



Thoughts from First Thessalonians ...

Imploring as a Father

Dads love their children. Sometimes, because of the sin that so easily besets the human race, that love is not perfectly shown, nor perfectly carried out. But, especially if the dads are Christians, they really want the best for their children — guiding them, developing their characters, getting them educated, bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. One of the greatest challenges, of course, is for the initiative, character, and discipline to become the child's own as he moves into adulthood. The father can want with all his heart for his sons and daughters to walk uprightly with the Lord, but at some point the now-adult child has to function on his own; the nestlings must flutter out of the nest and begin to fly without being propped up by their

parents. However, if the communication and relationship has been maintained, dads still have many opportunities to encourage and strengthen their grown children, and the relationship often becomes friend-to-friend and partner-to-partner.

- **How we were** — Paul has the brethren in Thessalonica call to mind his and his companions' work ethic and conduct while they labored in the midst of great persecution from the local Jews. "You are witnesses," he brings forward, "how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children" (1 Thessalonians 2:10,11). The key words are *each one!* Every single saint was very important to Paul, and he earnestly desired each's salvation and spiritual growth. Thus the apostle pictures himself as standing along the course of each of the brethren's long run, "exhorting and encouraging and imploring." Exhortation is demonstrated by a coach's firing up one of his players; encouragement would be complimenting the player on doing a great job on the last play and saying to go and play great again; imploring would be working with a player struggling with an attitude that needs improvement or helping him fight through frustration. Paul states that's "how we were!"
- **Walking worthy** — But this is not football or basketball game. This is the road of eternal life. Thus the encouragement and imploring was "so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12). There are those who insist that saints are always rotten sinners saved by grace. The word of God paints a picture that the brothers and sisters of Jesus can walk in a manner that imitates the character of the Lord, following in His footsteps. How exciting it is, that through the word of God and help from the indwelling Holy Spirit, the saint can present himself worthy of God!
- **Kingdom and glory** — The Father, through the gospel, is currently *calling* people out of this world into His kingdom — the church of the living God. He is also calling the brethren to participate in His glory now, the glory that shines in the inner man of the newly immersed saint. Those "whom He called," affirmed Paul, "these He also justified, and whom He justified, He also glorified" (Romans 8:30). But just as there is participation in the present kingdom and present glory, so there will be participation in the eternal kingdom and eternal glory! And the great God and Father of all has called each individual saint into both.

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portant to Paul.*

The apostle Paul knew how fraught with danger is the path that leads to eternal life. The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life are lurking around every corner. The challenges of continually facing persecution and disappointment are great, and fighting the battle against discouragement while the outer man is decaying are great. Hence Paul and the others were "exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one as a father would his own children." And through the scripture, he still is!

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