

## Introduction

One of the things that I really appreciate about the southern culture is how they show respect to one another. People of all ages reply with “Yes sir,” or “No sir,” or “Yes mam,” or “No mam.” You don’t see this as much in other regions of our country, but in the South it is part of the culture.

A similar habit that I have tried to practice in my own life, and also teach others to practice is to always give thanks. God tells us that it is His will for us to give thanks in everything, so I believe we should give thanks in everything and for everything. He tells us that when we come into His presence, we should come with thanksgivings and praise. We enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. In the tabernacle of David, he appointed certain Levites to continually offer up thanks. I believe that David understood how much God loves our offerings of thanksgivings. In our corporate times of prayer, I have encouraged our members to begin by giving thanks to God and hallowing His name. It takes time and effort to make this part of your DNA and culture, but it is an excellent habit.

(1 Th 5:18) “in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

(Ps 100:4) “Enter His gates with thanksgiving *And* His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.”

(1 Ch 16:4–7) “He appointed some of the Levites *as* ministers before the ark of the Lord, even to celebrate and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel:… {7} Then on that day David first assigned Asaph and his relatives to give thanks to the Lord.”

I believe our attitude of gratitude should not just be towards God. We should develop the habit of thanking one another. Every morning, I thank Karen for fixing me breakfast. I thank her regularly for doing my laundry. I look for opportunities to thank Karen for all of her hard work.

On Sunday, August 13, after church, I went over to my mother’s house and we watched the last round of the PGA Tour event in Memphis. I was really blessed by something that I saw at the end of the round. Lucas Glover, the winner, went over to the standard bearer and thanked the person for volunteering. He went over to the young man who was representing St. Jude Hospital, and thanked him. Lucas Glover was not just a winner on the course; he was a winner in my books off the course. He displayed an attitude of gratitude, and I really appreciate that.

The apostle Paul, and his team members, had an attitude of gratitude. They began this letter to the Thessalonians with, “We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers.” They went on to share four things that they thanked God about.

(1 Th 1:2) “We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers;”

Paul began many of his letters by giving thanks to God for that church. In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, he began by thanking God always concerning them. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul said, “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all.” I have prayed that verse over Karen on a regular basis, and also over many of you when I pray for you. I have worked at making this part of my DNA and part of the culture in every church.

(1 Co 1:4) “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,”

(Php 1:3–4) “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, {4} always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all,

God tells us that when we give thanks to Him, it honors him, and I want to honor God in my life, and I want any church I am part of to honor God.

(Ps 50:23) “He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me; And to him who orders *his way aright* I shall show the salvation of God.”

As Paul, Silas, and Timothy gave thanks to God, and prayed for the Thessalonians, four specific things came to their minds. First, they thanked God for their work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope. Second, they thanked God for His love and choice of them. Third, they thanked God for their imitation of himself and his team and the Lord. Fourth, they thanked God for the example that the Thessalonians were to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

### **Giving Thanks for the Thessalonians**

1. For their work and labor (1 Thess 1:3)
2. For God’s love and choice of them (1 Thess 1:4)
3. For their imitation (1 Thess 1:5-6)
4. For their example (1 Thess 1:7-10)

(1 Th 1:2–10) “We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers; {3} constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, {4} knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you; {5} for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. {6} You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, {7} so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. {8} For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. {9} For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, {10} and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.”

#### **1. For their work and labor (1 Thess 1:3)**

The first thing that Paul, Silas, and Timothy bear in mind while they are giving thanks and praying for the Thessalonians is their labor and work. They wrote, “constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father. The Thessalonians had made an impression on Paul and the team, an impression of how hard they worked in their faith. For the Thessalonians, it was a labor of love. They worked at their faith because they were in love with their Savior. Love is a powerful motivator, and the Thessalonians were motivated to work hard because of love.

(1 Th 1:3) “constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,”

If my wife needs me to do something, I will do it. Last year she wanted to put in some tulips and crocus around some of the trees. I went to Home Depot and bought some potting soil, and the tulips and crocus. I took out our posthole digger and dug holes for her to plant the bulbs. Buying dirt and bulbs was easy; digging holes in the hard clay was not so easy. I dug forty-two holes for her. My shoulders were sore from using the posthole digger. My clothes were drenched; there was not a dry spot on them. It was a labor of love. I love Karen and I was more than happy to work and labor to get her bulbs planted. When you are in love, you will gladly do things.

I tell young people that do not know what they want to do for a career to find out what they enjoy doing. When you love what you do, it is not hard to work at it. I don't encourage people to spend their life doing something that they do not enjoy doing. They will be far more motivated and will work much harder if they are doing something that they love to do. Love is a powerful motivator. The Thessalonians loved God and they worked at their faith; it was a labor of love.

Many people equate work with pastors; it is their work. In one sense, they are correct. Pastoring is work. Paul wrote Timothy, "If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do." When there was a problem with the Hellenistic widows being overlooked in the serving of food in Jerusalem, the apostles looked into the matter and told the church to select seven men to take care of this matter, while they devoted themselves to the ministry of the word and prayer. Pastoral work is not focused on helping with practical needs, although they should help when they can. The work of pastors is to study the word of God and to teach it. The work of pastors is to watch over the flock and pray for them. The work of pastors is to lead the flock and manage the affairs of the church. It is a fine work they desire to do, and it is work.

In another sense, it is wrong to equate pastors with ministry work. All of us are called to serve and to the work of faith. Pastors are to equip saints for the work of service. Saints are not equipped to gain head knowledge; they are equipped for the work of service. Every believer is to be involved in the work of ministry. We are to use our gifts and serve one another. The Thessalonians understood this and Paul, Silas, and Timothy thanked God and prayed for them, and bore in mind their work of faith and labor of love, and their steadfastness. The church today can learn from the example of the Thessalonians.

(1 Ti 3:1) "It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*."

(Eph 4:12) "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;"

There is a common term that is used quite frequently to describe the modern church: "Stadium Christianity." In a stadium, 100,000 people sit and watch twenty-two men on the field work. It is unfortunate, because God tells us that every joint should supply, according to the proper **working** of each individual part. When the body of Christ begins to work properly, it will cause the growth of the body. When we moved to New Mexico, and we joined a church, I asked the pastor, what do you need done. He said they needed a men's ministry. I told him they now had one; what else do you need? When we were part of a Vineyard church in Georgia, I asked the pastor, what needed to be done. He said they needed a men's ministry, someone to start and lead a prayer ministry, and someone to oversee ushers, servers, and greeters. So, I started and led the men's ministry. I led an intercessory prayer ministry. I headed up the ushers, greeters, and servers. I also led a small group, and taught Sunday School. I was not part of the pastoral team, but I was a member, and all the members are to do the work of ministry.

(Eph 4:16) “from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper **working** of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

In James’ letter, he said, “What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?...Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself....But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?” In the day of Stadium Christianity, we can learn much from the Thessalonians. They were remembered for their work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness.

(Jas 2:14–20) “What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? {15} If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, {16} and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? {17} Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. {18} But someone may *well* say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” {19} You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. {20} But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?”

## 2. For God’s love and choice (1 Thess 1:4)

I love the balance that Paul brings to the Thessalonians. He was bearing in mind their work of faith, but he balances this by saying, “knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you.” We can work all we want, but we can never earn God’s love. We can never earn His choice of us. We love because God first loved us. God loved us while we were yet sinners. God chose us before the foundation of the world. Our labor of love and service to God has nothing to do with God’s love and choice of us. We are beloved by God and chosen by Him.

(1 Thess 1:4) “knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you;”

(1 Jn 4:19) “We love, because He first loved us.”

(Ro 5:8) “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

(Eph 1:4) “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love”

Our salvation is not a result of works; it is by grace through faith in Christ that we are saved. It is a gift of God, not as a result of works, that no one may boast. While we are saved by grace, Paul went on to say that we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. He created us to work, but we do not earn His love, or choice of us. He loves us and our salvation is a gift, not as a result of works.

(Eph 2:8–10) “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it* is the gift of God; {9} not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. {10} For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

In Matthew 7, Jesus said that “not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’” There are some important keys that Jesus gave. It is not by works that we will enter the kingdom of heaven. It is not by doing works, even if they sound like great works. They were not allowed in because they did not know Christ. Salvation is a gift of God, but we have to receive it by confessing Jesus to be Lord of our lives. When we receive Christ into our lives, we enter into a relationship with Him. We have to know Christ to be saved. Second, God’s will is for us to live holy lives. Those who continue to practice lawlessness are not following Christ. Christians are in a relationship with Christ, and their lives are being transformed to reflect Christ.

(Mt 7:21–23) “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. {22} “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ {23} “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

### 3. For Their imitation (1 Thess 1:5-6)

While Paul, Silas, and Timothy were giving thanks to God for the Thessalonians, they were bearing in mind their imitation. They said that they became imitators of us, and secondly, imitators of the Lord. The Greek word for imitation that is used is *mimetes* (Strong’s G3402). The root word is *mimos*, which means to mimic or imitate. To mimic “means to make something so that it resembles an existing thing.” To mimic suggests “duplicating an original as nearly as possible.” It “implies a close copying.”<sup>1</sup>

(1 Thess 1:5-6) “for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. {6} You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,”

One of the great things about our current technology is that we can watch somebody do something on YouTube and then mimic them. Recently, I had to replace a belt on our edger. I went to YouTube and found a video on how to replace the belt on my particular model of edger. I watched it a couple of times, and then went out to my garage and did exactly what I watched this person on the video do. Everything went well and I tested the edger to make sure it was working properly, and it worked exactly like it is supposed to. I am really glad that I watched the video because there were some things that I would not have known if I had just tried to figure it out on my own. There are four pulleys on the edger. The belt is thicker on one side than the other, and when placing the belt on the pulleys, the thin side has to be on the pulley side on three of them. On the fourth pulley, the belt has to be with the fat side on the pulley. I would have never known this by just observing. Paul taught people God’s principles, and his life was a demonstration of the things he was teaching.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mimic>

If you are going to imitate someone, it is important that the person is a good role model. Paul and his team were great role models or examples for the Thessalonians to imitate. You don't want people to imitate someone's bad behavior; you want them to imitate good behavior. God tells us in Proverbs that we should not associate with a man given to anger or we will learn his ways and find a snare for ourselves. God tells us that the companion of fools suffers harm. Instead, we are to walk with wise men so that we learn from them wise behavior. We need to have good role models in our lives.

(Pr 22:24–25) “Do not associate with a man *given* to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, {25} Or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself.”

(Pr 13:20) “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”

Leaders in the church are to be role models for the congregation. They are to be examples to the flock. In Peter's letter he addressed pastors in the fifth chapter, and gave them three specific instructions about shepherding the flock. His third instruction was for them not to lord over the flock, but to prove to be examples to the flock. Jesus had taught His disciples the same thing. He told them that the rulers of the Gentiles lord over people, but they were not to be like them; they were to be humble servants. Peter exhorts pastors to lead by example. The word for example is *tupos*, which is one of my favorite Greek words. It has five different meanings. The literal meaning is a die, which is struck and leaves an impression. It is translated as scar, pattern, model, form, or example. A good die must be the exact image of what you are wanting to make. If the die has a flaw in it, whatever is struck with that die will have that same flaw in it. So, it is critical that the die be correctly shaped. The lives of pastors in a church need to be patterned like the Lord, so that the congregation can follow their example, and become like Christ.

(1 Pe 5:3) “nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples (*tupos*) to the flock.”

Notice how Paul prefaces his statement about how the Thessalonians had become imitators of us and of the Lord. He said that they knew what kind of men they proved to be among them. In other words, Paul, Silas, and Timothy had proven to be excellent examples for them to follow. Their dies were made in the image of Christ, and when they brought the gospel to the Thessalonians, they stamped their impression on them. The Thessalonians became imitators of Paul and his team, and also the Lord, because Paul and his team were in the image of Christ. Real leadership is about leaving an impression of Christ on those that you serve.

(1 Thess 1:5-6) “for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. {6} You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,”

In chapter 2, they said, “You are witnesses, and so is God, 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, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” Paul, Silas, and Timothy had behaved devoutly, uprightly, and blamelessly so that the Thessalonians would imitate their walk and they would walk in a manner worthy of the God who had called them.

(1 Th 2:9–12) “For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. {10} You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; {11} just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children, {12} so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

Paul and his team were excellent role-models, and examples for the Thessalonians to imitate. Paul also mentioned this in his second letter, saying, “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example (tupos), because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you.” They were examples, or dies, that were leaving an impression of Christ on those that they ministered to. They were examples of Christ-like lives for the Thessalonians to imitate.

(2 Th 3:7) “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example (tupos), because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,”

When I think about Paul and his life example, many things stand out. First and foremost is how he valued and prioritized knowing Christ. He considered all things as rubbish compared to knowing Christ. That is certainly something that I want to imitate in my own life. Here is a list of just a few things in Paul’s life that we can all learn from and imitate:

- Paul valued and prioritized knowing Christ. (Phil 3:8)
- Paul lived his life for Christ (Phil 1:21)
- Paul loved people and prayed for them. He wrote letters to them. He cared for people. He was willing to be expended for their sake. (2 Cor 12:15)
- Paul was a worshiper (Acts 13:1-3, 16:25)
- Paul was willing to suffer for the gospel (1 Th 2:1-2, Acts 9:16)
- Paul lived his life with a good conscience (Acts 23:1, 24:16, 2 Tim 1:3)
- He was a disciplined and visionary man (1 Cor 9:26-27, Acts 26:19)
- Paul was a hard worker (1 Th 2:9, 2 Th 3:8)

Many people have asked me what they should look for in a church. I believe the leadership of the church is a great place to look. God tells us that we are to submit to our leaders, and if you do not trust those leaders, it would be bad to come under their authority. You want to trust your leaders so that you have no problem submitting to their authority. A second area to look at is the life of the leaders. If you are going to follow their example and become like them, you want to know the shape of their die, because you are going to look like them if you follow them. Find a church where the leaders of the church are following hard after God and represent Christ in their behavior, speech, and attitudes.

(Heb 13:17) “Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

In chapter two, Paul mentioned a third area that the Thessalonians had become imitators. They had not only imitated Paul and his team, and the Lord, they became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. Paul taught people in every city how the churches in Judea operated. The church in Jerusalem was a model for the other churches to imitate.

(1 Th 2:14) “For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they *did* from the Jews,”

One of our daughters called us recently and wanted to know what a New Testament church was. She was going to a new church that had broken off of another church. They produced a document stating that they were a New Testament church, and in that document, they shared their concept of a New Testament church. I told her that the document describes a certain denomination. The form of government mentioned was a congregational form of government, which is used by that denomination. There were several other things mentioned that let me know that it was this particular denomination. I told her that when I think of a New Testament church, I think of how the churches in the New Testament operated. Paul traveled extensively and planted churches everywhere he went. All of the churches that he planted were established like the churches in Judea. How did the churches in Judea operate? We find a great description of the church in Jerusalem in Acts 2. The New Testament church was devoted to four things. They were devoted to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. The document that my daughter reviewed with us only mentioned one of these four. Most churches today are devoted to three things: exciting children’s ministry, excellent music, and dynamic preaching. There is very little corporate prayer, sharing of meals together, which includes the taking of communion in that meal, and to fellowship. That is the American church, not the New Testament church. The Thessalonians became imitators of the churches in Judea.

(Ac 2:42) “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

#### 4. **For their example** (1 Thess 1:7-10)

Paul, Silas, and Timothy were great examples for the Thessalonians to mimic or imitate. They did such a great job of imitating Paul, Silas, and Timothy, that they became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia, and in every place their faith toward God had gone forward.

(1 Th 1:7–8) “so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. {8} For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.”

God intended for us to make disciples. He came and invested Himself in the twelve apostles. They invested themselves in the lives of other people, who then invested themselves in other people. He told them to go and make disciples, which was what He had done and role-modeled for them. At the Last Supper, He washed their feet and told them that He gave them an example and they were to do likewise. The principle did not just apply to washing feet, and serving others; Jesus was our example to follow in all areas of our life.

(Mt 28:18–20) “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. {19} “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, {20} teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”



(Jn 13:15) “For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.”

The apostle Paul was a great example for them to follow. He invested himself in faithful men, and asked them to entrust the things that he had taught them to other faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. The Thessalonians were doing exactly what God intends every church to do. He wants leaders to invest themselves in the lives of the congregation, and to be an example to them. He wants the saints in the church to learn and to follow the example, and then to be examples to other people. That was what God commanded us to do.

(2 Ti 2:2) “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

When Paul, Silas, and Timothy went to Thessalonica and preached the gospel, the Thessalonians turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God. They were now waiting and putting their trust in Jesus, who had been raised from the dead, and who rescues us from the wrath to come.

(1 Th 1:9-10) “For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, {10} and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.”

The gospel message is the first part of the Great Commission. When people receive Christ, and turn from their idols to serve God, we teach them to observe all that God commands us to do. We mentor and disciple them. We live holy and blameless lives before them, which is what Paul and his team did. In Colossians 1:28-29, Paul said that he proclaimed Christ, that is preaching the gospel. Next, he admonished and taught every man with all wisdom, so that he could present every man complete or mature in Christ, and this is discipleship. This was the purpose that Paul labored for. This was the reason that he worked day and night, and was striving according to God’s power, which worked mightily within him. God wants His body to proclaim Christ with their words and with their lives. He wants His church to make disciples and to help people become mature believers. He wants this process and cycle to be repeated over and over again.

(Col 1:28–29) “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. {29} For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”

## Conclusion and Applications

As Paul, Silas, and Timothy gave thanks to God and prayed for the Thessalonians, they were mindful of how the Thessalonians were working and laboring in their faith. They were being steadfast in their work. Second, Paul was mindful of God’s love and choice of them. Third, they were grateful that the Thessalonians had imitated their lives and the Lord. Fourth, they were mindful and gave thanks to God for the example that the church in Thessalonica had become to all the other churches in Macedonia and Achaia.

As we look at applications, perhaps God may have spoken to you about your work of faith. Are you laboring for Christ, or just going along for the ride? There are many people who go to church each Sunday, but attendance is about as far as they go. We are individually members of the body of Christ and God wants every joint to supply. You are an important part of the body, and God wants every member to be working and laboring for Him. What has he called you to

do? What are the needs of the body? Use your gifts, talents, time, and energy to do the things that He is calling you to do.

Some of you may need Paul's reminder that God loves you and that He chose you before the foundation of the world. He loved you enough to send His Son to die to save you from your sins. Jesus loved you enough to lay His life down for you. God drew you to Himself, and He called you. He loves you and has chosen you. When you know that God loves you and chose you, it can change your whole perception and attitude towards yourself.

God may have been speaking to some about evangelism and discipleship. We are to proclaim Christ, which Paul did, and then we are to make disciples. We are to be examples for people to follow and to imitate. Are you proclaiming Christ to others? Are you proclaiming Christ to others through your conduct and behavior? Are you imitating the lives of godly leaders? Are you imitating the example that Paul set? Are you imitating the example that Jesus set? Are you being an example that others can follow?

### **Closing Prayer**

Father God, thank You for Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. Thank you for Paul's example. Thank You for the example of the Thessalonians. They were not just examples to the churches in Macedonia and Achaia, but they became examples to us today, whether we are in Rome, Georgia, or Washington D.C., or Iligan City in the Philippines. Father, help us to be working and laboring for you. Help us to use the gifts, abilities and talents to build Your church and Your kingdom. Help us to be steadfast in our labors. Help us to work wisely, and to strive according to Your power, which mightily works within us. Father, help us to fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith. Help us to imitate Christ in our attitudes and actions. Help us to become examples to other people, so that they might become followers of Christ, and to become complete in Christ. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Introduction** (1 Th 5:18, Ps 100:4, 1 Chron 16:4-7, 1 Co 1:4, Php 1:3-4, Ps 50:23, 1 Th 1:2-10)

1. **For their work and labor** (1 Th 1:3, 1 Ti 3:1, Eph 4:12, 4:16, Jas 2:14-20)
  
2. **For God's love and choice** (1 Th 1:4, 1 Jn 4:19, Ro 5:8, Eph 1:4, 2:8-10, Mt 7:21-23)
  
3. **For Their imitation** (1 Th 1:5-6, Pr 22:24-25, 13:20, 1 Pe 5:3, 1 Th 2:9-12, 2 Th 3:7, Phil 23:1, 24:16, 2 Tim 1:3, 1 Cor 9:26-27, Acts 26:19, 1 Th 2:9, 2 Th 3:8, 3:8, 1:21, 2 Cor 12:15, Acts 13:1-3, 16:25, 1 Th 2:1-2, Acts 9:16, Heb 13:17, 1 Th 2:14, Ac 2:42)
  
4. **For their example** (1 Th 1:7-10, Mt 28:18-20, Jn 13:15, 2 Ti 2:2, Col 1:28-29)

**Conclusion and Applications**