

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Helping the Baby to Grow Up 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 Part 5

Paul is presenting to us in **chapter 2** three different pictures of how he saw himself ministering to the Thessalonians.

We first of all saw that Paul viewed Himself as a “steward.” A steward is someone who has been entrusted with the property or affairs of another. And certainly this is clearly how Paul viewed himself in **1 Thess. 2:1-6** for we read in **V. 4** “**but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts.**” Paul lived his life feeling responsible before the Lord for his ministry of the Word in the lives of others. If we are going to be effective in ministry we also must feel this same sense of responsibility. We must have this same mindset. We must have a mindset of a steward.

Not only did Paul view himself in his ministry to the Thessalonians as a steward, but he also saw himself in his ministry to the Thessalonians as a nursing mother. Look at **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.** If we are going to be effective in our ministry with people we must like a nursing mother see them as truly needy. We must respond to the need with a heart of compassion. We must seek to draw them into our lives and to give them the life giving milk of the word. In other words we must see ourselves as their caretaker.

But this is not all. Paul did not only see himself as a steward. Paul did not only see himself as a mother but he also saw himself as a father. Let us read **1 Thess. 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 may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”**

As the Lord’s stewards we must approach our ministry not only as a nursing mother would approach her own children, but also as a father. It is clear from these statements that Paul actually observed a distinct difference in the way a mother and a father would approach the responsibility of parenting. Paul was actually able to see distinct roles, and he now refers to these distinct roles in helping us to see how we are to be ministering in the lives of people.

We have already mentioned the role of the mother as being that of a caretaker. We have seen that very graphically portrayed in the picture of a nursing mother who in response to the need of her infant child will tenderly pull the child close to her body, so that the child might receive the warmth of her body and to her breast so that the child might receive the nourishment of her milk. She does this because she has a fond affection for them because she has a heart of compassion for them. She is compelled to do this.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

She is compelled to do this because this is how the Lord has designed mothers to be. Not only anatomically, but emotionally and psychologically. In other words, it is natural.

But what about the men. How are men to function? Paul gives to us some very important information by telling us how he functioned as a father to the Thessalonians. By examining how Paul functions as a father to the Thessalonians we can get an insight into how fathers in general should be functioning in respect to their own children.

Because father's day is quickly approaching I would like to take a little extra time to develop this subject for you. I hope that it will prove helpful to you.

The question we will be answering is, How had Paul been a father to the Thessalonians?

If I believe that there is one word to describe how Paul functioned as a father to the Thessalonians it would be leadership. This is how I would sum up **VV. 9-12**. Certainly if this is not so clear to you at this point in the message hopefully it will become clear as we develop it more fully. But even if this not so at this point, from this passage, certainly it is clear from other passages in God's word that this is exactly what a man's primary role should be in the context of the home.

Eph. 5:23 says “**for the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He himself being the Savior of the body.**” The word “head” is to be understood in a figurative sense of denoting “leadership of” or “having authority over.” Historically, it should be noted that Paul's statement in **Eph. 5:23** is not drawn from a culture where men reigned unchallenged as heads of their wives. In fact, a serious breakdown of marriage and family was occurring throughout the Roman Empire at this time. Both men and women were resisting the idea that man was the head of his wife, but for different reasons. Men really did not want the responsibility, and women were increasingly reluctant to give up their rights. Therefore, Paul's call for a man to be the head of his wife sounded as radical to many then as it does to many now. And yet this was the clearly defined biblical role of the man.

The man is to be the head of his home. It is not only his privilege it is his responsibility. In fact if a man does does manage his household well the word makes it very clear that he cannot hold the office of elder in **1 Tim. 3:4** or deacon according to **1 Tim. 3:12**.

If we are going to effectively minister in the lives of people we must come to the place in our lives where we are willing to take on a leadership role very much as fathers as to do in respect to their on homes and families. We cannot afford to be passive but rather we must determine to be an active participant in molding and shaping individuals into the people that the Lord would have them to be. But we need to step up to this position of leadership with our eyes open. We need to know what will be required of us. WE MUST BE PEOPLE OF STRONG CONVICTION

Let me ask you a question. What makes a man a man? If someone were to say, “Boy, so and so is a real man?” what do you think that they would be talking about? Is he talking about his physical strength? Is he talking about his ability to bench press 400 pounds? Or is he talking about his athletic ability? May be he is talking about his ability to drive a golf ball 300 yards?

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Or Is he talking about his interest in hunting and fishing? Or is he talking about his ability to rebuild an engine? What makes a man a man? I believe that the scriptures are very clear. There is in fact one quality that the scriptures isolates that is uniquely associated with being a man.

1 Cor. 16:13 is a very interesting verse. It says, **“Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”** What is this saying? It is saying that when we think of maleness we should think of strength. Not physical strength, but strength of character to do what you know is right. The Corinthian church was a weak and sinful church. So he exhorts them to **“Act like men, be strong.”** He is in essence telling them you know what is right, now act like men and do it.

As men, our role within our family is to lead, and in order to lead we must prove ourselves strong. We can't be wimps when it comes down to doing what we believe to be right or best we must perform it no matter what the cost.

As I look back on my own home, I would say that in this sense the home that I came from was particularly blessed. I had a father who believed in things. He certainly did not in any way ever function as a caretaker in my life, but he did function as a leader. He had strong convictions and he, as far as I could see, lived by those convictions. If I were to actually use one word to describe my father it would be “strong.” This certainly was not only my perspective, but I would say that this was the perspective of my entire family.

The whole family knew that if my dad believed something that there would be no wavering or turning back. Once he set his course, the course would not be abandoned out of indifference or difficulty.

This kind of strength provides a great deal of stability to a home. Mothers so often times may not be taken seriously. They will look into their mother's eyes and often times they see a gentleness that they can exploit to their advantage. However, with the fathers it may be a totally different read. I knew that my dad believed certain things were right and certain things were wrong, and I knew just by looking into his eyes that there would be no flex. He had set the course for his home and that was just the way it was going to be.

And even though what I am sharing with you is true my dad fell short of the ideal. Not because he lacked convictions, but rather his convictions were sorely lacking in respect to what mattered the most. If we are looking for the ideal model of strength in respect to spiritual leadership, I think of Joshua.

I see this kind of man in Joshua. At the end of his life he was addressing the nation of Israel and he said **Joshua 24:14,15** **“Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. (15) And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”** Joshua was a man of strength. He understood what had to be done, and he would do what had to be done in order to accomplish what he had purposed.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

He was willing to pay the price. He was willing to stand up for what he believed. He was willing to stand up for what he valued. So many families are rudderless because the husbands and fathers are not acting like men. We need husbands and fathers to apply themselves, like Joshua, to discern what is important and to pursue it with strength. And to lead their families in those things which they value.

Mothers are so often times expending themselves in order to provide for their husbands and for their children. They wash, they iron, they mend, they cook, they sweep, they console, they comfort, they impart to their families with fond affection their very lives. It is tantamount, therefore, for men to step forward and see the bigger picture. They need to be able to see the forest for the trees and determine within themselves what is important and go for it. Not passively, but with strength and courage.

What do you want your sons to be? You want them to be strong and courageous. If we do not raise up sons with this quality they will be ineffectual leaders, whether that is of a family or a nation. The importance of this quality in a man's life certainly was understood by King David. In **1 Chron. 22** David is instructing his son Solomon concerning the future construction of the Temple and he says to him beginning in V. 11 **“Now, my son, the Lord be with you that you may be successful, and build the house of the Lord your God just as He has spoken concerning you. (12) Only the Lord give you discretion and understanding, and give you charge over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the Lord your God. (13) Then you shall prosper, if you are careful to observe the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord commanded Moses concerning Israel. Be strong and courageous, do not fear nor be dismayed.”** Leadership is not easy. When we set a course especially that of pleasing the Lord there will be hardship. It is absolutely necessary for someone to hold ground and not be willing to budge. It is absolutely necessary for someone to keep the home and family on course, and that is exactly what David understands. This is what he desires for his son David, and he exhorts him accordingly.

This is not the last time that we see David speaking to his son like this. As David is approaching the very last days of his life we see again we will see him again exhorting his son in the very same way. **1 Kings 2:1-2 “As David's time to die drew near, he charged Solomon his son, saying, (2) I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show your a man.”**

Being a man is not being 6'6" and being able to bench press 400 pounds. Being a man is not changing the oil in the car. Being a man is not being able to appreciate sports or having a fast car. At the very heart of being a man is being strong and courageous. It is not even making a large salary. It is believing in something deeply enough to persevere in the midst of adversity showing ourselves strong and courageous in respect to our convictions.

How had Paul been a father to the Thessalonians? He had been a father to the Thessalonians by giving to them strong and courageous leadership. This is the role of the father.