

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **Helping the Baby to Grow Up 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 Part 4**

Christ has called us to go into all the world and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is this particular work that should define our lives. It is this particular work that should give our lives purpose and meaning.

We are continually hearing stories of people who through some personal tragedy view their lives as being totally devoid of anything worthwhile.

On the national level, I am sure most of us have read about the suicide of Jeremy Michael Boorda, the Navy's top officer. Boorda killed himself last Thursday, apparently amid questions about whether he had earned the right to wear certain combat decorations on his uniform. Apparently he lived his life for the accolades of his peers, and when that was being threatened it appears that he thought there was no reason to live.

On a local level, a man named Frank Guterrez could not accept the fact that his wife was leaving him. And, therefore, he chose to shoot her to death in front of his children last week on Sierra Highway. Guterrez apparently felt his life consisted of keeping his family together, and he was therefore willing to even do the unthinkable in order not to keep from experiencing the breakup of his marriage.

People are so desperate to give their lives meaning that they are willing to lie, cheat, steal, and even murder in order to obtain it. And when they fail they sometimes become so desperate that they are willing to take their life or the life of another. How tragic!

For us, who are here this morning and who have received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, our lives have significance. We have a work to do that is truly important, whose results will not evaporate with time. And what is our work? It is going and making disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and then teaching them to observe of that the Lord has commanded.

This is why the church has been left in this world. We are here to be involved in fruitful labor. We are not here to enjoy ourselves. We are not here to entertain ourselves. We are not here to indulge ourselves. Though all these things may happen to some degree in our lives this should not be the purpose of our lives.

Our lives must be defined by the commission which Christ has given us. And if it is not then the Lord might as well just take us to heaven. Hopefully each of us here this morning understand this and are therefore seeking to be more effective in this endeavor. And if this is so, then what Paul shares with us concerning his ministry amongst the Thessalonians should be of great interest.

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As we examine **1 Thess. 2** we will see that Paul paints for us three different images or pictures of how he viewed himself in this wonderful work that he was involved in. The first image was that of a steward. And we saw this image conveyed to us in **VV. 1-6**. If we are ever going to effectively minister in the lives of people. Seeking to make disciples and teaching them to obey all that the Lord has commanded then we must view ourselves as the Lord's steward. We must come to the place in our lives where we feel personally responsible to minister the truth of God's word in the lives of others, particularly in respect to the gospel.

This morning we will be considering the second image or picture that Paul presents to us concerning the way he approached his work of fulfilling the great commission. And the second picture that we see in this passage is that of a loving mother.

### A LOVING MOTHER

Let us read **VV. 7,8** **“But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. (8) Having thus a fond affection 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 very dear to us.”** Notice that the very first word of **V. 7** is **“but.”** Not this, but this. What is he saying? Far from being greedy, licentious, sexually motivated, given to self aggrandizement, manipulation, and abuse; rather than that, we proved ourselves to be gentle among you.

Gentle is a beautiful word. And it is a word that will generate a number of different images in our minds. But of all the images that this word potentially could have produced in the apostles mind to describe for us the concept he gives us the image of a nursing mother.

Let us again look at **V. 7** **“But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.”** This a marvelous metaphor. Paul picks out of all the human realm the most intimate, cherishing relationship, that of a mother nursing her infant child.

It is a real shame that breast feeding has gone behind closed doors and breast flaunting has been exalted to almost cult status in our country. It is a shame because it may make it difficult for some of us here this morning to appreciate the significance of this metaphor. But for the Apostle Paul he obviously had ample opportunity to watch mothers feeding their infant children and he had been impacted by what he saw. He was impacted by the very special relationship that he observed between the mother and the child.

He was impressed with the total selflessness of that act. He was impressed with the fact that the mother would literally share a part of herself with her infant child with no thought for her own personal comfort or benefit and with such great tenderness. The nursing mother in no way was seeking to receive from this infant anything. Her only reward was in the act of giving.

The verb “tenderly” means “to warm with body heat.” The nursing mother that Paul has in his mind, when using this metaphor, is not tentative in nursing her infant. But she draws her infant close to her so that this child would not only receive the nourishment of life giving milk but the warmth of her own body.

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Paul is saying he and his companions proved themselves to be gentle amongst the Thessalonians as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. What Paul saw in the relationship between a nursing mother and her infant is what he felt and did for these Thessalonians.

### PAUL'S AFFECTION WAS COMPARABLE TO THE AFFECTION OF A MURSING MOTHER FOR HER INFANT

Look at **V. 8** “**Having thus a fond affection for you.**”

When he initially saw these Thessalonians he saw them as totally helpless, he saw them like infants. And he was moved in his spirit to feel a fond affection for them. Not just a little affection. Not just a moderate degree of affection, but that kind of affection that a nursing mother would feel for her own infant.

We will never be affective in ministry until we actually find ourselves feeling affectionate toward those the Lord brings into our lives.

When we see people what do we feel? When Paul saw the Thessalonians he felt compassion for them. He felt affection for them as if they were his own children. And just as a mother would their own infant son he drew them close to himself. Do we see people in this way? Are we drawing them into our lives? Or do we leave them alone while we go along the path of our own self indulgence?

The world today is so busy. People have very little time for people. I recently moved into a new house and I have already begun to visit with my neighbors. And what I discovered was the fact that my new neighbors have never been in our home. They talked about our house as if it were a foreign country. But this is so typical of the world today. People are too busy for people. May the Lord give us the grace not to be so busy that we would not be so busy that we would not see people as the Lord sees them. May the Lord grant us grace to genuinely care for them. Not superficially care for them, but rather as a nursing mother might care for her own child.

Are you being convicted yet? Hopefully we will be confessing our sin, and ask God to minister ever increasing grace in our lives so that we might be able to say that same thing as Paul.

Not only did Paul feel what a nursing mother feels toward her own infant, but he did what a nursing mother does for her own children. Not literally, obviously Paul doesn't suckle the Thessalonians. But he figuratively does what a nursing mother does.

### PAUL DID WHAT A MURSING MOTHER DID

### HE PULLS THE THESSALONIANS INTO HIS LIFE JUST AS A MURSING MOTHER TENDERLY PULLS HER INFANT CHILD TO HER BREAST

Paul did not remain distant from those he saw as being in need. He comes alongside of them and he involves himself with them. How can we feel great affection for those who are so needy and not draw them into our lives. I believe it is impossible.

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We will very shortly be beginning our new softball season. This year we will have 18 different teams. We will have nearly 350 people playing softball out there on Sunday nights. Why are we doing this? We are doing this so that you might have the opportunity to draw people who are either unsaved or unchurched more closely to you, and to others who will hopefully also share your affection for them.

This summer we will again be opening up our homes to Japanese young people from Japan. Why are we doing this? We are doing this so that you might have the opportunity to draw people who are helpless and without strength and who you have a fond affection for closer to your life.

But this is not all that a mother of an infant child does.

When we draw people into our lives and view them as our own children we need to feel compelled to offer them what we have available to give them. Look at the words of Paul in **V. 8** **“Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives.”**

What did Paul have to give them? First of all he gave them the Gospel. We must be prepared to minister the word to the people the Lord is bringing into our lives. We must be willing to give the pure milk of the word. Not in an abrasive and harsh manner, but with the gentleness and the tenderness of a nursing mother.

This necessitates that we ourselves just as a nursing mother is giving attention to our own diet. We will be much better able to do this work if we ourselves are feeding on the pure unadulterated word of God. The nursing mother eats the food and transforms it into milk for the baby. The mature Christian feeds on the Word of God and then shares its nourishment with the younger believers so that can grow.

We cannot have a church that is looking to the church staff to minister the truth of God’s word to the spiritually needy of this world. It is for you to see the people in your life as God sees them and with a heart of compassion draw them to yourself and into your life so that you can gently minister the truth of God’s word.

But not only did Paul minister the word to these Thessalonians. He gave them his very life. **“Having thus a fond affection 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 very dear to us.”** Obviously Paul did not in fact experience martyrdom in his ministry to the Thessalonians, but certainly he had the heart of a martyr.

God has called us to be ambassadors for Christ and ministers of reconciliation. Our purpose in this world should be to go and make disciples baptizing them and teaching them to do all that the Lord has commanded us. This obviously should not be viewed as an easy task. And certainly this image of a mother’s love should not diminish in our minds the amount of energy and personal sacrifice necessary to carry this off well.

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If we are truly going to be successful in the ministry that called us to perform in this world we must begin to see ourselves not simply as a steward who is responsible but also as a nursing mother who is filled with genuine concern for those the Lord has brought into our lives.

This expression of affection is not always well responded to. **2 Cor. 12:14,15** we read the words of the man who has suffered in this wonderful work. **“Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for their parents but parents for their children. (15) And I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If I love you the more, am I to be loved the less?** Paul is saying that he loved them so much that even if you do not love me in return I will continue to tend to your needs. Isn't this what a nursing mother is willing to do for her own child.

Of course it is! But hopefully as the child becomes older he or she will rise up as **Prov. 31:28** tells us and call their mother blessed. And yet even this is not guaranteed. And yet even so, the mother will continue to give to her infant child though she receives nothing back in return. Even in fact though she may never receive anything back in return she will continue to give and so it should be this way in our ministry to those the Lord has brought into our lives.

### CONCLUSION

The world is seeking to find a purpose in terms of the things of this world. The Lord, in His wisdom, has freed us from this futile pursuit by giving us an earthly mission with eternal reward. And that is to go and make disciples, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.

But don't think it will be easy. For this work can only be effectively carried out if we approach it as a mother nursing an infant child would carry out her work. It takes long hours, it takes great sacrifice, it changes our whole lives.