

HWMR: LIVING AND SERVING ACCORDING TO GOD’S ECONOMY CONCERNING THE CHURCH, (Week 7)

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 1:16; 4:12; 1 Thes. 2:1-12

The Pattern of the Apostle Paul

1 Timothy 1:16	But because of this I was shown mercy, that in me, the foremost, Jesus Christ might display all His long-suffering for a pattern to those who are to believe on Him unto eternal life.
1 Timothy 4:12	Let no one despise your youth, but be a pattern to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.
1 Thessalonians 2:1	For you yourselves know, brothers, our entrance toward you, that it has not been in vain.
1 Thessalonians 2:2	But having suffered previously and having been outrageously treated, even as you know, in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much struggle.
1 Thessalonians 2:3	For our exhortation is not out of deception nor out of uncleanness nor in guile;
1 Thessalonians 2:4	But even as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who proves our hearts.
1 Thessalonians 2:5	For neither were we found at any time with flattering speech, even as you know, nor with a pretext for covetousness; God is witness.
1 Thessalonians 2:6	Nor did we seek glory from men, neither from you nor from others, though we could have stood on our authority as apostles of Christ.
1 Thessalonians 2:7	But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children.
1 Thessalonians 2:8	Yearning in this way over you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved to us.
1 Thessalonians 2:9	For you remember, brothers, our labor and hardship: While working night and day so as not to be burdensome to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.
1 Thessalonians 2:10	You are witnesses, as well as God, how in a holy and righteous and blameless manner we conducted ourselves toward you who believe,
1 Thessalonians 2:11	Just as you know how we were to each one of you, as a father to his own children, exhorting you and consoling you and testifying,
1 Thessalonians 2:12	So that you might walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Day 1

1 Timothy 1:16 - But because of this I was shown mercy, that in me, the foremost, Jesus Christ might display all His long-suffering for a pattern to those who are to believe on Him unto eternal life.

Philippians 1:21 - For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

I. Paul was a pattern to the believers of **living Christ, magnifying Christ, and ministering Christ as the Spirit in his spirit for the building up of the Body of Christ—1 Tim. 1:16; 4:12; Rom. 8:16; Phil. 1:19-21a, 25; 2 Cor. 3:3, 6:**

A. The Lord appeared to Paul to appoint him as a **minister** and a **witness** both of the things in which Paul had seen Him and of the things in which He would appear to Paul—Acts 26:16-19; cf. 1:8; 23:11; 20:20, 31:

1. Paul lived a life that was **fully dignified**, with the **highest standard** of human virtues expressing the **most excellent** divine attributes, a life that **resembled** the one that the Lord Himself had lived on the earth years before—Eph. 4:20-21; Phil. 4:5-8, 11-13.
 2. The wonderful, excellent, and mysterious God-man, who lived in the Gospels, continued to live through Paul as one of His many members; Paul was a **living witness** of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and God-exalted Christ—Acts 1:8; Phil. 2:2, 5; 1:8; 2:13; Acts 27:22, 24-25; 28:3-9, see footnote 1 on v. 9.
- B. Paul took Christ as everything—as his **living, pattern, goal**, and **secret**—Phil. 1:19-21a; 2:5-16; 3:7-14; 4:11-13.
- C. Paul was **infused with God** to shine forth God in the ministry of the new covenant, which is the ministry of the Spirit, the ministry of righteousness, and the ministry of reconciliation—2 Cor. 3:18; 4:1; 3:6, 8-9; 5:18-20.
- D. Because Paul was a **pattern** to the believers (1 Tim. 1:16), he could charge Timothy to be a pattern “in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (4:12).

Our **daily living** is an indication of **what we are** and **where we are** concerning the experience of Christ. We may talk a great deal about Christ, but in our daily living we may not actually be in Christ. Instead, we may be in our culture, national philosophy, or domestic logic. When we are in the church meetings or with the saints, we may have a lot to say about Christ. But in our daily life we may live in our national philosophy, domestic logic, or family concept.

Both we and the Lord have come to a point of crisis. A critical situation definitely exists among many of us today. Yes, we have seen the vision that Christ is our life, that He is the life-giving Spirit, and that we are one spirit with Him, and we talk a great deal about Christ. However, in our **practical life day by day**, **we do not live Christ every moment**. We are not found by others in Christ continually. We may be very familiar with Philippians 3:7-10. But how much have we gained Christ, how much are we found in Christ, and how much do we experientially know Christ? Because of our urgent need to experience Christ, it is not my burden in these messages to present Bible teachings. It is to **minister Christ** to the saints that they may grow in the divine life, which is Christ Himself, and may advance in the experience of Christ and enjoyment of Christ. (*Life-Study of Philippians, chapter 21*)

Day 2

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 - For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died; And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.

- E. Paul is our pattern in his being an **ambassador of Christ** (Eph. 6:20; 2 Cor. 5:18-20) with the following qualifications:
1. He did not live by what he was or could do but by the **immortal life**, which is **Christ Himself**—v. 4; John 14:6; Col. 3:4; Gal. 2:20.
 2. He was determined to gain the honor of being well pleasing to Christ in all things—**living** Christ, **growing** Christ, **expressing** Christ, and **propagating** Christ in every respect—2 Cor. 5:9; Col. 1:10.
 3. He was constrained by the love of Christ to no longer **live** to himself but to live to the Lord; for us to live “to the Lord” means that we are under the Lord’s direction and control and that we want to fulfill His requirements, satisfy His desires, and complete what He intends—2 Cor. 5:14-15.
 4. He did not know others **outwardly** according to the flesh in the old creation but inwardly according to the spirit in the new creation—vv. 16-17; Gal. 6:15.

- F. Paul is our pattern by **living** and **servicing** God in his regenerated spirit by the indwelling Christ, the life-giving Spirit, not in his soul by the power and ability of the soul; he was a spiritual man who sowed unto the Spirit to bear the fruit of the Spirit—Rom. 1:9; 7:6; 8:4, 16; Gal. 3:3; 5:16, 22-25; 6:8; 2 Cor. 4:5; 1 Cor. 2:15; 2 Cor. 2:13.
- G. Paul is our pattern in his being **Body-conscious** and **Body-centered**, doing everything **in** the Body, **through** the Body, and **for** the Body—Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:1-6, 15-16; Col. 2:19; Acts 28:13-15 and footnote 2 on v. 15.

Day 3

1 Thessalonians 2:1-3 - For you yourselves know, brothers, our entrance toward you, that it has not been in vain. But having suffered previously and having been outrageously treated, even as you know, in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much struggle. For our exhortation is not out of deception nor out of uncleanness nor in guile;

II. The best way to shepherd people, to cherish and nourish them, is to give them a **proper pattern**; Paul fed his spiritual children with his own living of Christ— 1 Thes. 2:1-12; 2 Cor. 1:23—2:14; 11:28-29; 1 Cor. 9:22; Acts 20:28:

- A. Paul and his co-workers were a **pattern of the glad tidings** that they spread; “you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake”—1 Thes. 1:5b.
- B. In the church the most important thing is the **person**; the person is the **way**, and the person is the Lord’s **work**; what you are is what you do—John 5:19; 6:57; Phil. 1:19-26; Acts 20:18-35; Matt. 7:17-18; 12:33-37.
- C. We need to follow the pattern of the apostles to **pay more attention to life** than to work—John 12:24; 2 Cor. 4:12.
- D. The apostles not only preached the gospel but also **lived it**; their ministering of the gospel was not only by word but also by a life that displayed the power of God, a life in the Holy Spirit and in the assurance of faith—1 Thes. 1:5.
- E. The saints in Thessalonica became **imitators** of the apostles; this led them to follow the Lord, to take Him as their pattern, thus making them a pattern to all other believers—vv. 6-7.
- F. The apostle Paul stressed repeatedly the apostles’ entrance toward the believers; this shows that their manner of life played a great role in infusing the gospel into the new converts—vv. 5, 9; 2:1:
 1. The apostles were **struggling and speaking** the gospel to the Thessalonians in the boldness of God—v. 2.
 2. The apostles were **free from deception, uncleanness, and guile**—v. 3.

Day 4

1 Thessalonians 2:4-5 - But even as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who proves our hearts. For neither were we found at any time with flattering speech, even as you know, nor with a pretext for covetousness; God is witness.

3. The apostles were first **tested** and **approved** by God and then were entrusted by Him with the gospel; hence, their speaking, the preaching of the gospel, was not of themselves to please men but of God to please Him; God proved, examined, and tested their hearts continually—v. 4; Psa. 26:2; 139:23-24; 2 Cor. 1:12; 6:6; 7:3.

4. The apostles were **neither** found with **flattering speech** nor with a **pretext for covetousness**—1 Thes. 2:5:
 - a. To have any pretext for covetousness is to **peddle** or **adulterate** the word of God—2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2.
 - b. It is also to **pretend** to be godly for the sake of gain—1 Tim. 6:5; Titus 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:3.

When he would hear that a certain preacher had successfully gained a large following or that a certain Christian worker was doing a big work, he would frequently tell us, his trainees, that the real work is the **outflow of life**.

With the gifts, knowledge, and ability he had, he could easily have acquired a large following in Christianity. Watchman Nee, however, did not misuse his gifts and knowledge in this way. He always took **pains to restrict himself** in the function of his gifts and the use of his knowledge in order to ensure that his work was **fully in life, of life, with life, and was life itself**. As long as he had the assurance that his ministry was the outflow of life, he was satisfied.

His ministry began from the year 1922, and the church in Shanghai, which was fully under his ministry, was raised up in 1927. By the end of 1933, when I first visited him in Shanghai, the number of saints meeting there in the Lord's recovery was slightly over one hundred. In February 1928 he held an overcomer conference in Shanghai. The attendants at this conference included all the co-workers and seeking ones throughout the country. The attendance was a little over three hundred. After he had been in his ministry for over six years, the number of saints in the Lord's recovery at that time was still so small. However, he was not disappointed; rather, he was strongly encouraged because he realized that **that small number was the issue of his ministry**. Praise the Lord! Because Watchman Nee was not interested in the outward work, the life-issue of his ministry has flowed throughout the whole earth. That part of his ministry which has flooded today's Christianity through his books was not his work but rather the **very life** that issued from his work. To him work did not mean much; life meant everything. In my whole life, he is the only person I have known who paid more attention to life than to work. (*Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, chapter 11*)

Day 5

1 Thessalonians 2:6-7 - Nor did we seek glory from men, neither from you nor from others, though we could have stood on our authority as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children.

5. The apostles **did not seek glory from men**—1 Thes. 2:6a:
 - a. To seek glory from men is a **real temptation** to every Christian worker; many have been devoured and spoiled by this matter—cf. 1 Sam. 15:12.
 - b. Lucifer became God's adversary, Satan, because of **glory-seeking**; anyone who seeks glory from men is a follower of Satan—Ezek. 28:13-17; Isa. 14:12-15; Matt. 4:8-10.
 - c. How much we will be used by the Lord and how long our usefulness will last depend on whether we seek glory from men—cf. John 7:17-18; 5:39-44; 12:43; 2 Cor. 4:5.
6. The apostles **did not stand on their own authority** or **dignity** as apostles of Christ—1 Thes. 2:6b:
 - a. To assert authority, dignity, or right in Christian work **damages** that work; the Lord Jesus, while on earth, gave up His dignity (John 13:4-5), and the apostle preferred not to use his right (1 Cor. 9:12).
 - b. If we follow this pattern, we will kill a deadly disease germ in the Body of Christ, the **germ of assuming a position**—Matt. 20:20-28.

7. The apostles cherished the believers and yearned over them as a **nursing mother** would cherish and yearn over her own children—1 Thes. 2:7-8; cf. Gal. 4:19; Isa. 49:14-15; 66:12-13:
 - a. To cherish people is to make them **happy**, to **comfort** them, to make them feel that you are **pleasant** to them, **easy to be contacted** in everything and in every way.
 - b. To cherish people in our **natural humanity is not genuine**; we must cherish people with the Lord's presence as the charming factor, as the reality of resurrection.
 - c. Cherishing includes nourishing; to nourish people is to **feed** them with the **all-inclusive Christ** in His full ministry of three stages—Eph. 5:29.

We need to contact and take care of others, sinners and believers, as the apostle Paul, the top apostle, did in contacting people and taking care of people's need. In 2 Corinthians 11:28-29 Paul says, "*Apart from the things which have not been mentioned, there is this: the crowd of cares pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?*" This unveils the care of a proper shepherd.

Our attitude may be that everyone is weak but we are not weak. We may have the feeling that we are strong ones. In 1 Corinthians 9:22 Paul says, "*To the weak I became weak that I might gain the weak.*" This means that we should come down to the weak one's level. To a sick person we come down to the level of a sick person. This is the way to shepherd people by **visiting them**. Paul also says, "Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?" This is to burn in sorrow and indignation over the cause of the stumbling of all the fallen ones. This shows the pattern of Paul as a good shepherd, taking care of God's flock.

In addition to the shepherding by the main function of the gifted persons, Christ as the Head of the church also charged the apostles to appoint **elders** (overseers) in all the local churches to **carry out His shepherding of His flock**. The Head of the church gave many gifted persons to function in shepherding for the building up of His Body, but the Body is manifested in the local churches. The Body is universal and abstract, but the churches are located and substantial. In the local churches the elders as the **local shepherds are needed**. The local shepherds are more practical. Christ as the Head of the church charged the apostles, the universal shepherds, to appoint some local elders to take care of the located churches. (*The Vital Groups, chapter 7*)

Day 6

- 1 Thessalonians 2:8* - Yearning in this way over you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved to us.
- 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12* - Just as you know how we were to each one of you, as a father to his own children, exhorting you and consoling you and testifying, So that you might walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

8. The apostles not only imparted the gospel of God to the Thessalonians; they also imparted their **own souls**—1 Thes. 2:8:
 - a. To live a **clean** and **upright life** (vv. 3-6, 10) and to **love** the new converts, even by **giving our own souls** to them (vv. 7-9, 11), are the prerequisites for infusing them with the gospel.
 - b. Paul was willing to spend not only what he had but also himself, **his very being**, on behalf of the saints—2 Cor. 12:15.
9. The apostles considered themselves as **fathers in exhorting** the believers to walk in a manner worthy of God, to have a walk that will enable them to enter into the kingdom of God and usher them into the glory of God—1 Thes. 2:11-12.

To give the new believers and young ones a lot of teaching is not the proper way to take care of them. The proper way to foster them is to **show them a pattern**. By showing them a pattern you **water** them, **supply** them, **nourish** them, and **cherish** them. This is fostering. If you find that your experience is somewhat lacking, point the new believers to different people in the Bible, for example, to ones such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and David in the Old Testament and Peter, John, Paul, and Timothy in the New Testament. We can present the lives of Bible characters in such a way as to foster the growth of the young ones.

If we give **too much teaching** to new ones and young ones, we shall **damage them**. Every mother knows that one of the most important matters in the raising of children is **proper feeding**. Caring for children is ninety percent a matter of feeding and ten percent a matter of teaching. This also should be our practice in caring for new believers in the church. We must learn to have ninety percent feeding and ten percent teaching. Feeding involves the presenting of patterns either from the Bible or from church history. By reading the biographies of saints throughout the ages, we nourish ourselves and experience a kind of fostering. The point here is that the **best way to feed others and foster them is to give them a proper pattern**. If there is no pattern, there can be no fostering. Only by having a pattern can we feed others.

In the book of 1 Thessalonians Paul was not preaching himself. Rather, he was feeding his spiritual children with his own living of Christ. This means that Paul's way of living was used to **feed his spiritual children**. This was the reason he emphasized his coming to the Thessalonians, his preaching, his way of handling the word of God, and his manner of living. (*Life-Study of 1 Thessalonians, chapter 13*)