

Monday, January 21 - We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. (1 Thessalonians 2:6-8). When Paul was with the Thessalonians, he didn't flatter them, didn't seek their praise, and didn't become a burden to them. He and Silas completely focused their efforts on presenting God's message of salvation to the Thessalonians. This was important! The Thessalonian believers had their lives changed by God, not Paul; it was Christ's message they believed, not Paul's. When we talk to other people about Christ, our focus should not be solely on the impressions we make. As true ministers of Christ, we should point to him, not to ourselves.

Tuesday, January 22 – Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. (1 Thessalonians 2:9-10). We find out in Acts that Paul learned to be a tent maker. This skill, which was marketable in any area he traveled, made it possible for him to be self-supporting. Remember, this was the infancy of the church. They were still learning what it meant to live as a follower of Christ. In other letters Paul does encourage the church to support their leaders and provide for them so that they can lead, teach, preach and encourage those in the faith community without having to worry about where their next meal is coming from. Another benefit of Paul working as a tentmaker - he showed them how a believer can live in the blue collar, working-life world. He lived "holy, righteous and blameless" while he was working to make a living. How are you doing at your job?

Wednesday, January 23 – For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory. (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12). No loving father would neglect the safety of his children, allowing them to walk into circumstances that might be harmful or fatal. In the same way, we must take new believers under our wing until they are mature enough to stand firm in their faith. We must help new Christ followers become strong enough to influence others for the sake of the gospel. By his words and example, Paul encouraged this community of faith to live in such a way that would be worthy of God. Is there anything about your daily life that would embarrass God? What do people think of God from watching you?

Thursday, January 24 – And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe. (1 Thessalonians 2:13). In the New Testament, *the word of God* usually refers to the preaching of the gospel, the Old Testament, or Jesus Christ himself. Today we often apply it only to the Bible. Notice what is "at work" in believers - God's word. It is not just something to hear once a week, or something to read to help us fall asleep. *God's word* contains words of life. Not just 'eternal' life - but day-to-day words that encourage us, that teach us and warn us. What is at work in you?

Friday, January 25 – For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last. (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16). Just as the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were persecuted by other Jews, so the Gentile Christians in Thessalonica were persecuted by their fellow Gentiles. Persecution is discouraging, especially when it comes from your own people. When you take a stand for Christ, you may face opposition, disapproval, and ridicule from your neighbors, friends and even family members. When Paul refers to the Jews, he is talking about certain Jews who opposed his preaching of the gospel. He does not mean all Jews. Many of Paul's converts were Jewish.

Saturday, January 26 - For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last. (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16). Why are so many Jews opposed to Christianity? (1) Although the Jewish religion had been declared legal by the Roman government, it still had tenuous relationship with the government. At this time, Christianity was viewed as sect of Judaism. The Jews were afraid that reprisals level against the Christians might be expanded to include them. (2) The Jewish leaders thought Jesus was a false prophet, and they didn't want his teachings to spread. (3) They feared if many Jews were drawn away, their own political position might be weakened. (4) They were proud of their special status as God's chosen people, and they resented the fact that Gentiles could be full members within the Christian church.