

1Thessalonians 12-03-02a

This is Friday the 3rd of March 2012. We're in the book of 1st Thessalonians. We're in chapter 2 We'll take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and then resume our excursion through this great letter from the Apostle Paul to these Greek and Jewish believers in the town of Thessalonica.

Shall we pray? Father it is a blessing and a privilege to have this opportunity to spend time together studying your word Enjoying fellowship and the learning of things that are pertinent and meaningful and applicable for us in the Life that you have called us to we thank you for this passage We thank you for the company of believers who recognize how important it is to understand these things and to Seek to apply them and live in their light We pray that as we study in fellowship together your Holy Spirit will superintend and that each one will receive a blessing Be built up and encouraged and edified. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen this Letter is One that is in the earlier part of Paul's ministry as you know, it is probably the Perhaps the second of the extant letters of Paul if you remember what he says in chapter 1 Paul Silvanus or Silas and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ he reminds them of Positional truth he establishes that foundation.

They are not followers of men. They are not followers of a cult They are in God and in Christ Jesus that is what the gospel teaches and communicates Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ this positional truth is Or partakes of relationship with God not only is there directional Look at God in heaven and man on earth, but he is God our Father There is a familial relationship a relationship that is defined by love by grace by compassion by provision by Expectation as you would find in a healthy family God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ Christ as the head of the church as the authority as the one who defines what Christianity is We give thanks to God always for you all making mention of you in our prayers When we are thankful for one another we pray for one another Remembering without ceasing your work of faith labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father knowing beloved brethren your Election by God and as I've said you could you could translate this your selection by God. God has selected them Given them the opportunity to produce these things Work of faith labor of love and patience of hope this isn't Language that is typical of the Old Testament is it? the Jewish people the nation of Israel was selected by God for a different purpose Their nation functions in a different light under a different covenant with different Bases for judgment but for the church God is looking for faith.

Hope and love For our gospel did not come to you in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance As you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake now we're getting to the fabric of the letter and It really has three parts. There is Paul and Company Paul and Silas in this case Paul Silas and Timothy But Paul and the companions who are with him when he first visited Thessalonica That's one end at the other end are the Thessalonians and there was both response and reaction in that city when Paul came and

Presented the third part which is the message the gospel and These three elements are constantly revisited throughout the rest of chapter 1 and into chapter 2 Paul is going to talk about himself and about what kind of people he and his companions were in Thessalonica, he is going to talk about the reception that they received from the Thessalonians both those who believed and those who opposed and Rebelled and tried to run them out of town and he is going to talk about the nature of the message So these three things keep coming to the foreground and the other two will rotate to the back to return a few verses later So the three issues that we see Constantly brought to our attention are the messenger the message and the recipients Now, why do we care about this? It's a long time ago 2,000 years ago got some dusty old apostle going to some Greek town to a bunch of people that have been long dead Preaching some as yet unknown message. Why do we care? because If this message is true, and this is a first-class condition if it is true It is the same message that you and I receive we are getting it from the same messenger, aren't we? Paul the Apostle wrote this epistle under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the message that he gave the Thessalonians is the same message that is given to us and There is the same emphasis on The recipients what do we do? What is our response? What kind of effect should the message have on us that makes sense? Somebody pitching somebody catching and something going between the pitchers mound and home plate Paul is pitching We're catching and the ball here is the gospel So you constantly see these things coming to the front and this is really what our Christian faith is all about What part of Christianity does not partake either of the authoritative source of revelation? our reception of that revelation and what effect it is supposed to have Its source its content and its effect these this is the grist This is the warp and the woof of our Christian faith if any one of these things is messed up.

It's a waste of time God can divinely inspire and send faithful messengers, and they can faithfully preach the true gospel But if the if the reception and the response is lacking you've got Jesus on the cross in Jerusalem Weeping and asking his father to forgive these who? When they knew him as God did not glorify him as God neither were thankful these who when he came to his own Received him not right wasn't anything wrong with the messenger the Lord Jesus Christ wasn't anything wrong with the message The sermon on the mount the content of Jesus preaching all that red ink in the Gospels, but what happened? The reception almost entirely failed you had just a very few disciples, and it was not sufficient You didn't have ten righteous in Sodom and within within 40 years Jerusalem Judea the nation of Israel will be destroyed because there is insufficient response This has ever been true look at Israel in the Old Testament the prophets come preaching a faithful inspired message from God What is the response you have false prophets who aren't the right guy aren't supposed to be telling anybody anything false prophet bad source false prophecy false gospel false message wrong content and Then you've got people responding to that all day long. It's a message of peace It's a message of prosperity when God says you're actually in line for judgment. It's its falsehood So these three elements for you, and me are really important We want to it's kind of like these you know one-armed bandit things And there's three little rolling dials you want to get cherry cherry cherry That's when the jackpot comes out right you want a good messenger bringing a faithful message, and it produces a

faithful obedient Excited enthusiastic fruitful response, that's what we want well.

This is what Paul is talking about He says I love you Thessalonians because we came to you preaching the true gospel of God and you responded It's jackpot it's it's the best of all possible and he's saying this in spite of the fact that there was riots and arrests and running out of town and Unable to return and people having to put all of their possessions in hock and from the outside it might look like a dismal failure But to Paul this was one of the greatest visits. He ever had and he loves these people dearly so this is what he's expressing and Notice you'll see each of these things rotating to the front as we go through our gospel did not come to you just as words verse 5 But also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance This is the the pitching in the catching This is the the messenger demonstrating that the power of God is on them These are the people receiving it and feeling the power of God in their lives it made a difference So much so that in verse 6 you became followers of us and of the Lord followers here is my mate I Me mate I this is imitators Imitators now Especially in the King James you find this word imitators a lot and it's going to come up again tonight in chapter 2 but in English Imitation Doesn't have the same connotation that my mate I has in Or my met Oh has in Greek the meadow is the verb And it doesn't when we say imitate we this is something sort of inferior and Secondary and usually kind of cheap and not as good Well, that's imitation silk. That's imitation leather.

That's imitation wood And I've told you many times when I was a child We'd get this box of cold dessert from the commissary. That was imitation ice milk Ice milk is already imitation ice cream and this is imitation ice milk And so when we say imitation we say oh, well, that's just imitation. You know, that that's that's an imitation Rolex That's an imitation Gucci or whatever and so in English it has kind of a negative connotation but my mate my meadow and my mate I in Greek means to follow the example to be it's more in line of And even this is has a little bit of a negative but we used to talk about a mimeograph You want to have a typewritten test or handout for your class? They would take the master and type it up on a thing and run it through the mimeograph and it would produce true copies but rather than copy or imitate really follow the example of or Use something as a model is Is the idea here and you find this idea many places in Scripture and we're going to see it a number of places here in Thessalonians The believers in Macedonia and Achaia are Imitating the people in Thessalonica.

What does that mean? It means they are producing the same genuine response to the gospel They're not saying oh, you know the Thessalonians Threw Paul a party on Thursday night will throw Paul a party on Thursday night when it says they are Mimeti of them. It means they are following the same pattern. They are duplicating the same behavior.

They are similar and like-minded in their response and This makes sense when you look at other passages of Scripture that say Be imitators of God as dear children over in Ephesians, I think it's Ephesians chapter 5 be Be imitators of God. We don't want to be little imitation gods What are we

doing? we are looking at his example of righteousness and holiness and justice and long-suffering and compassion and kindness and Endeavoring to produce those same qualities in ourself in a very genuine way By the way when it says Macedonia and Achaia here in verse 8 This is the two Roman provinces that that basically defined Greece at this time The nation of Greece is now split into two big Roman provinces. One is Macedonia and the other is Achaia So this is basically saying all the Greeks everybody that's a mainline hometown Greek is in one of these two provinces and this is the the arena of Paul's Visit and ministry remember the man from Macedonia had come over here.

So You became a model in verse 7 and and the word model there is a Type it's to pass to you POS you became examples and this is the other side of the mimeti thing if you are a if you are memet owing something if you are You know, we have a mime he acts just like there's a solid wall there Even though there's not he acts just like he's inside a box Even though he's not he acts just like he's being blown by the wind even though he's not People, you know only us really elderly people can remember and I say that tongue-in-cheek I'm not nearly as elderly as some of you but Marcel Marceau one of the most famous mimes of all time He's a mime. He makes it look like something's going on. That's not really there Extremely talented in the physical Memeo type of thing.

So what is it? You're imitating? Well you're imitating the type the two POS and so the the Thessalonian believers became imitators of Paul and imitators of Christ in the sense of following the example of Genuine enthusiasm for the things of God and in that enthusiasm they in turn become a two POS so that the other believers in Macedonia and Achaia are following in their footsteps producing their same type of behavior and So you become part of something where we are all Pursuing righteousness. We are all pursuing the glory of God. It's all genuine.

None of it is Imitation in the sense of of a cheap knockoff, but it is in the same pattern. It follows the same blueprint it Partakes of the same plan and purpose and it is of the same stuff. So you have This imitation Thessalonians are imitating the churches of Judea Just turn a little bit forward in chapter 2 verse 14 Paul is going to tell them this you brethren became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus now these people Half or more of them probably don't even know there is a church in Judea so in what sense could they imitate something that they've never even seen well because of this idea they are following in the footsteps of they are like-minded they are Building something based off the same plans or blueprints all believers are to Memento the the faithful leadership in the church you find this in 2nd Thessalonians chapter 3 verses 7 through 9 Where Paul is going to write to this same group a bit later on and he'll say You Yourselfs know how you ought to imitate us For we were not disorderly among you nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge But we worked with labor and toil night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you not because we do Not have authority, but to make ourselves an example a tupas of How you should imitate? Memeo us So you have a model you have an example Christ is our example of Faithfulness and obedience

dedication to the things of God Man should not live by bread alone every word that proceeds from the mouth of God and this is how even a flawed and fallen fellow Human being a believer whether it is an apostle or a godly Relative if our if our parents have been faithful believers They can be our type our tupas our model and we become imitators.

We become followers in That helpful sense. Hopefully we can be a similar tupas for other believers, and we don't want them to you know be Aping us or It's superficially Reproducing the same behavior. This is a genuine investment in the same things dedication to the same ideals and principles and priorities and goals So hopefully we've clarified this a bit You became followers of us verse 6 of chapter 1 of first Thessalonians and of the Lord Why because Paul is an imitator of Christ.

They are an imitator of Paul the other churches in Macedonia and Achaia are imitators of the Thessalonians it is Infectious it's contagious it you see it and you say that's how It's done. That's that's what godliness looks like. That's what faithfulness and obedience and endurance under pressure looks like That's how to not complain That's how not to backbite or or be negative that's that's how to do it, right? I look at that and I'm encouraged.

I'm uplifted I I see the outworking of these things that start out as just abstractions into teachings Here's how they become real. Here's how they take on flesh and bone and this is an encouragement This is why we have fellowship. This is what it means to build one another up in love and Encourage one another unto love and good works.

It is an encouragement when we are faithful it is an encouragement when we are diligent we can become a two-poss of the work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope and I say, you know, I really admire the way this particular believer has has Embodied this Teaching that I have heard and that I'm struggling with myself. I it's easier for me to to do now because I've seen it See it in the Apostle Paul see it in the Lord Jesus Christ Who did not think equality with God was a thing to cling to? Emptied himself the God of the universe took on the form of a servant came in the likeness of men humbled himself became obedient to the point of death and Because of that God has highly exalted him and we look at that example and we say you know what if I look far enough Ahead I can be patient. I can be faithful.

I can be obedient I've just got to do what the Lord Jesus did and look past the cross to the crown look past the people to God the Father this is what Paul is going to talk about now as we move into chapter 2 you became a 2-poss to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe remember I mentioned it in chapter 1 He mentions Macedonia and Achaia three different times. Why because that's their nation That's their fellow Greeks, that's everybody in every place your faith toward. God has gone out What are the three things you've got the messenger you've got the message And you've got the recipients and their reception of that message your faith toward God your response to this message delivered by these Apostles has gone out so that we do not need to say anything They themselves declare to us what kind of Entry we had to you what kind of

reception we had we the messengers and How you turn to God for models now? Here's this is really the the meat of it right here.

I think about this What's the point of having a messengers and a message and finding some recipients? Well, what's the point? there ought to be an effect and If the message is legitimate if the messengers are Authorized and the proper people and if the recipients receive this message properly All of it is Authenticated by the result think of a diet plan People can talk all day long you listen Saturday afternoon radio while you're working on your car crawling around under there can't change the station here comes after the garden show and after the financial advice show here comes the Nutrition and diet show and I'm stuck under there with my hands up to my elbows in grease and here they come on and oh you know your free radicals this and your Metabolize that and you've got too many levels of this and not enough levels that and they ramble on and on and it's all half the time it's it's a lot of Now not there is genuinely such a thing as free radicals, and there are some really good diet programs but there's others that are just complete fluff and They're saying you know let's go on the apricot pit diet, or let's go on the banana peel diet or the the ground Orange seeds diet or some such thing and they're talking about well You know in an orange seed there's this obscure chemical and it gets in there and your spleen reacts to it And well, it's just all nonsense. There's that you look it up. There's not a shred of support for it and so people say oh wow I've got to have that peach pit diet send it to me now and and You you get the thing in the mail and they send you all of this and then you try it out and and Month and a half two months two and a half months later you look at yourself, and you haven't lost any weight He's not been eating these over this peach pit powder.

I've been drinking this you know sawgrass green I don't know what it is. I've been doing this at any other and it's terrible, and I don't see any results well what happened Somewhere in there either the messenger is not legitimate the message is not true or Maybe all of that was true, but you didn't really stick to it. You said well.

Yeah, I'm drinking the peach pit The you know brew in the morning, but I'm eating a box of chocolates every afternoon And I don't understand why I'm not losing weight something has something has broken down right but What is it that really convinces people? Why why did Pritikin and some of these others really catch on three words? because it worked It worked right No nonsense if you do this thing it works person after person after person after person Here's a legitimate nutritionist who says you know you've really got to balance Diet and exercise and here's some things you should avoid here some things you can eat Here's the portions you should eat follow this plan The message is sound it partakes of truth and actual principles of metabolism and body functions and whatnot and people faithfully received it and Followed it and there are results and people say wow look at you. I you've look you must have lost 40 pounds Well, it's actually 45. How did you do it? I follow the next diet over here.

I'm gonna try that diet So the proof of the pudding is in the results This is what Paul is now going to talk about what he's talking about He says we're legitimate apostles you all received the word

in great enthusiasm and and faithfulness and obedience and look at what happened You turned from idols to serve the Living God You became an example and a forerunner for all of the other people throughout your region Macedonia and Achaia Your faith toward God has gone out. We don't need to say anything Not just them saying they have faith these people were Transformed and their altered life their change in their business practices their change in their priorities the change in the way They lived their lives and acted in other people Made a splash people were saying man. Have you been to Thessalonica lately? Have you been to Thessalonica lately? These it's a whole different thing.

I've been dealing with this guy for years. I went down there and and The whole transaction what was so different so much better I and I asked him I said what what got into you? How come you're not bartering me down and pinching every shekel and so on or whatever they spent drachmas or denarii and and he says Well, you know what? I I'm not so worried about money anymore I found the Lord Jesus Christ and and I realized that my treasures really in the future so I'm not trying to Skinflint and make a make a a bunch of money out of every single customer and I see that you've got a legitimate need here And I kind of believe in your cause so I'm giving you a break This just became notorious people hadn't seen anything like it it had a result it made a difference now Why is this important to us? Same thing? Is the source legitimate is the Bible the inspired Word of God did these prophets and apostles? have an authorized status in delivering this message is the message itself true and alive and powerful and Able to to rebuke and correct and instruct us in righteousness and thoroughly equip us for every good work Both of those things are true. So what remains it is our response.

What do we do with it? We don't want to be cherry cherry lemon. We don't want to be where the whole thing breaks down and becomes useless We don't want to be Judah in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ or in the days of the Apostles We don't want to be those Synagogue Jews in Thessalonica are in Philippi or other places where Paul the Apostle with the living truth of Christ the steward of the mysteries of God the forward advance of everything that the Jews have been living for for 1,500 years and They just completely missed it just like they missed the Lord Jesus himself We don't want to be those people how tragic to have this great Faithful set of communicators up to and including the Lord Jesus Christ himself bringing the Beautiful complete connected thoughts of God down to man and and right to us It's not up in heaven that we have to climb. It's not down in Shaul that we have to descend.

It's nearest it's in our hearts It's on our lips. It's in our songs. It's in our services.

It's in our fellowship. It's in our memory verses It's on our radios. It's on our Internet.

It's on our refrigerator magnets. It's in our Bibles Thousand books you can get it's everywhere how tragic if we are Dead to it and it has no effect. It makes no difference This is what Paul is talking about What manner of entry we had to you you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven the ultimate expression of this is is faith hope

and love You yourselves know brethren our coming to you is not in vain after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi as you know We were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.

These are the messengers There's the message despite the environment despite the opposition. They were bold They were faithful messengers and they spoke the gospel you angeli on Our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness nor was it in deceit? What's this talking about the messengers they weren't falsely motivated they weren't out for personal gain they weren't lining their pockets They weren't building an empire. They weren't aggrandizing themselves.

They weren't trying to to build a big Enormous edifice that had their name on it But as we have been approved by God We have been approved weighed and found Not wanting to be entrusted This this is the the passive of pistou You know pistou means to have faith pistis is the noun for faith. Well God has put faith in them. It's the same faith word God has put faith in us with the gospel we were entrusted with the gospel and So we speak God decided we were trustworthy and we are he gave us a message.

We speak it Not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts same word by the way as up there for approved dokimadzo we were dokimadzo and found that we were worthy to be entrusted with this gospel and God who tests the hearts neither at any time Did we use flattering words as you know nor a cloak for covetousness all of these things go back to the messenger How do you find a faithful messenger watch for one? That's not trying to gain anything by the delivery. He's not looking to you. He's looking to God God is witness.

This is basically theos Martus the word we get martyr from God is witness Nor did we seek glory from other men? We weren't trying to impress you. We weren't trying to get anything from you We weren't trying to get anything from anybody else. We're trying to impress anybody else Again, which of those three things is at the front the messenger? If everything is as it should be the messenger is going to be found faithful.

He will be obviously Approved by God and entrusted with this message Not out for personal gain not taking advantage of you or others when we might have made demands as Apostles of Christ Had the authority could have said hey, we're Apostles you're supposed to support us Eddie up Cross my palm with silver, but we were gentle among you as a nursing mother cherishes her own Children once again Paul is saying look What what's his purpose in bringing all this up? Is he now trying to impress them with all of their fine attributes? What's his purpose in bringing this up? Paul is saying cherry cherry cherry You know that this gospel is real because your messengers are faithful Paul isn't talking about this to build himself and Silas up He's reminding them as they face continued opposition continued criticism continued naysaying gainsaying Dismissive abusive Derisive comments from their neighbors and their friends and their community he says look You know this thing is real you remember what kind of messengers you received it from you can you remember what the message itself was? and you can see what effect it had in you and This is

True true true, that's how they know That it is worth continuing it is worth Remaining dedicated to but it takes reminder it takes reinforcement And so Paul is pointing these things out. We're gonna pause here and take our break We'll pick up in verse 7 where he says we were gentle among you as a nursing Mother cherishes her own children and very soon. He's going to be Moving from the characteristics of the messenger to the Power of the message, and it is just as powerful for us as us as it was for them But let's pause here and take our break