

As a Father – 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Reading – Vs. 4-12

B. Father's Day / Set Up

1. Because it's Father's Day, we'll be taking a look at Paul's words in vs. 10-12.
2. Though Paul only spent 3 weeks in Thessalonica, he'd made the most of it.
 - a. This letter makes clear he not only led many to Christ,
 - b. He *taught* them about every major doctrine of the Faith.
3. He wrote 1 Thess to commend & encourage them, as well deal with a minor issue that had popped up.
 - a. False teachers had arrived & were promoting their own ideas by bad-mouthing Paul.
 - b. That's why he calls them to **remember HOW** he'd lived & worked among them.
4. He uses 2 images of the example he'd left them – Of a Mother & a Father.

II. TEXT

Mother • Vs. 7-9

⁷But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.

1. When Paul's team arrived in Thessalonica, they didn't storm in like angry prophets, announcing the flaming judgment of God.
2. They were *gentle*, like a mother with a newborn.
 - a. *New* believers don't need to be "whipped into shape."
 - b. They need to be tenderly brought up on the pure milk of the Word.

⁸So, 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.

3. Just as there's a profound bond between a mother & her child, a *bond of affection* had been forged between Paul & the Thessalonians.
 - a. He hadn't give them just the Gospel;
 - b. *He gave himself.*
4. Paul didn't see his calling as simply a *Salvation Salesman*.
 - a. Preaching wasn't the *end*, it was the *means* to the end, which was *relationship*.
 - b. Relationship with God → & *because* of that, with one another.
5. As I mentioned in our recent study in 1 Cor., we might assume from reading Acts Paul was a hard-driving, Type A, task-oriented guy.
 - a. But his letters reveal as driven as he was to reach as many as he could,
 - b. It was never about sermons, campaigns, or missionary trips for Paul.
 - c. It was about *people*. It was about *relationship*.
 - d. Paul knew his calling wasn't to a task; He was called **TO PERSONS** – 1st God—Then, People.
 - e. We'll come back to this later.

⁹For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night & day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.

6. That sounds so like a *mother*—working tirelessly night & day so her family is taken care of.

B. Father • Vs. 10-12

1. In v. 10, Paul turns the image from *mother* to *father*.

¹⁰You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly & justly & blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe;

2. Paul calls them to remember the example he'd left them because false teachers were saying Paul was a *poser* who *preached* one thing but *practiced* another.
 - a. In truth, it was the false teachers who were 2-faced hypocrites.
 - b. It's a common practice of such hypocrites to divert attention away from *their* hypocrisy by accusing

- others of the very thing they're guilty of.
3. So Paul reminds the Thessalonians they'd seen first-hand what kind of men his team were.
 - a. And there was ***no disparity*** between their public & private lives.
 - b. There were no shenanigans going on behind the scenes, no ulterior motives.
 - c. Bottom Line = They practiced what they preached.
 4. **BECAUSE** the Thessalonians ***knew*** Paul was a man of ***integrity***, they ought to realize the ***duplicity*** of his critics.
 5. Before we move on, let's ***pause & absorb*** the **importance** of what Paul says here.
 - a. He knew the health & safety of the Thessalonians depended on what they believed.
 - b. So he didn't hesitate to remind them of his reputation as a man of tested & proven integrity.
 - c. They ***knew*** there was no disparity between his message & motive.
 - d. He practiced what he preached because he ***believed*** it.
 6. How crucial integrity is in a leader! How essential leaders practice what they preach!
 7. We live at a time when people have become so cynical about their leaders they're willing to give them a pass when they ***fail*** to practice what they preach.
 - a. As long as the leader ***says*** the right things, ***holds*** the right positions, the public doesn't care if they actually ***do*** them!
 - b. For years now polls report the majority of people ***know*** politicians are lying to them – but vote for them anyway.
 - c. Private behavior matters not at all in public positions.
 - d. ***Character*** has become a non-issue in the voting booth.
 8. This is a far, far cry from what the Founders Fathers intended.
 - a. ***Character was everything to them.***
 - b. It was everything because they wisely realized there was no way people could know ahead of time what issues, crises & bills would come up before Congress & the President.
 - c. So you voted for the candidate you trusted had the character & moral fortitude to choose what was right, wise, & good when those issues & crises ***did*** rise to challenge the Nation.
 9. But today we're told a politician's ***private life***, his/her ***character***, has **nothing to do** with their ability to govern!
 10. The result is, we have politicians who preach environmentalism but themselves have a massive carbon footprint.
 11. We have judges who break the very laws they're supposed to be enforcing – as in the case this week of the Federal Appeals Court Judge in LA.
 12. The divorce of character from competency to lead has even infected the ***church***.
 - a. There are preachers calling their multitude of supporters to sacrificial giving,
 - b. While they own palatial mansions on each coast & live a lifestyle of obscene extravagance.
 - c. When they're exposed, their supporters cry "Foul" – not on the preachers who scammed them but on the ones who expose them!
 13. It's simple—We get the Leaders we ***deserve***.
 - a. In our system, ***we select*** our leaders.
 - b. As long as we divorce character from competency, then we'll keep getting leaders who are duplicitous & corrupt.
 - c. If we want good leadership then character has to be of primary consideration.
 - d. May God give us men & women of integrity & wisdom.

¹¹as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, & charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, ¹²that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom & glory.

14. Paul had not only worked among them with the tenderness & diligence of a mother,
15. He'd also modeled the role of a father.
16. ***How*** he'd fathered them starts back in v. 10 where he says

You are witnesses, and God also, how → devoutly & justly & blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe.

17. As we take a closer look at these, we get a glimpse at Paul's concept of fatherhood.
18. They provide dads a great template for how to raise our children.
19. **First**, Paul says he behaved *devoutly*.
 - a. The word refers to one's *sacred duty*.
 - b. It's the *moral imperative* that presses a man to sacrifice himself in service of a higher cause.
 - c. It's the **Ought that Outs**.
- d. A good way to think of "devout" is = *dev-out* → the *devotion* that comes *out*.
 - e. One of the *marks of genuine manhood* is the willingness to *spend himself in a noble cause*.
 - d. One of the noblest & most important causes of all is raising children to become the men & women of God He created them to be.
20. **Second**, Paul treated them *justly*; fairly.
 - a. Justice was never slanted in favor of a favorite.
 - b. This is one of the more tricky parts of being a leader.
 - c. Anyone who has authority runs the risk of being accused of playing favorites
 - d. And sometimes, in an attempt to *avoid that charge*, leaders will be *harder* on those close to them so they *don't* give room for doubt.
 - e. In high school, our wrestling coach had a son on the team. He worked him harder than anyone else for the very reason that he didn't want anyone to think he was giving his son a pass.
 - f. By avoiding a *charge* of being unfair, he *became* unfair.
 - g. It's crucial fathers never play favorites with their children.
 - h. While every child is different & some might more naturally adopt the likes & dislikes of a Dad,
 - i. He has to be careful he never communicates a greater approval or acceptance of one child over another.
 - j. Both love & discipline must be meted out *fairly*.
21. **Third**, Paul was *blameless*.
 - a. This doesn't mean he was *perfect*. It means there was no glaring character defect he'd rationalized away.
 - b. Being blameless means not have some abiding moral flaw or ethical failure.
 - c. We're *all* still growing; none of us is perfect.
 - d. Part of being spiritually mature is the *humility* to accept correction w/thankfulness.
 - e. Blame doesn't stick to the humble.
 - g. Part of being a father is the humble admission we're not perfect. We mess up too.
 - h. And when we do, we have to take our lumps just like everyone else.
 - i. The difference is that as fathers, while *we're the one* who doles out discipline to our children, *our* discipline comes from God.
22. Dads, how you doing in these 3 things?
 - a. Do you embrace your role as a father as a *sacred duty* – something worth giving your life for?
 - b. Are you *fair* in the treatment of your children?
 - c. Are you *blameless*? Do you practice what you preach? [Lying, Cheating]
23. In v. 11, Paul gives 3 more father-tasks:

¹¹ . . . you know how we exhorted, & comforted, & charged every one of you, as a father does his own children
24. **Exhorted** means to *call* someone with a sense of *urgency*.
 - a. In v. 12 the call is to a serious & solid daily walk with God.
 - b. Salvation isn't just for the sweet by & by; it's for **TODAY!**
 - c. We don't have to wait for heaven to walk with God; we can walk with him now.
 - d. Paul urged the Thessalonians to integrate their faith in God into their daily lives.
 - e. Fathers ought to do the same with *their* children.

- f. They do it first & best by walking the talk themselves.
 - g. The Christian life is more ***caught*** than ***taught***.
 - h. Teaching's important – but the most effective ***learning*** is done by ***hearing then seeing*** a good example.
 - i. And Dads, if there was an ***urgency*** in Paul's call to the Thessalonians to walk with God,
 - l. We ought to be ***positively insistent*** with our sons & daughters that they live all out for Jesus in these last days.
25. Paul also ***comforted*** the Thessalonians as a father should.
- a. When they faltered in the walk, he ***consolated*** them.
 - 1) He didn't berate & beat them.
 - 2) He encouraged them with warm words of forgiveness & restoration.
 - b. The good father discerns ***between innocent mistakes & willful disobedience***.
 - 1) ***Innocent mistakes*** ought to be treated with gentle correction & comfort.
 - 2) ***Rebellion*** is a different matter. That treated more severely.
 - c. When a 3 year old spills her glass of milk at the dinner table because she's still learning how to hold it properly, that's an innocent mistake that ought to be treated with tender encouragement.
 - d. But 5 years later when she's 8 & her mother tells her the glass is too close to her plate & she needs to move it or she may spill it & she ***disregards*** her mother's instruction, ***then*** knocks it over, that demands some ***serious discipline***.
 - f. Men are often good at being the ***disciplinarian*** but not so good at ***comforting*** their children.
 - 1) Dad, there's nothing that can better arm you child for learning ***how to deal with failure*** than by ***encouraging*** them when they fail.
 - 2) Life is filled with disappointments, many of them arising from our ***own*** failures.
 - 3) Learning from them & pressing on to success instead of walking away in perpetual defeat is ***a life-skill handed*** to a child by his/her father who encouraged them to not let failure & disappointment stop them.
26. Finally, Paul ***charged*** the Thessalonians.
- a. As he prepared to leave, he gave a last speech.
 - b. Knowing he might never see them again, he'd issued a ***challenge***.
 - c. He handed off their ***continued*** spiritual growth & the ***mission*** of Christ, ***to them***.
 - 1) What he says in Ch. 1 makes clear the Thess. had ***both continued to grow***,
 - 2) And had faithfully ***reached out*** to their surrounding region with the Gospel.
 - d. A ***charge*** is something every Dad ought to do with his son or daughter.
 - 1) When children become adults, the relationship between parents & children must change.
 - 2) The goal of parenting ***isn't*** to keep children in a state of ***perpetual dependence*** but to bring them to a ***godly independence***.
 - e. Throughout history & the world until modern times, people were considered children until right about the age of 13, then they became adults.
 - 1) There was no socio-economic group called "teenager" until the dawn of the 20th century.
 - 2) Then the teenager was invented so there'd be another market to sell stuff to.
 - 3) Prior to that, before their 13th year, boys & girls spent most of their time with their mothers & were considered ***children***.
 - 4) When they turned 13, ***girls*** were welcomed by the women, ***as*** a woman.
 - 5) ***Boys*** went off to join the men & were from then on considered a ***man***.
 - 6) In most cultures, there was a ***solemn ceremony*** that marked the passage from child to adult.
 - 7) Within the ceremony the father would ***charge*** his son, "From now on you are a man."
 - f. With the invention of the "teenager," the distinction between child & adult has blurred.
 - g. As the traditional family has dissolved & absentee or self-absorbed fathers have become the norm, children, & especially sons, are not being ***welcomed*** into ***adulthood***.
 - h. The result is an entire generation of men who want all the ***rights & privileges*** of being an adult but

none of the **responsibilities** – which is the **essence** of **maturity**.

- i. This is why we did the Braveheart Bowl last year & are doing it again this year at the end of September.
- j. Fathers, just as Paul **charged** the Thessalonians – handing off the **duty** of carrying on the Faith, so **you** must eventually turn your son or daughter loose with **the solemn charge** to live a life well pleasing to the Lord.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Sam Rayburn

1. Sam Rayburn was one of the most powerful men in the history of American politics during the first half of the 20th Century.
2. He served in the House of Representatives for **48 years**. 17 of them as Speaker of the House.
3. He was instrumental in passing many of the laws & policies that define the American system of government.
4. For a time, no bill could pass without his approval, no president could succeed without his support.
5. In his later years as he looked back on those moments that were most instrumental in shaping his life, there was one that stood out above all others.
 - a. It occurred at a railroad station near his home in East Texas,
 - b. Far removed in both time & space from the marbled halls of the Capitol in Washington DC., whenever Rayburn recounted this event, he did so with the utmost reverence & emotion.
 - c. He specially turned to it whenever faced with a crisis.
6. The year was 1900 & Rayburn was an 18 year old leaving home for college.
 - a. He stood on the platform, the waiting train behind him, a bundle of his clothes tied with a rope lying next to his feet. His parents too poor to afford a suitcase.
 - b. In front of him stood his father, a poor farmer who'd spent his whole life tilling his fields.
 - c. They said their stoic goodbyes, then Sam turned to board the train.
 - d. His father reached out & quickly pushed a wad of bills into his hand;
 - 1) \$25 dollars! No small amount in 1900.
 - 2) And to a poor family like the Rayburns, a minor fortune.
 - e. Sam was stunned. He knew they'd had only enough to survive for years.
 - f. Rayburn later said, "I often wondered what he did without, what sacrifice he & my mother made."
 - g. With tears in his eyes, Sam turned to board the train. Again his father reached out & turned him around.
 - h. Then spoke 4 words that burned into Rayburn's soul – "Sam, be a man!"
7. Rayburn understood the love contained in those words.
 - a. He held them in his heart for the rest of his life as **a charge to be worthy of.**
 - b. His father's love, devotion, sacrifice & example as a hard-working man of integrity defined for Sam what it meant to be a man.
 - c. He knew if he could rise to his father's example, he'd do well.

B. A Charge to Fathers

1. Paul's shown us in these verses how fathers can perform their role **well**.
 2. But I want to end with something I mentioned early on.
 3. Paul didn't see his calling as an Apostle as primarily a **job** to do or an office to fill.
 4. His calling wasn't to a **role**; it was to **relationship**.
- ⁸So, 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.**
5. **Then** he goes on to describe his work among them as a mother & father.
 6. Here's the point → "Father" isn't a **role, title, or office**; it describes a **relationship of warm affection**.
 7. It's a relationship of loving authority that **cultivates** a child's strengths, skills & talents, while carefully **pruning** away weakness & error.
 8. That's what **our Father in heaven** does **each day**, with us.

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Feed My Sheep

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