

1 Thessalonians 1:6-2:12

And you became followers[imitators] of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

The labour of a “Follower” of Christ

The greatest respect is due the pantomime artist who studies the many body movements and facial expressions necessary to imitate the simplest action. This requires hours of hard work. Yet this kind of work should not be unfamiliar to the Christian. In 3 John 11, the believer is exhorted to "follow not that which is evil, but that which is good." The word translated 'follow' is the word "mimeomai". The English words mime, mimic, and mimeograph are derived from this Greek word. This word translated in modern text as follow or imitate, expresses the idea of examining, reflecting back to something clearly identified, and then actually copying that characteristic in one's own life.

Paul called the Corinthians to "imitate Himself as He imitated Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1). Indeed, Paul's chief aim in life was to "know Christ, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death." (Philippians 3:10).

To follow Christ begins with placing our faith in: His sacrificial death on the cross in punishment for our sins and His resurrection from the dead for our justification. However, this is only a beginning. As the pantomime artist studies body movements and facial expression in order to imitate actions, so must the believer study the character and qualities of Christ as revealed in scripture, and seek by the power of the Holy Spirit, to imitate these qualities. In the popular Christian novel "In His Steps", Charles Sheldon the author captures this concept with a story suggesting the impact of a few Christians on a town when every decision they make is preceded by the question "What would Jesus do?" This is a very practical way of imitating Christ.

Every Christian is called upon to do the work of the pantomime artist in studying and imitating Jesus. Only in so doing can one truly say he is a "follower of Christ." To this end every believer is also called to 1Th 2:14 - "became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans," Heb 6:12 - "imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises," and 1Pe 3:13 - "become followers of what is good?" Christian friend, do you work at following?

What is my response:
