

1Thessalonians 12-03-09b

We pick up our study now in 1 Thessalonians. We're looking at what it means to be an imitator because as most of you know, many of you have memorized the verses that pertain to being an imitator of Christ. The word memetai, as I've already suggested, might be better translated since it is always accompanied by genomai, become comparable to.

And what this helps us to do is, first of all, we kind of shake out of this imitator thing with its baggage, you know, imitation leather and so on. And secondly, when we talk about something being comparable, we intuitively understand that it is going to be comparable in a particular way. It is going to become through some sort of a process, which speaks of time, like something else in a particular way.

And you can become like something else without actually knowing about that something else. This is how the Thessalonian church became like the churches in Judea without necessarily specifically knowing the whole history of persecution by the legalists and so on in Judea. But they became like them in the sense that they received the word, were persecuted for it, and sustained their motivation and their joy, their obedience, their faith, their hope, their love, and so on.

And so when they say you became, when Paul says you became imitators of the churches in Judea, they weren't looking over the pond at Judea saying, well, what did they do when they got persecuted? I'm just going to imitate them. They became comparable to them in this specific way. In other ways, they're quite different.

The churches in Judea had virtually no Gentiles. The churches in Judea were harassed in different ways with different outcomes. So it is a specific point of comparison.

Well, the lexicon tells us that when it is used as an encouragement, it means to use something as a model or to be like something that is a model. And our primary passage for this is 1 Corinthians 4, verse 16. Who wrote Corinthians? Paul.

It's a Pauline word in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 4, verse 16. And the verse, if you want to memorize this, it might take you a little time.

Therefore I urge you, imitate me. That's the verse. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.

Now, do you remember what I said about memetai in the first session? In the Greek, do you think this is an imperative from memetomai or something? What is the actual imperative here? Become an imitator of me. In Greek, this is literally unparakalo. Unparakalo, listen to the word.

Un means therefore, parakalo, as in parakaleo, as in paraclete. Therefore I encourage you. I come alongside and call to you.

I do the job in this sense that the Holy Spirit does, who is the paraclete. I will send you another

parakletos, Jesus said. I am going away, but I will send you another, how is it translated? Comforter, interesting shift there, because what does parakaleo mean? It means to exhort, to encourage, to come alongside and support.

And we have parakalo there, and here it's translated, I urge you. Jesus said, I'm going away, but I will send you another urger, another exhorter. But it's more comforting to say, I will send you a comforter, parakaleo, urge, motivate.

I will send you another drill sergeant, so to speak. Therefore, I urge you, I exhort you, I encourage you. Memetai gynesthe mu, gynesthe mu.

It's a form of gynomai. Now, what is the therefore, therefore? What was the other thing that we noticed in the first session tonight? Not only is it a process, become an imitator, but what else? There is some specific aspect in the context. He doesn't say become an apostle like me.

Go around and don't lead about a wife and write some inspired letters and be exactly like me. There's a specific something in the context. So when he says, therefore, I exhort you, become a memetai of me, we've got to look in the context and figure out, well, in what way are we supposed to be like Paul? Should we have plastic surgery and can be short, bald-headed, hook-nosed, squeaky voice? Should we run around trying to establish churches? In what way should we become a memetai of Paul? Well, he says, therefore, so we've got to look up above.

So let's go up to the beginning of this chapter, 1 Corinthians 4, because we need all of this to understand the exhortation. Let a man, chapter 4, verse 1, 1 Corinthians, let a man so consider us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

Already, we begin to see some context here, an area where we might expect Paul to urge people to be like him. He has been given a commission. Didn't he mention that in our first Thessalonian letter? We have been approved by God to be the messengers of the gospel to you.

And God is witness. We have been faithful to that commission. You are witnesses, how faithful we were among you to deliver that gospel as mothers and as fathers both.

Like a mother, like a father, we were faithful. God has approved us. 2 Corinthians 6, verse 1, 1 Corinthians, let a man consider us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

It is required in a steward that one be found faithful, a faithful steward or reliable steward. But with me, it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. I'm already lost.

What? If it is required in a steward that a man be found faithful, well, how do you know if he's faithful or not unless you judge him? And then Paul says, well, I think it's a very small thing to be judged. In fact, I don't even judge myself. Well, how do you know if you're being, how can you say

you're a faithful steward if you don't judge yourself to see if you're a faithful steward? Well, again, we've got a problem with the English translation here.

When we get back to the Greek, it really helps us a lot. Now, you may remember, some of you may know the Greek word for judge. It's krino, K-R-I-N-O.

But we don't just have plain old unadorned, unaccompanied krino here. Krino is used with some prefixes. So, when Paul says moral variation is required in stewards that one be found faithful, but with me, it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court.

Now, when he says human court, think context again. This is 1 Corinthians. I hear that there are wars and divisions among you, and not only that, but you're taking each other to court over it.

Do you not know that we shall judge angels? Can't you settle these disputes within the house of God, among yourselves, in the power of the Spirit, prayerfully, lovingly, cordially? Why are you suing each other in human court? Everything ties together. Context is everything. Paul says it's a very small thing.

Don't be trying to take me to human court. Well, this also gives us some insight into the word judge, because this is anakrino. This is judging Anna.

We're going to take Anna, and we're going to, no. Anna, A-N-A in Greek means, in this case, up. Sometimes it means again.

When we say I'm going to read up on something, we're going to go read something for the first time in Greek. If you say I'm going to read up, you say I'm going to read again. Anna means up.

In this case, it means up. Judge up, or up-judge. You say, well, that's very helpful.

It's a small thing that I should be up-judged by anyone. So, we need some help from historical usage of this. This was an examination.

This was looking into something based on a charge, or looking into something based on a potential further action. For example, there is a slave in the slave market. You say, well, that's a good young, of course, we would never say this because we don't believe in slavery, but let's say we did.

Let's say we wanted to buy a slave. We would go to the slave market, and here's a nice, young, healthy male who looks like he could do work in the fields. Here's a nice, capable young lady that looks like she could do domestic chores, help the wife with the cooking, whatever it might be.

But there is something potential. I'm thinking of buying this slave. And this is exactly how the word is used.

I can give you a quote from Greek historical literature, where a man said, I went to the market

and I anacrenode this slave. Not just examined him, not just judged him, but I was looking at him with this later decision in mind. In a court case, in a court situation, this is sort of like a grand jury.

A charge is brought, and so they look into the matter to see if it should be brought to trial, this kind of thing. So the closest English translation I can come up with is review. I've heard that there's something up with this particular thing, this particular person.

I need to review it so I'll know what we should do. Somebody is making charges. We need to look into this.

We need to review it and see if these charges have any merit. Or somebody has said this is a really good deal. I need to look into it and see if this is something I might want to take advantage of.

The best colloquial modern synonym for anacreno would be Google. I'm going to Google that. I'm going to check it out.

I'm going to see what's up. Anacreno. Now, go back to 1 Corinthians.

We are stewards of the mysteries of God, and it is required that a steward be found faithful. Paul says, now let me tell you what I mean when I say that I should be found faithful. Be found faithful by whom? He says it's a very small thing that you should review me, that you should be trying to look into me and trying to ascertain if I'm a faithful steward or not, or if you were going to do like you're doing to each other and take me to court to try to figure out if I'm a faithful steward of God's mysteries.

That to me is a very small thing. Now, there are certain things where you should take note. Paul says in Thessalonians, you are witnesses of how we lived among you.

You can anacreno that. Did we flatter you with a view toward getting money from you? Did we butter you up and then soak you, take you, cheat you, chisel you, flimflam you, con you? That is something they could be anacrenoed for. Remember the three things.

You get the messenger, the message, and the recipients. Also, now we're talking about the recipients actually being comparable to the messengers. Paul says that's all legitimate.

He makes a big point of that in Thessalonians. What is he saying here? When it comes to whether or not we are faithful stewards of God's mysteries, are you going to try to figure out if the Bible is true? How do you check this? Now, this is a current problem. Think about this.

Somebody says, well, you know, this Bible, how do you know if when it describes heaven and golden streets and heavenly arcs of the covenant and all of this? It's unverifiable. It's unscientific. How do you know there's life after death? The Bible tells you there's life after death.

Well, I see no scientific evidence of any life after death. We have no measuring instruments that tell us that there are souls in some other dimension that are functioning and we saw them go and the body got lighter. You know, there's no scientific evidence for this.

You're just being dumb and believing this because there's no evidence. There's a very fine distinction here, and I hope I can get it across adequately so you can catch it. In Thessalonians, Paul says, there are things that you can easily judge about us, that you witnessed about us, and if you want to know whether or not we are valid messengers, you are qualified to judge the way we behaved.

But what he's telling the Corinthians is, a man should consider us as servants of Christ. Once you have ascertained that we are indeed servants of Christ, not serving our lusts, not con men, not chiselers, not snake oil salesmen, once you've determined that, there are certain things that you do not question the apostle about, and that is, I think, Paul, you're a wonderful guy and you're certainly a great example of self-sufficiency and grace and so on, but this whole doctrine of the mystery of Christ, you're just wrong about that. I've looked into this, I've examined it, and I think your doctrine is faulty.

Think of an Old Testament prophet. Here's Moses, come back to Egypt after 40 years. Pharaoh, God says, let my people go.

Hey, you Israelites, God has come, it's time for us to stand up and march out. Look at this leprosy on my arm. Look at this river turning to blood.

Look at the staff turning to a snake and all these authenticating signs from God. He is vetted and authenticated as a genuine messenger of God. Once that has been established, this guy is in fact a steward of God's Word, and he's delivering it.

It is not your place to start slicing and dicing and parsing his message. If he is God's man, he's been approved by God as the messenger, and he's bringing the message, take the message. Don't start reviewing the message and putting it in a human court to figure out, this is what happens in a lot of modern biblical scholarship.

They will acknowledge that Paul wrote the letter, and they'll acknowledge that Paul is universally recognized as an apostle of the church, but did Paul actually see Jesus on the Damascus Road, or is this a rhetorical device? Did Paul actually have revelation from God about the way the church should run, or is he sort of responding on the fly, trying to just manage and do what any one of us would do in terms of keeping everybody kind of on the straight and narrow with his own imagination? Paul says, look, once you have understood and verified for yourself through the signs and indications that God has given that we are in fact valid people, a man should consider us as servants of Christ and stewards. Once you have made that decision, you need to concentrate on understanding the message, not questioning the message. Does that make

sense? The validity of the message is God's province.

God and the messenger have to figure that out between themselves, and I'm not talking about pastors now. I'm talking about apostles, prophets, authors of inspired scripture. We do not need to question the inspired scriptures as to their validity, because the messengers have been demonstrated by God to be approved.

Let a man so consider us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. And a steward must be found faithful, but it's not your job to figure out if I've somehow messed up the message, and that it should be taken with a grain of salt. If you recognize me as a steward, then you need to focus on the message and figure out how to process and deal with the message.

Don't take the message to court. It is a very small thing that I should be on a crenote, reviewed, that I should be sort of on prospectus. Well, it's a provisional acceptance.

Let me hear what you have to say, and I might accept it or I might not. I really need to kind of review this and look into it a little bit. I don't know if I want to buy this slave or not, type of thing.

He says, look, God has already shown you we are stewards, and this is the mystery I'm declaring to you. I am a faithful man, and if any lack of faithfulness is involved, that's God's province to judge, not yours. You don't second guess the message once the messenger has been vetted.

That's the whole idea here. So, this is why he says, in fact, I don't even second guess myself. I don't review myself.

I don't question, gee, I wonder if maybe I just ate something, and that's what made me think that this is what God said. This dream and vision, maybe it was just my fears, my id was talking to my ego or something, and maybe I just dreamed it all. Maybe that thing with the Damascus Road, maybe I was just sunstroke, as a lot of people have alleged.

Paul says, look, if there are people, if some of you, quote, unquote, are trying to judge my anachronism, that's a very small thing. Take it to a human court, small thing. I don't even second guess myself with regard to the stewardship of the mystery, for I know of nothing against myself.

I see no reason to question it. In other words, a review takes place when there is an occasion. I don't go down and review slaves if I'm not going to buy.

Now, this won't make any sense to women who shop when they have no need to buy anything. But Paul says, I don't shop when I don't have to buy. I don't go down and review the slaves when I don't need to buy one.

But he says, I'm not justified by this. He who judges me is the Lord. And he changes words here.

He says, it's a small thing that I should be judged by you. That's anachronism. When he says, I do

not even judge myself, that's anachrino.

Review, looking to some subsequent transaction. He says, he who judges me is the Lord, and that's anachrino. So we've got three anachrinos.

You all shouldn't. I don't. God will anachrino me.

Therefore, judge nothing before the time. And this is the shift in verb. Now, it's just plain old crino.

What does plain old crino mean? What does judge mean? We've covered judging in the past. Judge not, lest ye be judged. For with the judgment that you mete out to others, that is what you will be judged with.

What does judge mean in a biblical sense? Plain old crino. I determine your guilt, and I assign and execute a sentence. Why is it that we can discern and not judge? How does that work? I look at a fellow believer and I say, you're in the wrong.

And that's okay. When would I be judging to look at a fellow believer and determine in my own mind, that person is out of line. That pastor is doing the wrong thing, fleecing his sheep.

That pastor is doing the wrong thing, distorting the scriptures for his own purposes. I can discern that. And if somebody looked at me and thought I was messing up, they could do the same thing.

When would it become judging? When would it become crino? I will now make him pay. I will pass sentence. And this is what we have to avoid with one another.

We have to avoid saying, this person was wrong to hurt my feelings or treat me the way that they did. I discern that. I have not crossed any boundaries as of yet.

I can look from the standard of the Word of God and say, this person was excessively bitter and angry. This person held a grudge. This person treated me in an unbiblical way.

I'm fine. If I say, I'll show you. I'm going to cold shoulder you.

I'm going to deprive you. I'm going to cut you off. I'm going to return the hurt to you in some way.

Now I am doing crino. I have passed sentence and I am now going to execute that sentence. Your penalty for hurting me, for sinning against me, for causing me some kind of pain or harm or emotional turbulence is this.

I am going to do thus. Now I have crino'd. Paul says, don't judge anything before the time.

Don't do like these Jews in the synagogue and decide that Paul is distorting Scripture and messed up on the doctrine of the Messiah. Therefore, we can beat him and tear his clothes off and run him out of town and take his hosts and take everything that they own. These people in

Thessalonica crino'd and they are just three kinds of wrong.

Therefore, judge nothing before the time. It doesn't mean discern nothing before the time. Don't evaluate anything before the time.

Don't be passing sentence and treating people in specific ways outside the Scripture. Now everything has got to balance. Sometimes you discern that somebody is in the wrong and you have to separate.

But the separation has to be done in a way that is not an infliction of penalty. You are not separating because you want to penalize them or punish them. You are separating because it is necessary to your spiritual function and purity.

The separation is not punishment. It is a functional necessity. If I have a bad apple in a drawer full of apples in my refrigerator, I am going to take that apple out and separate it.

Not because I want to punish the apple for going bad, but because I want to preserve my other good apples. When we do take action, Paul is going to say later on in one of his letters to the people, he is going to say in 2 Thessalonians, he that does not work should not eat. Well, you slacker, we are taking your plate away from you.

We are going to punish you for being an idler. Is that the idea? No. There is a completely different dynamic there.

We are not to judge. We are not to inflict punishment on one another. Any quote unquote church discipline, any acts of separation or placing distance are preservative in nature, not penalties.

So, judge nothing before the time until the Lord comes. This doesn't mean don't notice when people are sinning. Don't notice when people are out of line or in transgression or in doctrinal error or functional error.

It has nothing to do with that. Once you have made that determination, don't punish them. Don't elbow God out of the way and say, vengeance is mine, I will repay.

Until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the heart? Something that you might have thought to punish, God may reveal that there were counsels and hidden things that you didn't know about. You see this all the time as a plot device in TV shows and things where somebody goes on a rampage for vengeance and they shoot a guy and then come to find out he wasn't really the culprit, didn't know everything, didn't have all the facts. We're not qualified to do judgment in the sense of measuring out justice.

We can discern, we can operate within the light of our discernment, but we are not to crino until the Lord comes who will bring to light hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the heart. These things are evaluated by God in the light of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

There can be mitigating and extenuating circumstances.

There can be things that are completely different. It isn't what we do, it is why we do it. That's why God is the faithful judge and he has entrusted all and delegated all judgment to the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ will judge.

That's why it is the judgment seat of Christ and not the judgment seat of the Father. Then each one's praise will come from God. Notice not each one's punishment will come from God, each one's praise.

Now, we're still looking for our understanding of memetai here. Now these things brethren I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes. He says I've used myself as an example, we're a faithful steward, but you shouldn't be judging us.

I don't prejudge, I don't take myself under review in terms of what the content of the message is and so on. I've transferred this to myself and Apollos for your sake so that you may learn in us, through us, by means of us. This is the dative, locative, instrumental use here.

So that you may learn in us, circle it, this is part of memetai. I've transferred these things figuratively. I've used us as an example so that you may learn in us, what? Not to think beyond what is written.

If this counsel of God, if this mystery stewardship is the written word of God, don't go beyond it. Don't second guess it. Don't decide that, well, even though these guys are by every possible measure vetted messengers of God, I just think maybe they've screwed the message up.

Paul says don't do it. Don't go beyond what is written. So that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

Remember in Corinthians, I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Cephas, I'm of Peter, I'm of Christ. They were taking sides. I think Christ's message is better than Paul's message.

This happens today. Paul took Christianity and messed it all up. We need to get back to Christ for Christianity.

Peter's the Pope. He's the guy that's got the real thing. We should all be Catholics.

Apollos, poor guy, none of his followers have survived. We don't have any letters from Apollos and nobody knows what his faction was trying to push. But it has to do with the message.

Why would you say I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas, I am of Christ? Why would they say that? They perceived differences in the message. Nobody's disputing that these are messengers from God, but instead of trying to harmonize and find the common ground, they're trying to parse and differentiate the message. For who makes you to differ? In verse 7. And the

word there for differ isn't differ at all.

It's diakrino. Diakrino. And not anakrino, diakrino.

This dia means through, right? The dia meter is the line you draw through the center of a circle. If you pass through a country, you pass dia, that region. Diakrino, judge through.

We were up judging, now we're through judging. And it almost literally means that in English in a weird way because diakrino was used for settling out of court. You know what? We've looked into this and instead of deciding that it needs to go and be properly adjudicated, we're just going to settle this between ourselves.

We'll decide the truth of the matter on our own. And it was the word that was used for settling out of court. So when Paul says, who makes you diakrino? He said, who makes you settle? Why have you settled on an answer to this yourselves? You've decided, well, Apollos is the real messenger and his is the real message.

You've diakrino'd it. You haven't let the judge in heaven be the arbiter. You haven't said, well, God has approved this messenger.

I need to listen to this message and I need to concentrate on finding a harmony because all of these messages are right. I don't have to pick between them. This is why Paul says in the first chapter to why are you trying to pick between? Is Christ divided? You have all things in Christ.

All of this is true. You need to be looking for the synthesis, not for picking one little strand and throwing the rest out. Who told you you could settle out of court? Who makes you diakrino? That from one another is an interpretation.

You can scratch it out. And what do you have that you did not receive? You say, well, Apollos is right and everybody else is wrong. You got that from Apollos.

How is that any better than what others have received from Paul or what somebody else received from Peter or what somebody else says they received from Christ? Everything you have is second hand. You're judging everything at the second hand, so why are you just picking one? You're not qualified to settle out of court and whatever you have chosen, you're still relying on the integrity of the witness of the communicator. Now, if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you hadn't received it, as if you are in a position to judge and you can take credit for its rightness now? You are already full.

You are rich. You have reigned as kings without us and indeed I could wish you did reign so that we might also reign with you. We'll leave that for later.

I think God has displayed us the apostles last as men condemned to death. We have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are

wise.

We are weak. Just look at Paul's half of this. We are fools for Christ's sake.

We are weak. We are dishonored. We hunger and thirst.

We are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. Even when we are reviled, we bless. Being persecuted, we endure.

Being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now. I don't write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children, I warn you, you might have a myriad of instructors in Christ.

That's the Greek word, myriades, and it literally means 10,000. You might have a myriad of pedagogues in Christ. You do not have many fathers in Christ.

I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore, I urge you, become imitators of me. So what is the context? Paul says, I'm not questioning the integrity of my message.

I'm not deciding that Peter's message is better than mine, or Apollos' message is better than mine, or mine is better than Apollos or Peter. You should not judge, throw me out before the time. Look at the example we have set.

We are working on your behalf, despite all of these setbacks and challenges and persecutions and disadvantages. We've become the offscouring of the world in dedication to getting you this message, and you're setting yourself up as grand jury and settling out of court, deciding that my message should be thrown away. You need to go back to that fundamental equation that he has given us in 1 Thessalonians.

Look at the integrity of the messenger. Look at the accompanying signs and authenticating work that God the Holy Spirit has done. You cannot throw that out.

So be comparable to me in dedication to the Word of God. Remember in both chapter 1 and chapter 2, when the Word of God came, you became memetai. You became memetai through the Word of God.

This Word has got power. The authentication, the way you know that you don't have to worry about whether the messenger messed up the message, is look at the power of the message to transform. Look at what it does to the messengers who carry it.

They endure all things for your sake. They are models of the Lord Jesus who endured all things for our sake. So become comparable to us as we are comparable to Christ in dedication to the integrity of this message, recognition of the power of the message.

It is the Word of God that is alive and powerful. So, becoming is something we'll see as we move

through this chapter, but the area of comparison is attitude toward the message. The reason you're here in Bible class tonight, the reason you are listening to the sound of my voice, whether now or in some future point by recording, the reason you're listening is in some way, shape or form, you recognize the importance of the message, the power of the message, and you can have confidence.

If you ask, it will be given. If you seek, you will find. If you knock, it will be opened.

You can have confidence in the message that God will get you the right message and that that message has power. You know that it's the right message, that you shouldn't have picked Buddhism instead, because you will see the transformative work that it does. It never leads to flattery.

It never leads to covetous exploitation. It never leads to brow-beating and arrogant subservience. It is marked by selflessness on the part of those who embrace it.

Jesus Christ was selfless. Love is sacrificial towards self. The messengers, look at his litany of persecutions.

In 1 Thessalonians, what does he say? You received it with much affliction and you kept your joy. You were selfless. You see the power of it.

You know what manner of men we were among you. You know what kind of people you became in the light of it. It's a good message.

Don't be anacrino-ing it. Don't be diacrino-ing it. Don't be crino-ing people who are trying to bring it to you.

Focus on the living, breathing, powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder Word of God. This is your life. This is your future.

This is your gift from God. Don't get distracted by people. Don't get distracted by circumstances.

Don't even get distracted by yourself. Paul says, I don't even sit around examining my own spiritual navel. It is the Word of God.

It is the power of God for deliverance to those who point their faith at it. Romans 1.16. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the power of God for deliverance to those who believe.

Don't let anything get in the way of your faith. Don't be worrying about the wrinkles in the messenger, if any. Don't be worrying about the wrinkles in your own self, if any.

It is the power of God for deliverance. This is the overarching message in 1 Thessalonians. Why does he spend so much time talking about what kind of men they were? Why does he talk so

much about the way they received it? Why does he talk about the churches in Judea? Look at the transforming power of God.

People would wilt and fail and give up and go away if it was not a real message. But you became comparable to the people in Judea. You became comparable to us because when you saw the value of that Word, nothing can get in your way.

You people are going on despite all of this negative opposition and challenge and reproach and criticism and loss and sacrifice, but you have seen the light. You have seen the value of this message and you are not letting anything get in your way. This is what *ginomai memetai* means, to become an imitator.

And you see it carry through from Christ to Paul to these faithful churches all the way down to the present day. We want to be that kind of imitator. We are dedicated to the veracity and the power and the beauty and the glory of God's Word most fully revealed in the incarnate Lord Jesus Christ.

That is how to be an imitator. How do we become an imitator? This is what Paul is going to move into because they are having a little bit of trouble. Some of their following and some of their comparability is starting to suffer.

This is what Paul is going to address in this next part of 1 Thessalonians. He says, you became imitators of us and of the churches, but Timothy has come back and he tells me we are starting to lose it. We are starting to shake and vibrate off the platform here.

So let me give you some information. Let me give you some more of the Word of God that will keep you a faithful *memetai*. It will help you continue to become more and more closely conformable to that great image.

So this is where the letter is going. We are at a real kind of turning point in chapter 2 and the rest of the letter is going to tell us about that process of becoming like the apostles, like the Lord Jesus Christ and our dedication to God through His Word. Let's close here for tonight in a word of prayer.

Father thank you that you have not just given us a calling without giving us instructions. You haven't asked us to meet a standard without showing us how to do it and empowering us to do it. We thank you for the content of this great letter, for the faithful ministry of the Apostle Paul and for the Thessalonian believers who serve as an example for us even as the Judean churches were an example for them.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will continue to impress these things on our hearts, cause them to live and flame in our souls so that we will be motivated and encouraged to look forward to that day of the Lord Jesus return and the ultimate judgment of all things in and through Him where

righteousness will reign, where justice will be implemented and where our following in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus and the faithful believers in the past will be vindicated and brought to fruition. We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified in our group and in our individual lives. We ask it in His name.

Amen.