

3.01.20 ~ 1Thessalonians 2:7-12, Parental-Style Leadership

Last week in 1Thessalonians 2:1-6, we looked at the characteristics of spiritual leadership that bring honor to God. Today, we are going to look at 1Thessalonians 2:7-12 where we will consider how leadership within the church is much like that in a normal family, i.e., that there is to be both a mother and a father.

In **1Thessalonians 2:7** Paul writes, "we were among you, as a nursing mother who tenderly cares for her own children," but then in **verse 11** he says, "we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children."

Paul provides here two of the many metaphors used in Scripture to distinguish the character and practice of spiritual leadership in the church; but before we look at those, let me give you a few more examples of how the those who lead in God's church are to serve:

In 1Corinthians 4:1-2, as a steward [one who manages the resources of the house of God]; in 1Timothy 2:7, as a preacher, a herald [bringing the gospel message of forgiveness and eternal life in Christ]; in 2Timothy 2:2, as a teacher [one called and equipped to rebuke, correct and train those in the church with the truth of God]; in 1Peter 2:16, as a bond slave [a free man who chooses to serve God wholeheartedly]; in 1Peter 5:1-4, as a shepherd [feeding, caring for, overseeing, and protecting the flock of God].

Read 1Thessalonians 2:7-9... Paul says that he, Silas, and Timothy served as spiritual mothers to the believers in Thessalonica (**verse 7**), we were like "a nursing *mother*" who "tenderly cares for her own children."

Out of all the relationships humans have, this is the most gentle and tender, a mother nursing her baby, giving herself for the life she is holding in her arms. Paul is illustrating the personal and tender care that is to be given to the church by those who are in leadership.

The verb "tenderly cares" means to warm another with your own body heat, i.e., a mother holds her baby to her breast warming the child with her own body, while also feeding the infant with milk from her own body.

Paul says (**1Thessalonians 2:8-9**) that he and the other apostles had a deep affection for the Thessalonians, like a mother does for her baby; and not only did they *impart* to them the gospel of God" to save them (like a mother breast feeding her baby), but they "also [imparted to them] their own lives, because these believers had become so very dear to them."

The word translated *impart* here [means to share something fully, yet to retain some of it yourself], e.g., the apostles shared the gospel with them, but also their very lives; for they sacrificed for them like a mother does for her own child (especially a baby, who consumes its mother's life), as she feeds it, changes it, loves it, clothes it, bathes it, puts it to bed, gets it up, takes care of its every need.

And a mother does all this without receiving any special awards or kudos for mothering her children; in fact, she is expected to labor through all kinds of troubles: sleepless nights, stuffy noses, teething, stomach aches, skinned knees, sore throats, ear aches, etc. A mother does all this because of the deep affection and love she has for her child or children; she gives up a big part of her life, to make sure they have what they need.

Paul is saying that those in leadership in the church are to give themselves to those in the church, the family of God, and they are to do this selflessly, constantly, even in hardship, "working night and day," just as a mother cares for her children.

Read 1Thessalonians 2:10-12... Just as **verses 7-9** illustrate the mothering role of a spiritual leader among the family of God, **verses 10-12** illustrate the fatherly role; clearly, there is to be a balance of both motherhood and fatherhood displayed as spiritual leaders care for family of believers.

But what is fatherhood? What makes a man a man? How should men act? In **1Corinthians 16:13** Paul commands the men, "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, **act like men, be strong.**" The verb "act like men" means to conduct oneself in a courageous way. Men are to be strong and courageous.

Clearly men are not to be effeminate [which means gentle, soft, womanly, unmanly]; in fact, the word feminine is taken from the word womanly; in the old English definition it literally means "one who suckles, or one who feeds from the breast," as we have already studied in 1Thessalonians 2:7-9.

But now we are talking about spiritual leaders representing the ultimate in God pleasing masculinity or maleness, that of being a God-honoring father to those in the church. He is to do this by being strong and courageous, he must be willing to engage in the challenges, to be steadfast in difficulties, and to be willing to remove or go through obstacles; these are part of his duties and responsibilities.

Moses, speaking to Israel, tells them that he is 120 years old and although he is turning responsibility for Israel over to Joshua they should not fear; then God exhorts Joshua to be strong and courageous because God will be with him.

Deuteronomy 31:3, "It is the Lord your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the Lord has spoken." **6**, "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you." **23**, "Then He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun, and said, 'Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you.'"

Joshua 1:5 "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. **7** Only be strong and very courageous;

be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. **8** This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. **9** Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

When King David is surrounded by the armies of the Arameans, he sends Joab out to lead Israel in battle:

2Samuel 10:12, “Be strong, and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; and may the Lord do what is good in His sight.”

When David was close to death, he exhorted Solomon:

1Kings 2:2, “I am going the way of all the earth [to die]. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man.”

1Chronicles 22:13, “[Be] 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.”

The point is, God has ordained for men to be leaders in their own families and to be leaders in God’s family, the church. God-ordained male leadership is exemplified by men who are firm in their faith; men with convictions rooted in the Word of God, who are willing to live boldly and yet humbly, as examples to others, acting like men, being strong and courageous, because their strength is from the Lord.

No one is perfect, only Jesus Christ the Lord. We all make mistakes,;I often mess up, and when I do, I must make corrections, and sometimes I have to apologize to someone. Owning up to your mistakes is representative of acting like a man, just as being strong and courageous is. Paul acted like a man, and he challenges other men, especially those who lead the church, to do the same.

Back to 1Thessalonians 2:10, “You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers.” Paul reminds them that they are witnesses of how he, Silas, and Timothy acted before them, and that God knows their actions and the very intentions of their hearts. Paul is saying, we were above reproach, blameless before you, as you well know.

Paul reiterates (**1Thessalonians 2:11**) how the apostles, as fathers, came *exhorting* them [meaning to come alongside them, to urge them to do the right thing, to receive Christ as Savior and Lord]; this is the same word used for the Holy Spirit [*paraklete*, literally, *Comforter, Helper*]. Jesus says, concerning the Holy Spirit [*Spirit of Christ, Spirit of Truth, Spirit of God*] (**John 14:16**), “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper,” [One just like Me] whose work (**John 16:8-9**), “to convict the world concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me.”

The apostles, as fathers, also came *encouraging* them [meaning to stimulate them to hang in there, to have confidence, and to continue doing the right thing]. **Hebrews 10:23-25**, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.."

Thirdly, the apostles came *imploring* [begging, entreating, urging] each of the believers in Thessalonica, just as a father would strongly plead with his own child to please consider the consequences that will come, if you do not heed the exhortation and encouragement I am giving you.

2Corinthians 5:20-21, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Basically, fatherly *exhortation* instructs a child to walk or to live in a certain way; while fatherly *encouragement* gives emotional, intellectual, moral and/or spiritual support to the child, so that they can keep on keeping on; and finally, fatherly imploring them earnestly, from the heart, making it very clear that to continue turning a deaf ear to the message or to rebel in their heart toward it, will bring dire consequences, destruction, and ultimately death" (cf. **Romans 3:10-12; 23; 5:8; 6:23; 8:1**).

In **1Thessalonians 2:12**, Paul states why, as a father, he is exhorting, encouraging, and imploring them, "so that [they] would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls [them] into His own kingdom and glory."

At the moment of genuine salvation a person enters the kingdom of heaven, ruled by the KING of Kings and LORD of Lords, Jesus Christ: crucified, resurrected, and coming again to take all who believe in Him to live with Him, forever in the new heaven and the new earth, where there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain, or death, for all that has past away (cf. **Revelation 21:1-4**); and surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever (cf. **Psalms 23:6**).

Pastor Mike
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