paul's life was after he was saved. Notice the verses on your sheet: **Galatians 1:23-24** "But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me."

They glorified God—they rendered praise and thanksgiving to God—because of the change that had taken place in Paul. How much of a change has taken place in **your** life since you've been saved? And how **important** is it to you that changes continue to take place?

Take your Bibles and turn to **I Thessalonians 2**, beginning with verse 9. Please follow along as I read through verse 12 (read). This morning I want to begin a series entitled "Walking Worthy of God" taken from the last verse I read. Although I probably shouldn't have been, I was a bit surprised to discover that **every** book in the NT—with the exception of Philemon—has a verse about: **a)** encouraging us to live in a way that pleases God; OR **b)** discouraging us from living in a way that displeases God

We are not going to look at every one of them, but note the following: Ephesians 4:1, 17; Colossians 1:10; I Peter 1:15-16; I John 2:6.

This topic is not only important because of its frequency in the NT; it is also important because it is God's desire for **every one** of His children. Not every one can be a Pastor or a missionary; not everyone can play an instrument or sing; not everyone can teach children or work on a building—but everyone can live their life in a way that pleases God. Title of my message this morning: *Are You Walking Worthy of God?*

1. Example of Walking Worthy (V 10)—It can be done!

A. You are our witnesses

"**Ye** are witnesses...." Paul was asking them to remember what they observed in him and his fellow-laborers. What did he want them to remember?

Was it 'Remember how great of a preacher I was when I was there?'

Nope

Was it 'Remember how generous I was or how smart I was?'

Nope

Was it 'Remember how I provided nice things for my family?'

No; it wasn't that either

It was 'Remember "how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe"

Was Paul perfect? No; but he had **behaved** in such a way that he was not afraid to have them examine his conduct.

Chapter 1:5 "...as ye **know** what manner of men we were among you for your sake."

Chapter 2:1 "For yourselves, brethren, **know** our entrance in unto you..."

Chapter 2:5 “For neither at any time used we flattering word, as ye **know**”

Chapter 2:9 “For ye **remember**, brethren, our labor and travail”

Paul wrote to Timothy that the qualifications of a Pastor include being “blameless” and of “good behavior.” In other words, accusations can come but they won’t stick; they are unfounded.

I couldn’t help but think of the prophet Samuel’s words as he was nearing the end of his life.

I Samuel 12:2-4 “And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am: **witness against me** before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose mule have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand.”

Samuel here is saying nearly the same thing Paul did—look back at my life and examine it and you will see that I did you no wrong!

Back to the passage before us. Paul not only said **they** were witnesses in how holily and justly and unblameably he and the others behaved, he also said...

B. God is our witness (v 10)

“Ye are witnesses, **and God also**, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:” It is one thing to be behave holily and justly and unblameably before other **people**, but it is quite another thing to say God will also attest to the fact that that is how I lived!

Verse 4 “...not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.”

God—who knows the heart—knows what our motivation was in preaching the gospel.

Verse 5 “For neither at any time use we flattering words, as ye know—**you** are our witness—nor a cloke of covetousness; **God** is our witness:” In verse 5 Paul says you and God are witnesses—and in verse 10 he says the same thing.

Let’s pause here for a moment. We have witnesses, don’t we? Often times—probably way more than we care to realize—what we do and say is being witnessed by other people.

I read an article not too long ago about a husband and wife who were at either a friend’s home or a family member’s home. *Where* it was not as important as what *happened* while they were there. They got in an argument and rather than embarrass themselves in front of their guests, they decided to go into an empty room. There was no physical altercation—but there were certainly heated words. All of the sudden the woman stopped and quietly whispered to her husband, “There’s a baby monitor in this room!” Everything they had just said was being witnessed by people in the other room!

We have monitors—witnesses—don’t we? It may be a co-worker...or a neighbor...or a friend...or a parent or a spouse...or a child, but we all have them. How do we behave before them? What report would they give as witnesses? More importantly than that, what does the all-seeing **eye of God** see...and the all-hearing **ear of God** hear...and the all-knowing **mind of God** know about us? What has **He** witnessed?

It saddens me to think back on some of the things my children witnessed in me when they were young, particularly my anger. But I’m thankful for God’s working in my heart and helping me with that sin. I’m thankful that there are certain things they didn’t witness—not because they were *absent* when it took place—but because they didn’t take place! They never saw their Dad drunk...or hit their Mom...or heard rumors about another woman in my life.

Was I perfect? Obviously not—and I'm still not. Neither was Paul. In your bulletin I have the following quote from Barnes: "This is not a claim to absolute perfection, but it is a claim to **consistency** of character, and to **faithfulness** in duty, which every Christian should be able to make. Every man professing religion should so live as to be able to appeal to all who have had an opportunity of knowing him, as witnesses that he was consistent and faithful, and that there was nothing which could be laid to his charge."

First, Paul was an example of holy living; he demonstrated that it **could** be done.

Second, there was his....

2. Exhortation to Walk Worthy (vss 11-12a)—It is something that **should** be done!

In verse 11, Paul reminds the readers that he was not a silent leader that led merely by example—he also instructed them. He **exhorted** them—strongly encouraged or urged them

--and **comforted** them (consoled and encouraged them, primarily because of persecution)

--and **charged** them—strongest word of these three and carries idea of insisting

Why did Paul exhort and comfort and charge them?

A. Because of his responsibility to them (v 11)

Paul had a special love for these believers.

Verse 7 "But we were **gentle** among you, even **as a nurse cherisheth** her children" (better—nursing mother cherishes her children)

Verse 8 "So being **affectionately desirous** of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also **our own souls**, because ye were **dear** unto us."

Chapter 3:1 "Wherefore when we could **no longer forbear**, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;" Chapter 3:5 "For this cause, when I **could no longer forbear**, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain."

Paul had a love for them like a mom has for her children, he was affectionately desirous of them and would lay down his life for them, they were dear unto him, and he couldn't stand not knowing how they were doing. He also had a fatherly love which compelled him to exhort and comfort and charge his spiritual children to live for God!

We have it backwards, sometimes don't we? We think it's the mother's role to teach the children to live for God, but Paul makes it pretty obvious here that it is the father's job to do that. In **Ephesians 6:4** we are reminded: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Why did Paul exhort and comfort and charge them? Because he had this special bond with them and love for them and was challenging them to live for God the way all good fathers—and spiritual leaders—should do. Paul charged Timothy to "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." **II Timothy 4:2**

I sometimes ask myself if I'm doing that enough; if I'm reproofing and rebuking and exhorting the way I should? I don't want to "beat you up" every time you come to church, but I most certainly don't want to disobey the Lord either. **Philippians 2:15** reminds us "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye **shine as lights** in the world;" We need to be different from the world—not act like it!

There was a second reason Paul exhorted and comforted and charged them to walk in a manner that was worthy of God, that being....

B. Because of their current representation of God

"That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto **His kingdom**..." (v 12b)

Paul did not exhort them to live holy lives because they were a reflection of Paul or because they represented Paul—they were representatives **of God**. Walk worthy of God—not of me!

Ephesians 5:8 “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: **walk as children of light:**” Peter makes a similar statement: **I Peter 2:9** “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;”

Paul exhorts them to walk worthy of God because they now belonged to God; God had made them members of His kingdom. I wonder if we take seriously enough the fact that once we are saved, we **represent** the Lord. The world takes this concept of representation quite seriously—especially of late. How many people in high places have lost their jobs because their conduct—the way they behaved—did not represent the company that they worked for so they were dismissed?

What does it mean to walk worthy of God; to represent God in a way that is pleasing to Him?

Barnes (sheet) writes: “A child ‘walks worthy of a parent’ when he lives in such way as to reflect honor on that parent for the method in which he has trained him; when he so lives as to bring no disgrace on him, so as not to pain his heart by misconduct, or so as to give no occasion to any to speak reproachfully of him.”

--Should not we want to live in a way that brings honor unto God?

--Should not we avoid living in a way that disgraces God and pains His heart?

--Should not we avoid acting in a way where others will reproach God because of us?

Paul exhorted them to live holy because it was his responsibility; he also exhorted them because they represented God—and needed to represent Him honorably.

Third, Paul exhorted them

C. Because of their future glorification with God (v 12b)

“That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and **glory...**” (v 12b)

If we are a child of God, we are a member of His kingdom now. And if we are a member of His kingdom **now**, God has also called us unto a future of **glory**. We have a future whereby we will be glorified—we will not only be pain free and sorrow free, we will also be sin-free and stain-free. Shouldn't that motivate us to live for God **now**?

God, through John, says it should! Notice your sheet: **I John 3:2-3** “Beloved, **now** are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him **purifieth himself**, even as He is pure.”

Knowing we will be like Him in the future should motivate us to be like Him now. Not only will **we** be glorified in the future—**Jesus** will then receive His due honor as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Philippians 2:9-11 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

In the future, every knee will bow before King Jesus and He will get the honor that He deserves. Some will bow lovingly and reverently and willingly; others will not. If you will bow willingly in the future, why not bow willingly now?