***1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; 11as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, 12that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.***

Today is Father’s Day. We’ve been blessed and are blessed by Godly fathers in this church. As with our Godly mothers that we honored back in May, we honor our Godly fathers today and remember their examples. In May, we encouraged mothers, as well as fathers, to be diligent, charitable, faithful, and obedient. Fathers, as well as mothers, today I encourage you with the words of the Apostle Paul from 1 Thessalonians 2. Let our lives stand as evidence, serve as encouragement, and provide an ever-present arrow pointing those we love toward Jesus. Fathers, you can be that impact. So many are witnessing our walks. Children and others are watching. Are they seeing Jesus in us?

This morning, we are with Paul as he sends a letter to the people of Thessalonica, in modern day Greece. Paul was probably in Athens, Greece at the time of the writing of this letter. He makes mention of his conduct and the example he set while among the people. Verse 10 says- *You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe.* In verse 9, we see that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy labored night and day. They performed honest labor. Paul says – You are witnesses, and God also. So often, we think of the word witness as meaning someone who saw, but a witness can also be evidence or a record. In this case, the people of Thessalonica are both. They saw Paul’s conduct, but they also received the Gospel and stand as a record to what Paul taught. Fathers – our children see, but they also stand as a record, as evidence of what was seen. As Paul says – behave devoutly, having a complete devotion to your belief. Behave justly. Behave blamelessly. Notice how he ends the verse – we behaved ourselves among you. We know that the people are standing as evidence to what they experienced. There’s an old saying – don’t do as I do, but as I say do… Fathers, live in such a way that the witness of your life shouts instead – do as I do.

Verse 11 *As you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children.* As you know… how do they know? They witnessed. They saw this conduct and accepted it as evidence. Paul exhorted, meaning to call near – invite or implore the people. Paul comforted, meaning to relate near – encourage or comfort the people. And he charged, meaning to call to give testimony. Paul wasn’t saying – don’t do as I do, but as I say do. He was saying – come near, stay and relate near, and give witness of what you saw. Do as I have done. Fathers, call your children near, relate to them near, and invite them to bear witness. Live in such a way as the words of your life shout – do as I do.

Verse 12 finishes - *That you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.* What was the purpose of Paul calling the people near, relating to the people near (better known as discipling), and charging the people to bear witness to how he conducted himself devoutly, justly, and blamelessly? His purpose was to share the Gospel that others might learn, by observation and communication, to walk worthy of God. None of us are worthy, but our prize, as Philippians 3:14 tells us, is the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. We have a higher purpose than success in this world. We have an upward call, and we press toward it daily. We press toward the Kingdom and Glory, by the Grace and Mercy of our Heavenly Father. Fathers, when we want others to walk worthy of God and follow His call towards His Kingdom and Glory, we must first walk worthy ourselves – exhorting, comforting, charging - walking devoutly, justly, blamelessly in conduct. Sounds an awful lot like Self-control… the fruit of the Spirit. Fathers, let your life be an ever-present arrow pointing so, even if your children lose their way, they can go back to the map and find their way again.

Fathers, and mothers as well, today I encourage you - live in such a way that the witness of your life shouts do as I do, the words of your life shout do as I do, and the walk of your life shouts do as I do. Let our lives stand as evidence, serve as encouragement, and provide an ever-present arrow pointing those we love forever toward Jesus.