

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Helping the Baby to Grow Up 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 Part 6

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. **1 Thess. 2:1-6** communicates this very clearly. Certainly Paul saw himself as responsible. Look at **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 for the 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.

But it is one thing to feel responsible before the Lord for our ministry of the Word in the lives of others and quite another to know how to do this. Paul actually helps us in this regard beginning in **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 truly effective in our stewardship of the word we must have the heart of the nursing mother. When we look on the lost multitudes of this world we must see them as God sees them. We must see them as helpless and desire to draw them into our lives in order to minister the life giving nourishment of God’s Word as a mother would her own infant child. We must “tenderly” draw them into our lives and gently minister the truth to them “because they have become very dear to us.” I believe the primary force within a woman’s life and therefore her primary role within the home is that of a caretaker. This was the way Paul approached the Thessalonians and this is the way we must therefore approach the people God has brought into our lives if we are going to be effective in ministry.

But the ideal family is not complete with only a mother. The ideal family also needs a father. And Paul understands this. Paul understands that what is conducive to an effective family is also conducive to an effective ministry. He therefore, adds a third picture in **1 Thess. 2** and that is the picture of the father. Let us read **VV. 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 a steward of the Gospel of God if we are going to have an effective ministry we must approach the people God has brought into our lives as a nursing mother and also as a concerned father.**

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I shared with you that I believe that the primary role of the wife and mother in the home is that of a caretaker. Women, by the way, that God has designed them very naturally gravitates to the caretaking role in the family. This, of course, is very graphically communicated through the picture of a nursing mother. But what about the father? What is his primary role in the home? I believe that the bible teaches us that God has purposed and designed the man to take the leadership role in the home.

This is exactly what we see in **VV. 9-12**. Paul knew what he wanted to accomplish in the lives of the Thessalonians, and he was going to do whatever was necessary in order to take them there.

Leadership requires strength. And just as God has equipped mothers to be caretakers God has equipped men to be leaders. If we were to ask the question what makes a man a man the biblical answer appears to be strength. In **I Cor. 16:13** Paul exhorts the Corinthians **“Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”** Husbands and fathers have been given to the family in order to provide leadership and this requires strength.

If you are a father and are here this morning and you have a son. It is far more important that you impress upon your son the importance of being strong in respect to their convictions than any other quality. Consider David’s instructions to his son Solomon in **1 Chron. 22**. In this chapter 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, do not be dismayed.”** 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 this life we 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 yourself a man.”**

As Christian husbands and fathers we are to provide leadership for our families. The course that we are to set for our families is clear. We are to lead our families in serving the Lord. Certainly Joshua understood this in **Joshua 24:14,15** we read **“Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which you 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.”** We need to approach the people that God brings into our lives with that same kind of determination. We need to approach the people that God brings into our lives with in the very same way.

We cannot be complacent in respect to the people that come into our lives. We have a goal. God has called us to go and make disciples teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And we must be determined to see this goal realized.

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When someone comes into my life I don't see them as a postman or an engineer. I don't see them as a homemaker or child care worker. I see them as someone that the Lord loved and gave Himself for. And he has called me to go to them and seek to make them a disciple of Christ. In order to be effective in this endeavor I need to approach people with the heart of a mother tenderly drawing them into my life, but at the same time I need to have the determination and strength of a father.

We see the strength of Paul in **VV. 9-12**.

EXAMPLE

No one can be a strong or effective leader unless their own lives communicates the value of what they say they believe in.

I was on a very successful high school basketball team. It began with the our coach. He believed in winning and he believed that we could win. He paid a high price as a coach. Not only did he, within the rules of the CIF, take advantage of every training opportunity, he went far beyond the call of duty.

I remember in my senior year we had an All Coast League forward whose family was getting ready to move out of town. It would have been a significant loss to our team. It certainly would have been very difficult for us to win the championship, which he certainly had set his sights on. So he, without hesitation opened up his home and made him a part of his family for a year. Why? Because he believed in winning and believed that we could win. The team never questioned his commitment to the goal because of the way he lived. He was therefore in a much better position to give leadership.

Fathers within the home must understand this simple and basic concept. If you and I truly want a home that will serve the Lord then we must be living our lives in such a way that it communicates to our children that we are living for the Lord. How in the world can you ever expect your children to take you seriously when you only go to church when it is convenient. You choose not to get involved in ministry or cannot sustain ministry because it interferes with your hobby. Fathers may have the mistaken belief that if they bring their children to Sunday School and church that someone how that is enough. Certainly it is only a beginning and really far short of what is necessary if fathers are going to be truly convincing.

Paul certainly did not have this problem. People did not have to guess at what Paul thought was important. One of the ways he demonstrated what he believed in and what he thought was important is what he was willing to do in order to have an effective ministry.

Let us read **V. 9** **“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.”** Though he acknowledged in **1 Cor. 9** that he had the right to receive financial assistance from the Corinthian church he refused to exercise his rights. He refused to exercise his rights lest he might cause a hindrance to the gospel.

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In **1 Cor. 9:12** he says “**If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.**” He wanted to make sure that no one would be able to accuse him of doing his ministry for money.

This conviction cost Paul dearly. He forced him to work night and day. Probably they preached by day and made tents at night. The fact that Paul worked at times as a tent maker is clear from **Acts 18:3; 20:34-35**. Paul needed money because he paid for his room and board which is clear from **2 Thess. 3:8** where it says, “**Nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you.**”

We know that Paul, while at Thessalonica, received at least two gifts from Philippi, but we can easily conclude that these gifts obviously were not so large that he made it possible for him to stop working.

The difficulty of this commitment is emphasized both in **1 Thess. 2:9** as well as **2 Thess. 3:8** by the words “**labor and hardship.**” The J.B. Phillips translates it “**Our struggles and hard work.**”

If we want to be effective in ministering to people we must like a father prove ourselves strong by example.

If we say that we believe that the gospel is good news, and if we say that we believe that it is the power of God unto salvation we must show the strength of that conviction by what we do. Certainly Paul was doing this.

Paul and his companions were proving themselves to be men. They were proving themselves to be men because they were willing to pay the price of what they believed. They were not wimping out.

They could have said, “We can’t do this anymore.” They could have said, “We can’t keep working like this. These Thessalonians are just going to have to pay up and do the honorable thing. Starting tomorrow if they are unwilling to give us free room and board our ministry is over.” Or if they didn’t want to confront the Thessalonians they could have just stopped ministering the gospel and simply made tents, but neither of those options were open to them.

I am so thankful for many in this fellowship who are laboring night and day in the cause of Christ. By day, they are working in order to make a living, and then by night they are giving themselves up to ministry to people.

Those who in the past as well as those in the present who are so willing to give themselves to ministry at such great personal price give clear testimony as to their character. Look at **V. 10** “**You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers.**” Paul’s example described in **V. 9** communicated clearly the strength of his character. Reminding the Thessalonians concerning his ministry amongst them he challenges them to examine his character.

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He uses three words to describe himself in respect to his ministry. Although we should not attempt to distinguish too neatly between these three words, yet “devout” appears to refer to being “pleasing to god” ; “righteous” appears to be referring to our dealings with our neighbor, and “blameless” to our public reputation.

If these men had wimped out at Thessalonica seeking an easier path for their lives by either not proclaiming the gospel or by charging people for the gospel certainly they would have jeopardized any such claim to being devout, righteous, or blameless.

CONCLUSION

As a steward of the gospel of God we must see ourselves responsible for the ministry of God’s Word in the lives of people. But if we are going to carry out this responsibility with effectiveness we must approach those that God has brought into our lives with the heart of a nursing mother. We must be able to see their need and tenderly draw them into our lives so that we might provide them the life giving nourishment of the Word of God.

But not only should we approach them as a nursing mother, but also as a concerned father. We need to offer leadership to those who are so needy. We need to determine that according to the grace that God ministers in and through our lives we will take be God’s tool in introducing and maturing this individual in Christ.

We need to appreciate that our ability to give effective leadership to those that we meet will be affected by two things. **Example!** We need to live our lives in such a way that people will take us seriously.