

## **Continuing in the Faith**

1 Thessalonians 2: 10-12

We have set aside this day to honor our graduates. We are proud of each of you and the commitment you have shown to reach this milestone in life. No doubt, your journey has been difficult at times, requiring much effort and devotion. Your hard work and commitment has paid off, as you have reached the goal you began to pursue many years ago.

This is an exciting time for each of you, but it is also a critical time as well. Your life will change following graduation. Many of you will pursue further education, and some may even enter the workforce. Whatever the case, life will be much different. You will enjoy freedom that you have yet to experience. You will be called upon to make decisions for yourself, without the benefit of a parent being there all the time. With these new found freedoms, also comes great responsibility. You are no longer children, but young adults. I wish you all continued success, and I pray you will remain committed to walking with the Lord.

Our text today is a fitting passage for a graduation service. Paul wrote to young believers in Thessalonica, and challenged them to continue in the faith. While he was unable to be there with them, he sought to remind them of the great truths they had learned. He desired the church to continue for the Lord, even in his absence. Certainly that is my desire for our graduates, and all believers. As we go about our daily lives, we face situations that require our response. We do not always have the benefit of being in the presence of fellow believers. Even then, we must remain committed to the faith and our Lord.

With our graduates in mind, I want to examine the [lessons of truth](#) Paul shared as we consider the challenge of: [Continuing in the Faith](#). First we notice:

**I. The Example of Paul** (10) – [Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe](#). While Paul never claimed a life of sinless perfection, he had sought to live faithfully for the Lord. The church had witnessed his life, and Paul desired them to imitate the example he had provided them. As believers, whether young or old, we too need to imitate the great example Paul left for us. We discover, he had lived:

**A. A Life of Holiness** – Paul had walked before the church, and the world, in a manner of holiness. This was not something he developed while at Thessalonica; it was a way of life for him. Each day Paul lived, he sought to live holy before God. He lived a separated life from the world – a life totally set apart to God. His life was not dictated by the pleasures of sin, and he sought to walk with God each day.

- You would have to agree that we are in need of those who will live holy before the Lord. Holiness cannot be pretended. We either live for God or we don't. Many see folks who claim to love the Lord on Sunday, but their lives don't reflect that love throughout the week. We need to be separated, set apart unto the Lord. Graduates, I urge you to seek a life of holiness.

**B. A Life of Righteousness** (10) – He also lived **justly**. That literally means “*righteously, properly, and upright*,” dealing righteously with both God and man. Paul was just and right in all his dealings. He always treated men fairly and compassionately. He sought to treat them as he wanted to be treated and as God would treat them. He saw them as God saw them.

- We too must seek a life of righteousness, living upright before God and men. Our lives must reveal the grace and love of the Lord. We must see others as Christ sees them, loving them as He loves them.

**C. A Life of Blamelessness** (10) – Paul also sought to live **unblameably**. He desired to live “*blameless, without cause for censure, above reproach*.” Phil.1:10 – **That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ**. Sincere has the idea of “*judged by sunlight; without wax*.” Phil.2:15 – **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**.

- The world closely watches the lives of believers, seeking any means for accusation or reproach. We must all seek to live our lives above reproach, blameless before the world. That doesn't mean we will never be accused, but when we are, we have lived in such a way the accusations will not stick. Guard your testimony before others. If you tarnish your reputation, you will hinder your ability to be a witness for Christ.

**II. The Exhortation of Paul** (11) – **As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children**. Paul sought to strengthen and encourage the church. He loved them as a father does his children. Graduates, as you pursue your future endeavors, I pray you never forget that you are loved and appreciated. We will continue to pray for you as you begin this new chapter in life. Consider:

**A. His Exhortation** – **As ye know how we exhorted...every one of you**. This means to “*call to one's side, appeal to, or summons*.” He knew of their difficulties. Paul knew the burdens they carried. He

sought to exhort them, encourage them, and even instruct them. He didn't want them to wander aimlessly while seeking to serve the Lord. He wanted to equip them for service.

- We too must be willing to encourage others in the faith, sharing in their burdens. As our graduates prepare to move forward, they can do so with the assurance of the church being there to support and encourage their efforts. You are never alone; we will be there to support you in prayer. I pray we all seek to strengthen others in the faith, sharing our love as we share their burdens!

**B. His Consolation** (11) – *As ye know how we...comforted...every one of you.* Paul sought to “*calm and console them.*” Many of these new believers faced adversity that is foreign to our understanding. Many were persecuted for their faith, physically and emotionally. Many were shunned by their family and loved ones. Paul sought to comfort those who faced such opposition.

- Graduates, as you enter this next phase in life, you will encounter some harsh realities. There will be opposition and difficulty. You will need to rely on your faith and trust the Lord for strength. He will never leave or forsake you. We will continue to pray and encourage you in the faith as well. Difficulties will come, but you can endure by faith.

**C. His Admonition** (11) – *As ye know how we...charged every one of you, as a father doth his children.* The word *charged* means “*to witness or testify; it carries the idea of admonishing.*” Paul was loving and compassionate, but he was also bold with them. He sought to lead them in the right path. He clearly defined the Gospel and the expectations for all who follow Christ. He warned them of the dangers of straying from fellowship with the Lord. The Thessalonians knew Paul would confront error among them.

- We need those who will admonish from a heart of love. Many have developed the mindset of “anything goes.” They certainly wouldn't want to offend anyone. I don't like to offend folks either, but we need to stand for truth and be willing to confront error. Much of the trouble we are experiencing today results from believers being unwilling to confront issues that are contrary to the Word of God. We must be willing to stand for truth, and lovingly admonish those who walk contrary to the Word.

**III. The Expectation of Paul** (12) – *That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.* Finally Paul revealed his expectation for the Thessalonian church. These had been bought with a price, redeemed of the Lord, and expected to live in a way that revealed their relationship with Christ. Consider:

**A. Their Walk (12a)** – *That ye would walk worthy of God.* Paul desired the church to walk worthy of the Lord, literally in a way that prevented reproach upon Him and the church. They had been delivered from the bondage of sin, set free from the shackles of the desires of the flesh, and were expected to refrain from such behavior. They were to reflect the Light of Christ in a dark world.

- We all face temptation and fight against the flesh. Graduates, there will be much temptation before you as you journey through life. These temptations will come; they are unavoidable. When they do, remember you are expected to walk worthy of God. You have the benefit of the Spirit abiding within to guard and guide your life. Follow the Spirit and you will walk in a way that honors God.

**B. Their Witness (12b)** – *That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.* Paul offered a reminder of the grace they had received. They were no longer their own, or able to live as they pleased. These were bought with a price, placed within the body of Christ. Their lives were a direct reflection of the Lord. They were obligated to bear a faithful witness to the goodness and grace of God.

- As you prepare for this new chapter in life, I want to remind you of your heritage. You belong to Christ. You have professed faith in Him, and your life is a reflection of Christ to the world. Your actions and behavior not only reflect upon you and your family, they reflect upon the church and our Lord. Don't forget where you came from; remember your testimony for the Lord. Be a faithful witness of His grace to a world that desperately needs to see and receive it!

**Conclusion:** As we conclude the service, I would like for our graduates to come forward at this time. As they are coming, I want to invite those who will, to come and gather around them in prayer. I challenge the church to make a commitment to these young adults. They need our support and prayers. Will you join me in praying for them and with them?