

**I THESSALONIANS 2:7-8**  
**LEADERSHIP – GENTLENESS**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Thessalonians chapter 2 as we continue our study through Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica. As we have seen in our study so far, in I Thessalonians chapter 1 we focused on ***HOW THE CHURCH WAS BORN***.

And now, in I Thessalonians chapter 2 we are looking at ***HOW THE CHURCH GREW***. Keep in mind that Paul spent three Sabbaths in Thessalonica before he was run out of town. And yet, in those three weeks or so we not only see people getting saved, but growing in the Lord, maturing in the faith.

You see, witnessing is more than just sharing your faith and seeing people come to know the Lord. That is only part of our responsibility. We are also to train them up in the things of God! And that is what is missing many times as people witness.

Last time, as we begin our study in I Thessalonians chapter 2, we looked at ***LEADERSHIP – FAITHFULNESS***. That truly is important. Leaders need to be faithful in the work that they are doing and as they are, they are imparting that quality in those they are leading so that they may go out and lead in faithfulness.

And yes, there was discouragement, suffering, but there was also the speaking forth of the truth of God found in the Word of God, not bowing to the pressure of men but submitting to the will of God, not trying to tickle the ears of those who are listening but speaking forth the Word of God so that conviction may come upon the person who is listening.

You see, Paul, Silas and Timothy were faithful in this work and they were instilling in these new believers this quality of faithfulness!

This morning, in our study here in I Thessalonians chapter 2, we will continue to look at leadership and the focus will be ***GENTLENESS!***

Like I said last time, we are all leaders at some compacity or another. Either in the home, work, school, church and thus, these qualities are important for us to understand and apply to our lives. You see, if we don't, we can hurt others by our actions or by our words. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

At their school carnival, our kids won four free goldfish (lucky us!), so out I went Saturday morning to find an aquarium. The first few I priced ranged from \$40 to \$70. Then I spotted one - right in the aisle: a discarded 10-gallon display tank, complete with gravel and filter -for a mere five bucks. Sold! Of course, it was nasty dirty, but the savings made the two hours of clean-up a breeze.

Those four new fish looked great in their new home, at least for the first day. But by Sunday one had died. Too bad, but three remained. Monday morning revealed a second casualty, and by Monday night a third goldfish had gone belly up. We called in an expert, a member of our church who has a 30-gallon tank. It didn't take him long to discover the problem: I had washed the tank with soap, an absolute no-no. My uninformed efforts had destroyed the very lives I was trying to protect. Sometimes in our zeal to clean up our own lives or the lives of others, we unfortunately use "killer soaps" - condemnation, criticism, nagging, fits of temper. We think we're doing right, but our harsh, self-righteous treatment is more than they can bear.

- Richard L. Dunagin.

Again, not an easy lesson because I think all of us have gone down this path of being harsh, condemning, criticizing and-so-on. So, we can all glean something from this lesson that God is showing us here.

And please keep in mind that this is not to condemn you, but correct you, if need be, and to encourage you to go forward. God shows us what is in our heart so that we can let it go, give it to Him and grow in our relationship with Him.

That is what Paul is doing here with the Thessalonian believers. With that as our background, let's begin reading in I Thessalonians chapter 2 starting in verse 7 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

## **I THESSALONIANS 2**

### **VERSES 7-8**

I don't know about you, but these verses are very convicting to me. Paul is saying that Silas, Timothy and Paul gave whatever they had, put their lives on the line to see the Thessalonian believers grow, to minister to the body of Christ. They labored, they agonized, they were even in pain day and night because they loved these new believers so much they were willing to sacrifice their own lives for them.

And notice how Paul starts out. Paul tells us that he was "**gentle**" towards these new Thessalonian believers and he likens this gentleness to that of a "**nursing mother.**"

This word, "**gentle**" carries with it the idea of being kind to them and Paul likens this to a nursing mother caring for her children! What a beautiful picture this is.

You mom's know that when you are nursing your child, it is all about them. It doesn't matter what time of day it is, what you are doing, when they want to eat you drop everything and feed them.

And the reason you do that is because you love them and in the nursing process there is that intimacy that even makes that bond stronger.

This sacrificial love that a mother has for her child, Paul is saying that he loves these Thessalonian believers the same way, with that sacrificial love that was manifested in his actions, the things he did and the things he said to them.

Paul was not harsh towards them but, like I have said, he was "gentle" with them. He was not impatient with them but he was "gentle" with them.

And there are four main points in regard to this relationship that Paul had with these believers in Thessalonica. Like a nursing mother he ***CHERISHED THEM!*** Like a nursing mother he was ***AFFECTIONATE TOWARDS THEM!*** Like a nursing mother he ***IMPARTED TO THEM THE GOSPEL AND HIS LIFE!*** And lastly, like a nursing mother he was ***DEAR TOWARDS THEM!***

These are qualities of a good leader, like a nursing mother who sacrifices all for her child, we, as leaders should do no less for those who are looking to us for guidance. With the reminder of our time this morning we are going to look at these qualities and see how we can apply them to our own lives.

## 1. PAUL CHERISHED THEM

The verb rendered “**cherishes**” literally means “to warm with body heat.” Now apply that to a nursing mother who takes her child up close to her body to feed him. That is the idea here and that is what Paul is saying he has done with these believers. They were close to his heart, he did not push them away but drew them close and the only reason he had to leave them so quickly is that he was run out of town by those who were opposed to the Gospel message.

That is what we read in I Thessalonians 2:17-20, “**But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. Therefore we wanted to come to you - even I, Paul, time and again - but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.**”

You see, Paul did not want to leave them but Satan stirred up the people to come against him and the work he was doing and he had to leave. But his heart was with these believers. He loved them so much and that is how the church was growing, one of the ways it was growing. It was Paul’s compassion towards them and they saw it and they grew!

And isn’t that the heart of Jesus for us, for His people? Of course it is. Jesus said to the Jewish people, “**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!**” Matthew 23:37.

Our Lord wants to gather us under the shadow and shelter of His wings. We can rest in Him, take comfort in Him, be protected by Him because He loves us that much, He cherishes us!

Now, like our Lord, we are to do no less. And listen to how Webster defines this word, “**cherish.**” He tells us: “To treat with tenderness and affection; to give warmth, ease or comfort to . . . To hold as dear; to embrace with affection; to foster, and encourage . . . To treat in a manner to encourage growth, by protection, aid, attendance, or supplying nourishment.” (Noah Webster 1828, American Dictionary of the English Language)

That is exactly what our Lord is doing in our lives and what Paul was doing with the Thessalonians! What an example.

And let me say this. People can say all kinds of things about me, and yes, it hurts, but it is what it is. But when someone attacks the sheep that God has entrusted to me, and I am speaking of all of you, like a mother bear who is protecting her cubs, I will step forward and protect you because I do cherish you!

A while back someone was attacking the sheep here at Calvary, and I went after them. Now don't get the wrong idea, with me being Italian and all. It's not like this person went missing. But they did get the point that this person hurt the sheep that God has entrusted to me and I will not let it go without stepping in and protecting them, protecting you!

And think about that for a minute. What mother would allow someone to hurt their child? That would be crazy and yes, it is done, but it just shows that they are not a good mother. A good leader is no different. You watch over those whom God has placed in your care be it your spouse, you children, your co-workers, your employees, those in the church, whatever!

Let me show you what I mean in regard to a mother willing to sacrifice all for her child.

We are told,

Years ago, a young mother was making her way across the hills of South Wales, carrying her tiny baby in her arms, when she was overtaken by a blinding blizzard. She never reached her destination and when the blizzard had subsided her body was found by searchers beneath a mound of snow.

But they discovered that before her death, she had taken off all her outer clothing and wrapped it about her baby. When they unwrapped the child, to their great surprise and joy, they found he was alive and well.

She had mounded her body over his and given her life for her child, proving the depths of her mother love.

Years later that child, David Lloyd George, grown to manhood, became prime minister of Great Britain, and, without doubt, one of England's greatest statesman.

- James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited, Tyndale, 1972, p. 375

And that is Paul's point here. That he brought these Thessalonian believers close to his heart, into his life because he **CHERISHED** them just as a mother would her infant child!

## **2. PAUL WAS AFFECTIONATE TOWARDS THEM**

Again, this should just make sense. A mother who is nursing her child has this fond affection towards that child and it is so special that it is hard to compare with other kinds of love! This Greek word that is translated for “**affection**” is HOMEIROMAI, (Hom-ir’-o-mahee) and it speaks of someone longing passionately and earnestly for someone. It is a deep love, deep affection that is to be unsurpassed. Interestingly enough, “Ancient inscriptions on the tombs of dead babies sometimes contained this term when parents wanted to describe their sad longing for a too-soon-departed child.”

Think about that first date you have after you have your child. You and your husband go out to the movies or dinner or wherever and what are you thinking about? You are thinking about your child. I mean, you have been gone for 10 minutes and you are longing for them, you can’t wait to see them again, to hold them, to nurse them!

I feel the same way about you. I love to go on vacation with my wife. We have a great time and it is important. We have time to ourselves and yes, on the ship there may be a few thousand people, but we just sit back and enjoy ourselves like no one else is around.

But Julie also knows, as the ship begins to return to port, as we dock, my thoughts are back at home. They are thinking what I need to do, who I need to talk to, and I can’t wait to share the Word of God with you! I guess you can say I have this affection towards you and that is a good thing.

As leaders do we lead that way? We should, we should lead with that Agape love, that unconditional love and the people we are leading should be able to see how much we love them. Love is an action word and if you think about that, it just makes sense.



How many people say, “I love you” and then you watch what they do and you can easily come to the conclusion that their words were empty because their actions didn’t match what they were saying!

If you are a leader, and, like I have said, we all are, and you don’t love the people you are leading, you don’t have affection for them, repent or step out until you can love them, until you can have that affection for them.

Paul is telling them that you know my affection towards you, my love towards you because it is seen in how I treated you, cared for you, served you! And that is Paul’s point here. That he brought these Thessalonian believers close to his heart, into his life because he had this great *AFFECTION* towards them just as a mother would her infant child!

### **3. PAUL IMPARTED TO THEM THE GOSPEL AND HIS LIFE**

First of all let me say this. The verb that is translated “**impart**” in the Greek is METADIDOMI, (met-ad-id’-o-mee) and it carries with it the idea to share or to give someone something without losing it themselves.

In other words. If I gave you my car I would no longer retain possession of it, it is now yours. That is not the idea here with this word “**impart.**” This word speaks of giving to someone something and yet, you retain part of it, you don’t lose anything. We will see that in a minute and it will be clear.

Now, the first thing that Paul imparted to the Thessalonians was “**the gospel of God**” or the good news of God! Think about that. Paul imparted to them the gospel of God and did Paul lose the gospel in his life when he imparted it to them? Of course not!

And please understand that the gospel is more than seeing someone come to saving faith by sharing the Word of God. If you doubt that then listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20, “**... ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.**”

Yes, the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe but it does not end there. The Word of God brings forth the Gospel message and it is the Word of God that helps us to grow in our relationship with God. Remember what Jesus said in the Great Commission that we just read here in Matthew chapter 28, “**teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.**”

Think about a mother imparting to her child the things that will help them to grow, to mature, to be independent you might say. She is patient, she does not give up, and she is giving of herself, and we will talk about that in a minute.

Today, in the church, we have moved away from the teaching of the Word of God and have tried to entertain people, make them laugh, feel good and we negate the thing that they need most, the pure milk of God’s Word!

Peter tells us in I Peter 2:1-3, “**Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.**”

If you want a baby to grow you must feed them and that is true as well for Christians, they need the milk of God’s Word!

Notice how Peter opens up this chapter, with the word, “**therefore**” which points us back to the previous point he made regarding the Word of God. In I Peter 1:23-25 we are told, **“having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because ‘All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the LORD endures forever.’ Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.”**

It is what Paul is speaking of here in I Thessalonians. Peter is telling us since we are born again by the power of God’s Spirit working through the Word of God we need to remain in the Word of God, we need to take in the solid milk of God’s Word, or sound doctrine, healthy doctrine into our lives.

Why? Because it will protect us, it will help us to grow and mature in the Lord. Peter tells us that we need to put away, eliminate these things from our lives; malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, evil speaking because that will only cause division between believers and it will keep us out of God’s Word.

Yes, we once practiced these things but now we are a new creation in Christ and we need to discard them from our lives, don’t put back on these soiled garments. Very wise words.

You see, first you cast out those sins and then you take in the pure, uncontaminated, unadulterated Word of God so that you can grow, mature in the faith.

Let’s see if you can answer this question. “When does a newborn baby want to eat?” A baby wants to eat whenever, wherever it wants. It has this inborn passion to eat and nothing will stop a newborn from getting the food that it wants! May we have that hunger for God’s Word.

You see, if you tasted that the Lord is good, that He is gracious, then you are going to want to know Him more and more, you will feed upon the Word of God!

It is as Grudem tells us, “To drink the milk of the Word is to ‘taste’ again and again what He is like, for in the hearing of the Lord’s words believers experience the joy of personal fellowship with the Lord Himself.”

Remember what Jeremiah tells us, **“Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.”** Jeremiah 15:16. May we have that passion to know God!

Make no mistake about it, Paul taught them the truths of God found in the Word of God! And yet, today, we have those coming against the Word of God or saying foolish things like, “We have heard it all before! How many Bible studies do we need?”

And yet, Peter tells us in II Peter 2:12-15, **“For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.”**

I have been teaching you the Word of God for almost 22 years now, and we have been through the entire Bible and we are finishing up our second time through the Bible. So, you have heard it all before. So why do I continue to teach you these things? Why do you continue to come? You have heard it all before!

Because, as Peter said, we need to be reminded of these things because we forget so easily. And Peter, knowing he was going to die and be with the Lord shortly, said that he was going to leave them a reminder of these things so that after he departs they will have these things to review and apply to their lives. To go over and over again so it may become part of their lives!

Was the Word of God important in the early church? You bet it was. In Acts 2:42, as the church got started, listen to what they were about as they gathered together to worship the Lord, **“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”** This was actually my first message that I gave here at Calvary because I felt the Lord was showing me that this is what this church is to be about and I have not changed or departed from that!

The key here is that **“they continued steadfastly”** in these four practices. That word means, “a steadfast and single-minded fidelity to a certain course of action.” (Longenecker)

The first one was that they continued steadfastly in the, **“apostles’ doctrine”** or the Word of God. They had a tremendous love for the Word of God.

Why is this so important for us? Because sound doctrine leads to sound faith and sound speaking, it helps us to grow in the Lord! Why are so many Christians spiritually malnourished and sick? Because they are not taking in the Word of God to their lives! The early church **“continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine”** and so should we!

But today we seem to negate this or are kind of flippant about the Word of God. It really doesn’t matter what it says but it is more how you feel about things! Warren Wiersbe put it like this,

Today a modern, shallow attitude croons, “Don’t give us doctrine, we just want practical truth from the heart.” But such an approach would never have gotten to first base in the early church, let alone all the great preachers and teachers of church history.

We need precision in doctrine just as much as we need precision in medicine, law, and mechanics. Can you image a sick man saying to his doctor, “Doc, it makes no difference whether you remove my appendix or my liver, just as long as I know that you care about me!”

If devotional truth is not based on doctrinal truth, it is merely religious sentimentalism; and it will take more than a sentimental church to win the world to Jesus Christ!

- Warren Wiersbe cited in *Doctrines*, Raul Ries, p. 15

Absolutely, the early church was not interested in fluff, they were interested in all that God had for them and thus, they listened, they studied and they talked about the things of God and they grew in the Lord.

A healthy diet will help us grow strong physically and the same is true spiritually speaking. What are you taking into your life spiritually speaking? May it be the Word of God! The early church continued steadfastly in the *apostles' doctrine* and so should we if we want to be healthy!

The second practice we see in the early church is that they were involved with fellowship! The Greek word for "**fellowship**" is KOINONIA, (koy-nohn-ee'-ah) and it speaks of communion, fellowship, and participation; it means to *share* in something. And keep in mind that they continued steadfastly in this fellowship! This was not just when they felt like it, it was the pattern of their new life in Christ!

Coming together as a body of believers to worship the Lord, study His Word, and spend time with each other is important. Paul even warned the Hebrew Christians who were avoiding the fellowship of the brethren not to forsake it, for any reason.

He said in Hebrews 10:24-25, "**And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**" The early church was in fellowship with each other!

The third practice of the early church that made it so powerful is that they shared in the breaking of bread. Now I don't believe this is talking about meals here because we see in Acts 2:46 that they shared meals. Now in regard to what we just studied, fellowship, that could be part of it but like we have seen, it is much more than just sharing a meal, it is sharing their lives together.

I believe what Luke is telling us here in Acts is that they shared in communion together as they took the bread which pictured the body of Christ and the wine which pictured the blood of Christ and they partook of them together! The early church shared in communion with each other!

And the fourth practice of the early church as they gathered together is that they prayed together! I think that prayer is one of those areas that is neglected many times by Christians and that is not a good thing. God died for us, to pay in full the penalty for our sins so that we might have fellowship with the Father once again and yet we neglect the thing that was so important that God became flesh to dwell among us and die in our place! Go figure.

God wants us to talk with Him so He can direct us, correct us, guide us, show His love towards us, answer our hearts cry and-so-on. The key is talking to Him!

Paul, in I Timothy 2:1-2 said, **“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.”**

Paul is telling us, as Luke is, that prayer is foundational to the church, it is that important! And I am not only talking about our prayers with the Lord on an individual level, but what about corporate prayer, what about when we as a body believers gather together to pray, are you there?

I realize that everyone is busy, but how important is prayer for the people in this church, for our community, for our state, for our nation? Make no mistake about it, that which you feel is important to you, you will do! The early church prayed together.

Paul, as a leader, taught the people in Thessalonica the Word of God! And it was not just 15 minutes, a half an hour or even an hour. I believe he taught for a large portion of the day or there is no way they would have learned so much in just three weeks!

And as you look at the pastoral epistles, you find that teaching the Word of God was the focus of the early church. Sound doctrine, healthy doctrine was taught and as these saints grew in the Lord they used the gifts that God has given to them to bless the body of Christ and bring glory to God!

This article is from Answers in Genesis from 2011 and listen to what took place only some six years ago regarding the negating of the Scriptures and how it is affecting our beliefs. We are told,

According to data gathered last year by the America's Research Group, only 17.3 percent of Christian institutions surveyed define "authority of the Bible" to mean "you believe everything it says." Other institutions said the Bible is "foundational" (30 percent); "a book of guidelines" (22 percent) or "inspired by God" (21.2 percent).

Additionally, when asked "what does your institution teach about the Bible," only 35.3 percent of respondents said they teach that it is true. The two most popular answers after that were "it is inspired by God" (25 percent) and "it is a book of guidelines" (23.1 percent).

While phrases such as "foundational" and "inspired by God" sound good to prospective students and their parents, Ham says those are newspeak, terms which are used because they sound pleasing, but mean something totally different.



The data shows just how little “inspired of God” means with three follow-up questions. Respondents were asked if they believed in the inspiration, the inerrancy and the infallibility of the Scriptures. While nearly all respondents expressed their belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures (98.1 percent), less than three quarters of respondents (74 percent) affirmed their belief in the inerrancy, or total accuracy, of the Bible. Nearly 19 percent of respondents rejected the belief that the Scriptures are infallible or incapable of failing.

“We’re well down the road” of secularism, Ham told *The Christian Post*. . . .

Ham said the changes reflected in ARG’s 2010 data all started with a small crack in the colleges’ theology. That crack, he explained, is the way the institutions teach Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Ham, founder of the Creation Museum, asserted that too many Christian colleges and faculty members wrongly believe that it does not matter whether or not a Christian believes in a literal interpretation of creation (as having taken place in six 24-hour days) and a young earth.

Hall warned that if Christian professors teach youth that it is OK to change the Bible to accommodate evolution or an earth that has existed for millions of years, then students get the idea that it is also OK to undermine the authority of the Bible.

Without the strong teaching of Genesis, it won’t be long before Christian students and faculty will be changing the Bible to accommodate other beliefs such as homosexuality and abortion, Ham argued. The young earth creationist asserted that the issue is really about preserving the Bible’s authority as 100 percent true. “Until you get back to that issue (the Bible’s authority), then you’ll never be able to shut the door [on those issues].”

While Ham recognizes that “there are a handful of colleges that will take a stand,” he told CP that Christian colleges are on the path to becoming the next generation Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth and Princeton. All four of these Ivy League schools were founded on Christian values. They presently follow a completely secular values system.

- <http://www.christianpost.com/news/ken-ham-blasts-christian-colleges-for-compromised-stances-on-creationism-bibles-authority-50100/>

We must not compromise our faith or water down the Word of God or make it more appealing to people by editing what would offend people. God says what He means and means what He says and our responsibility is to share it with others. It doesn't matter if they like it or not!

Paul warned a young pastor named Timothy of what will come and what he is to do. Paul tells us in II Timothy 4:2-5 we are told, **“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”**

People will try to sway you away from teaching the Word of God, from sharing the Word of God, from talking about the Lord's return, not to teach the Old Testament verse by verse and-so-on.

My question, not only for pastors but for leaders, for all of us, is why are we listening to what people are saying instead of what God is saying. I really don't care if you don't like me teaching the Word of God, that is not my problem, that is yours!

I am not going to stand before God and hear Him say, “Why didn’t you teach my Word?” and me answer, “Because so-and-so didn’t want to hear it and I didn’t want to offend them!” And then hear the Lord say, “But you offended ME!”

I hope that makes sense, because there is such a push to grow churches today instead of following what God has established in His Word about the church and what the church is to be about. May we do as Paul, Silas and Timothy did, they brought them the Word of God, healthy doctrine, sound doctrine and that is how the church grew!

Paul imparted to them the Gospel message, the Word of God so that they could not only come to saving faith but so that they could grow in the Lord! Just as a mother nursed her child to help them grow, to keep them healthy, that is what Paul did with the Word of God!

Not only did Paul impart the Gospel to them but they all imparted their lives to these Thessalonian believers! We saw how Paul was not only treated in Philippi but also in Thessalonica, run out of town.

In I Thessalonians 2:2 we are told, **“But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.”**

Paul and these men literally laid down their lives for these believers in Thessalonica. And just like a nursing mother who sacrifices everything for her child, that is what we are seeing here with Paul. It is like this story where we are told,

A teacher asked a boy this question: “Suppose your mother baked a pie and there were seven of you - your parents and five children. What part of the pie would you get?”

“A sixth,” replied the boy.

“I’m afraid you don’t know your fractions,” said the teacher. “Remember, there are seven of you.”

“Yes, teacher,” said the boy, “but you don’t know my mother. Mother would say she didn’t want any pie.”

- Bits and Pieces, June 1990, p. 10

How true that is, willing to sacrifice for her child just as Paul, Silas and Timothy did, not only for the Thessalonians, but as you read these epistles in the Bible you see all that they were willing to give to see the Gospel message go forward and these believers grow in the Lord.

And if you miss the point of all that Paul went through serving the Lord, listen to what he wrote in II Corinthians 11:22-33. Paul is coming after the false teachers with their false doctrine who were coming against Paul and he tells us, **“Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? - I speak as a fool - I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness - besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which**

**concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.”**

Yes, Paul labored hard for the Lord. He said in I Corinthians 15:10, “**. . . but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”**

Today, some feel the more prominent you are, the higher title you have, the less you have to work, you let everyone work for you, take care of you.

The reality is the exact opposite is true. If my Lord said that He lived like this, “**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**” (Mark 10:45) then who am I to live any differently?

Paul was beaten for his faith in Christ. He was stoned for his faith in Christ. He was thrown in prison for his faith in Christ. He traveled many dangerous miles for Christ. He was shipwrecked. All these things Paul went through, why? Because the love of Christ compelled him or constrained him to go forward for Christ and that should also be what moves us, the love of Christ. (II Corinthians 5:14)

Of this Redpath tells us, “I could not possibly convey to you adequately in the English language the force of that statement. I tried to picture it in terms of being smothered under a blanket, or by being attacked and crushed by some great animal, for he could not have used a stronger word when he said, in effect, ‘That which bears me down, that which is upon me as an intolerable load, that which is a burden, that which is something that I can never shake off day or night. It is with me always. I have no vacation for it ever. It is upon me daily. The care, the compassion, the concern of all the churches.’”

Yes, that was Paul. Now some may say, “Hey, I am not Paul?” That is true but what is the example that our Lord gives to us regarding service, what we are to do? In John 15:13 Jesus said, “**Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.**”

You see, the things you do, how you serve, shows how much you love people. How much you care for them. Now some may feel I am getting a little legalistic here. Not at all!

Let me show you what I mean and I hope this makes sense to you. I have been married to my wife Julie for thirty-eight years now. And since her back surgery last year she has not been able to do a lot of different things around the house. So I do them. Why do I do them? Because I love her and I want to care for her, take care of her. It is not some legalistic relationship I have with my wife, but a love relationship that is manifested in the things that I do and the things that I say!

I hope that is clear. If you are serving and feel locked in, forced to do something, get out because your heart is not going to be in it. Better than that, repent and ask God to give you love for whatever you are doing or whoever you are ministering to! And that will bring us to our last point in a minute!

I’m sure you have heard it said before that people don’t care what you know until they know how much you care and thus, be a servant of all, it will cost you something but there are great blessings as you step forward and serve! They knew Paul’s love for them.

What we see here is that Paul ***IMPARTED TO THEM THE GOSPEL AND HIS LIFE.*** They not only came to saving faith but Paul built them up in the faith and he was willing to lay down his life for them to see them grow and mature just as a mother would her infant child!

#### 4. DEAR TOWARDS THEM

For some, the question may be to Paul, “Why did you do this for them? Why were you willing to sacrifice your life for these people you barely knew?” Well, we know that the love of God constrained him or controlled his life, but there is even more. You see, **HE LOVED THEM!** It is hard to sacrifice your life for someone you don’t care about. You can fake it for a time but eventually your true colors will be manifested when situations change, when things get tough, or whatever!

That really is a heart of a pastor, a leader, their love for the other person just like a mother has for her child! J. Vernon McGee puts it like this. He wrote,

Have you ever heard of a mothers’ union which insisted a mother would work only for eight hours of the day? Have you known any mothers who punch the clock and then turn away from their crying babies because they refuse to work anymore? Maybe some mothers will work out some kind of union agreement like that, but I don’t think real mothers would want it. Mothers work a little differently - night and day.

In New England there were two girls who worked together in the cotton mills. One of them quit working, and they didn’t see each other for several years. They met on the street one day, and the girl from the mill said, “What are you doing now? Are you still working?”

The other one replied, “No, I’m not working - I’m married. I not only have a husband, but I also have a little boy. I get up at three in the morning to feed the baby. Then I get up early to fix breakfast and make a lunch for my husband. I take care of the baby through the day, and then I prepare dinner for my husband.”

The first girl exclaimed, “I remember when you worked at the mill how you used to watch the clock. When that five o’clock whistle blew, you were out of there!”

The young mother explained: “I don’t watch the clock anymore. I’m working longer hours, but it isn’t really work.” This girl was motivated by love, and it didn’t seem like work anymore.

That is what Paul is saying here. He loved these people.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Vol. V, p. 382

Why are you in ministry? Why are you serving in the church? Why are you a mom or dad? Why are you a leader at your work place? I hope the answer is not that you were forced into it!

As I have said, the love of God compels you, I hope that is one of the reasons. And the other reason should also be love and that is your love for them, you care for them, you want to see them come to the faith, you want to see them grow, you want to see them mature!

We see this in marriage relationships and sadly, we see this love decrease over the years and that is always dangerous. When you are dating, you will do anything and everything for that person because you love them.

Then, after you are married, you still love them so much that no sacrifice is too much! But over the years we lose that love and when that love begins to die, when that love begins to grow cold, we are no longer willing to sacrifice our lives for that person and we move on!

Many do that in ministry as well. They have been in ministry for a time and that love they had for the people they were ministering to has been decreasing. Now it is more of a job than service to someone they care for, someone they love and want to see grow. And as that love goes so goes the joy and no longer are they dear to them but a burden!



For Paul, he served the Lord and out of that service to the Lord he ministered to others because that love of God not only flowed into his life but through him as well! If you are struggling here then come before the Lord, fall in love with Him all over again and all His love will not only flow into your life but through your life, touching the lives of others!

What we see here is that he was ***DEAR TOWARDS THEM OR LOVED THEM DEARLY!*** And as they were loved they grew, they matured because, like a mother loves her child and that child feels that love, they grow!

In these verses we have looked at this morning we have seen Paul compare himself to a nursing mother caring for her child. And we looked at four main points in regard to this relationship that Paul had with these believers in Thessalonica.

Like a nursing mother he ***CHERISHED THEM!***

Like a nursing mother he was ***AFFECTIONATE TOWARDS THEM!***

Like a nursing mother he ***IMPARTED TO THEM THE GOSPEL AND HIS LIFE!***

And lastly, like a nursing mother he was ***DEAR TOWARDS THEM!***

These are qualities of a good leader, like a nursing mother who sacrifices all for her child, we, as leaders should do no less for those who are looking to us for guidance.