“Behavior Matters”

September 4, 2016

I Timothy 2:1-8

Please find a Bible and open it with me to Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians and go to chapter two.

Do you think good behavior should only be taught to children? Do you think it really matters now that you are an adult? Does what you *do* as a Christian make any difference? Of course, you'd say “yes” to each of these questions.

Someone once said, “If it doesn't change your behavior, then it doesn't matter.” Someone else puts it this way “Your behavior is simply a reflection of your deepest beliefs.”

Today's topic is Behavior. I’ve titled today’s sermon “Behavior Matters.” Shall we pray?

I Thessalonians 2:7 *“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: (8) So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.*

*(9) For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. (10) Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:*

*(11) As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, (12) That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.”*

Here’s a report on school behavior from “Scholastic.com” from an article titled “Classroom Behavior Problems Increasing Teachers Say.” [Found on [www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com) “Classroom Behavior Problems Increasing, Teachers Say.” Primary Sources 2012 report.

*“Behavior issues that interfere with teaching and learning have notably worsened, according to an astonishing 62 percent of teachers who have been teaching in the same school for five or more years. The results were reported in Primary Sources: America’s Teachers on the Teaching Profession.*

*The report, recently released by Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, shows that the increased level of behavior problems has been seen across grade levels: 68 percent of elementary teachers, 64 percent of middle school teachers, and 53 percent of high school teachers say the same.*

*The problem affects the whole classroom. Behavior problems distract other students from learning and require teachers to spend precious instruction time on discipline and behavior management. Over half of teachers wish they could spend fewer school day minutes on discipline.*

*One elementary educator defined the problem this way: “The time it takes to referee fights and solve bullying issues takes away from academic instruction and keeps students from achieving as much as they could.”*

Imagine, for just a moment that someone was following you around all day for five days. Now, imagine they were filming you. And imagine that they observing everything you do; how you treated your family; how you spent your money; how you used your time; how you worked at your job. Just one week. What would that say about you?

Behavior is a family topic. It’s personal and it isn’t an easy one. But, today I’m going to make it a Church family topic.

Now, the Bible isn’t arranged topically. So, we can’t find a passage devoted specifically to behavior. Instead, we find the writers of the Bible describing the behavior of some people.

I’ve titled I Thessalonians chapter two “Paul's Opinion of Paul.” As you are about to see, Paul uses his own behavior as an example of the kind of behavior that can and does honor the LORD.

Paul had a lot of detractors. There were quite a few people who simply despised and rejected him. And these detractors were out to discredit Paul and get people to turn away from him and his teachings.

So, when Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians, he reminded them of what he was like while he was there. Look again at verse seven.

I Thessalonians 2:7 *“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: (8) So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. (9) For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.*

He reminds them of his behavior when he’d been there. Here’s what he says; that he was gentle among them.

Can you recall the most recent time when you treated those around you as a gentleman or a gentle-woman? By the way, the old-fashioned word for gentle-woman is lady. A lady is a gentle-woman. Something’s been lost when we’re living in a society where we have fewer and fewer gentlemen.

This is the first time the word “gentle” is found in the Bible. Now there is a term that is very similar. But it’s not translated “gentle” in the English Bible.

So, what does it mean? To be gentle, Biblically, means to be “sweetly reasonable” with people; to be “moderate.” It’s the opposite of harshness and a gentle person does “not insist on the letter of the law.”

Why do you think there was a time in our history when men were called “gentlemen”? A gentleman was once a man was both good and courteous and “sweetly reasonable” in his dealings with you.

And here’s what we find when it came to Paul’s gentleness. His gentleness was the gentleness of Someone else. I Corinthians 10:1 *“Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ…”* My hope today is to say something to you about behavior. But I want you to see this. Christ lives in the Christian. So, it is His behavior that we have the joy and privilege of manifesting to others.

Galatians 2:20 *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

So, when Paul refers to his own behavior, he’s really referring to Someone Else’s behavior. And that is the life of Christ Himself.

And alongside gentle, Paul describes himself as “affectionately desirous.” I Thessalonians 2:7 *“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: (8) So being* ***affectionately desirous*** *of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.*

What does that mean? It means that this was his behavior in front of those he preached the Gospel to; that he was “affectionately desirous” of them. It means he cared so much for them that he willingly gave his own soul to them to bring them the Gospel. He was more concerned for them than he was for his own things and his own welfare.

Now, as you can see, your behavior towards those you want to see saved matters. Here's how Paul saw Paul. Here’s Paul’s opinion of Paul. This entire second chapter is Paul recalling for the Christians in Thessalonica just what kind of Christian he had been when he was among them.

And, if you’ll look a bit closer with me at these verses, you see what Paul was really like.

First, he says, remember our labor and travail. That's verse nine.

Second, he says, remember our character. That's verse ten.

And third, he says, remember our encouragement. That's verse eleven.

I think we can all agree that your behavior does matter. You could say that Paul was a “Christ-man.” He was authentic. He has his troubles just like anyone else. But he was lived and worked among the Thessalonians with Christ living His life through him. Paul was “Christ living among them.”

Matthew 10:25 *“It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!”*

You live with others both at home and at work; at school and in your neighborhood. So, is your behavior *His* behavior? Are you letting *Him* live His life through you?

How did Paul live when he lived among them? Did they honor him as the “Great Paul”? Or, was he a Christ-man? So, how should you live and behave as a Christian?

As I read down through this passage on Paul’s behavior, here’s what I found when he told them to remember his behavior.

First, Paul's hard work. He calls it “labor” in verse nine. I Thessalonians 2:9 *“For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.”*

Did you notice that Paul uses two words here to describe his work ethic; labor and travail? The term “labor” means “real effort.” Labor is anything that reduces your physical strength. Labor is what a farmer is known for. II Timothy 2:6 *“The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.”*

Labor is a big part of your behavior, folks. It’s what you do when you work with your hands. Here's I Corinthians 4:12 “And labour, working with our own hands:...”

But “labour” includes something else. It includes “weariness.” And sometimes the Bible translates this word as “weariness.” For example this is what we read in John 4:6 *“Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore,* ***being wearied*** *with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.”*

I think if we taught our children that work (labor) makes you tired, then many of their behavior issues could be resolved. In essence, Paul worked hard. That’s behavior! That’s the way you conduct yourself before others. That’s what some call “a work ethic.”

What kind of worker are you? Do you put your heart into your work? And, by the way, it’s also this type of labor that needs to go into your study of your Bible. I Timothy 5:17 *“…, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”*

First, Paul's hard work.

Second, Paul’s travail. I Thessalonians 2:9 *“For ye remember, brethren, our labour and* ***travail****: for labouring night and day,...”*

Travail is an old English word. It means this. “You don’t give up when it gets very difficult.” Ladies, you all know that travail is the word that’s typically used when describing the ordeal of giving birth. Why? Because, in essence, you don’t give up when it gets difficult bringing your son or daughter into this world.

The same word is translated elsewhere as “painfulness." II Corinthians 11:29 says it this way *“In weariness (labour) and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”*

In essence, Paul is reminding the Christians that he worked hard while he was there. He exerted himself. He worked with his hands and he worked till he got weary. And he travailed. He did his work when it was painful to do so.

So, what kind of behavior do you exhibit? There are those who criticize Christians for all sorts of things. But should we ever be criticized for our work ethic? For our timeliness? For the effort we take when it comes to our work? I don’t think we should.

And notice this line here in verse nine. I Thessalonians 2:9 *“For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.”*

He says this again when he writes his second epistle to them. Look at II Thessalonians chapter three verse eight. II Thessalonians 3:8 *“Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:...”*

This is not saying that Paul worked 24/7 and never slept. Rather he’s telling them what they already knew; that he worked continually, honestly and faithfully on their behalf. By occupation, you see, Paul was a tent-man. He tanned hides and sold tents. And so this is a reference to the work he did to support himself while he ministered the Gospel. And as a matter of fact, I’m sure that’s why he worked so hard. It was so that he and his team *“...would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.”*

Now think about this. When Paul says these words to the Church at Thessalonica, he was implying that he was down on their level. In our modern day, we get the impression, don't we, that the Apostles and Prophets were on a higher plain than the common man?

Some of us do the same thing today when we presume that the Pastor is quote “higher” than the rest of us or that the missionary evangelist is “better” in some way than the rest of us; as if “they” are in the ministry, but you are not. Paul, as you can see, wasn't afraid of hard work. And you shouldn’t be either. His work ethic showed those around him that he was a whole lot like them. He worked as Christ among them.

So, what about you? Isn’t it OK to get weary when you work hard? That, folks, is God’s way. It’s natural and it’s good to work hard while at the same time being ready to deliver the Gospel message to those we meet and know. The two go hand in hand as you can see in the life of this great man of God.

First, then, Paul tells them to recall his work ethic.

Second, Paul reminds them about his character. That’s in verse ten. I Thessalonians 2:10 *“Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:...”*

When it comes to reaching those you know with the Gospel, either in your home or your neighborhood or at your job, it’s a much better approach to let your co-workers and neighbors see you for who you really are.

And Paul’s exuded at least these three things while he lived there among them. He was holy, just, and unblameable.

These are the words that describe Christ’s character. Paul and you and I have this same Person living in us. He, Jesus, is holy. He lived a surrendered and consecrated life. He was “set apart” as an instrument, tool to be used for His glory.

And folks, for those of you who think holiness is only for the missionary or the evangelist, here's what the Apostle Peter says. I Peter 1:15 *“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;...”*

The holiness of Christ is what you show in every area of your life. “In all your ways be holy.” Your “conversation” is the Old English term for your lifestyle. You must display a holy lifestyle; one that is set apart from the society to the standards of the LORD. That holy lifestyle is the holy life of Jesus being revealed through you.

First, he was a holy man. Second, he was a just man. Just means that he lived a righteous life. He did what was right. Paul knew the law and obeyed the law. He obeyed the laws of Scripture and the laws of Rome.

Have you ever met the Christians who are serving God, yet feel they have a right to live contrary to the law of the land? Listen folks, the testimony of the Apostles of the NT is this. They did what was right. They followed the law of the land. They were not so “spiritual” that they could disregard the very laws that God allowed to keep evil in check in the world.

And in this he was unblameable, meaning that he lived before others so that they could see Christ in him. Again, folks, it's good to know that you stand or fall before the eyes of the LORD. But we were saved to live in a world where the eyes of man do matter. People are watching you. They observe your life. And one of the highest priorities of a Christian's life is that you let the life of Christ rule over you. You live and work in a manner that doesn't give people reason to justly condemn you.

What kind of life do you live? Is it one way Sunday and another on Monday? Is not Christ living in you? Then, surrender your life moment by moment so that whatever you are doing, it is both holy and just.

Paul’s goal was to reach people with the Good News of the Gospel. But, as you can easily see, he didn’t just “quote” preach. Rather he gave himself to them. Here’s how he describes himself in verse eight. I Thessalonians 2:8 *“So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.”*

Now, what about your life? What about your behavior? Does your life not affect those who know you? Can you imagine what effect your life is having on your family and in your neighborhood and those you work with? Remember, it’s His holiness, His righteousness, and His unblamability?

First, Paul labored while he preached.

Second, he showed Christ to them in his life and character.

Third, he treated them as a father would treat his children. Look again at verse eleven. (11) As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,...”

Now, consider the ways of a father is with his sons and daughters. Godly fathers love their children. Godly fathers live before their children. Fathers get to be an example of godliness before their children. Fathers support and praise their children. Fathers make time for their children. Fathers pray for their children. Fathers find a way to enable their children to succeed.

You might remember that just four verses earlier we read that Paul compared himself to a nurse who cared for little babies. And Paul was that. But, as you can see, he was much more. He was fatherly in his dealings with the Christians.

And why? Well, one clear reason is that when he came to town, there were no Churches. There was no one preaching the Gospel. There was no one teaching the Bible to these people. There was no one living as Christ among them. So, when they repented and received Jesus as the LORD and Savior, they needed someone to “father” them; someone to help them to grow up in Christ; someone to build them up and encourage and lead and teach them. And Paul took all of his responsibilities seriously.

And what do you think Paul did in his fatherly treatment of these people? Well, he tells us exactly what he did; three things. One, he exhorted them, meaning he encouraged them to do what God had called them to do.

We should always be grateful for someone who will exhort us. What do I mean? I mean that when someone says something to you that will help you to do what is right, you should be grateful and not take offense to it. Now, some may abuse this privilege and think that God is forever telling them to tell other people how to live. But that’s not what exhorting means. It means reminding them that God’s ways are so much better. And when we yield our hearts to the LORD, He will be both pleased and praised by our lives.

He also comforted them. Like us today, we need those who will comfort us when we are grieving and in need. Comfort is godly encouragement. You and I are always in need of someone encouraging us. We live is an oftentimes very discouraging world. The world easily condemns and criticizes what is good and right. They especially look down on those who claim to follow Jesus. They may have seen some poor examples of what it means to follow Jesus.

Paul's fatherly manner was to counsel and encourage these saints.

And three, he charged them, meaning that he gave them clear directions on how to know and walk with the LORD. If there is a need in the Christian world today, it's for someone to help us to truly walk with the LORD. Walking with the King is what life is really all about. And when we fail or when we're tempted to quit or even tempted to simply give in to sin, we need someone who will charge us; challenge us to do what is right no matter how the world views it.

So, I’d like to ask this “Does behavior matter?” And, I think we all know the answer. Yes, it does matter. But as you can see from Paul’s personal testimony; from Paul’s opinion of Paul, we see that our labor matters, our character matters, and our concern for others matters.

Now, what will you do with the words of I Thessalonians two? Will you agree that Christian behavior matters? And will that be it? Or will you work very hard this week, even to the point of weariness? And will you give out the message of Christ to a lost soul? And will you let the LORD develop your character into true Christlikeness? And will you be an encouragement to those around you?

I know that these are large matters. But we’ve only got this life to do these things. Soon Jesus will return and we’ll be ascending into Heaven. So, today is the day to surrender your life to Him and to serve others. Today is the day to live a life that truly reflects Christ.

Will you live for Him today and this week? Here’s the Prayer of Surrender.

“LORD, I submit all that I am to you; my spirit, my soul, and my body. Do with me what is most pleasing to you. Work out Your will upon me today.”

Now, it may be that you are not a Believer in Jesus Christ thus far in your life. And the question, of course, is, “Why not?” What are you allowing to hinder you from turning to Jesus Christ and receiving His free gift of eternal security?

The Bible is just as plain about this. Today is the day of Salvation. What will you do about the condition of your heart for eternity

 The one eternal matter that stands between you and God is the matter of sin. And Jesus has already gone to the cross to take care of that for you.

So, here's what you need to do.

REPENT

Here’s a simple salvation prayer for you to pray if you’ve never trusted the LORD for His free gift of eternal life.

‬Salvation Prayer

The moment you repent and believe on Jesus Christ, you are declared righteous in God’s sight and you truly enter into a love relationship with God for eternity. And you are saved by that love for eternity. Have you prayed the sinner’s prayer? Have you come into a personal relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ? If not, why not?

Shall we pray?

Would you take your hymnal and turn with me to Hymn # \_\_\_\_\_ “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”