Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Parental Pictures of Spiritual Leadership, Part 2
Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12
Code: 52-6

This morning as we come again to the study of God's precious Word we return to 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 and our text, verses 7 through 12. The title we have given to this section is "Parental Pictures of a Spiritual Leader."

I am constantly amazed at how much the New Testament says about spiritual leadership in the church. As one who has studied for many, many years the New Testament, I see again and again the emphasis placed on the matter of leadership. Obviously from the very beginning of creation God had established in the human realm the need for leadership. And even in the first marriage, between Adam and Eve, God established Adam as the leader. And from the time that God began His redemptive purpose and unfolded it in human history, there were always those who were given the role of spiritual leadership. In every family there was a husband and a father. There were patriarchs whose leadership influenced not just a family but a whole tribe of people. There were prophets and priests. There were judges. There were kings. There were military leaders, always God mediating in one way or another His will and His Word and His purpose through spiritual leaders.

You come into the New Testament and the greatest leader of all appears, Jesus Christ, and immediately begins the process of training leaders. Calls to Himself an apparently random collection of men and yet chosen from before the foundation of the world to be trained to be leaders in order that when Jesus left, they, being filled with the indwelling Holy Spirit, might produce more leaders for the church and those leaders might reproduce themselves throughout the centuries until we finally arrive today and still the premium is on the training of spiritual leaders.

Because this is at the very heart of the unfolding of divine purpose in the world, we shall not be surprised then to find that it is repeated often in the Scripture how important leadership really is. But what continues to thrill me and amaze me, I confess, is how many, many different ways the Holy Spirit speaks to the matter of leadership. You think that you have just sort of wrapped your arms around it all and you are exposed to a whole new understanding which thrills and challenges and excites the heart as well as informing the mind. That has been my experience in coming to this particular text. For in this text Paul identifies himself as a leader in two pictures. In verse 11 he says, we proved really to be a father to you. In verse 7 he says, we proved also to be a mother to you.

Now I mentioned father first because that's our focus for this morning as mother was our focus for last time. And we stated, I think, last Sunday rather clearly for you to understand that a spiritual leader has to have a mothering side and a fathering side, this by God's design. There is the need for us to be both father and mother to our spiritual children. And so Paul gives us the portrait in verses 7 through 9 of the spiritual leader as a mother or fulfilling the feminine role, and a spiritual leader as a father in verses 10 to 12, fulfilling the masculine role. The balance of these two is essential for effective spiritual leadership. And may I hasten to add here we're talking here about men as spiritual leaders and men must be both mother and father to their children in the faith.

Paul was such an effective spiritual leader that when he was being empowered by the Spirit of God he was able to become a living pattern for us to follow. And this particular instruction could come in a no more compelling portion of Scripture than in 1 Thessalonians since the Thessalonian church was such a remarkable church. While the apostle was only there for a few weeks, he had an amazing impact on the people, and the church that was established was a pure and powerful church in a very strategic city. Paul just a few weeks after leaving them can write back to them and say, "I know, I am confident you are brethren beloved by God, you are elect," as he says in chapter 1 verse 4.

He affirms in verse 1 that they were all in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 2 he says, "I can be thankful for all of you." Here was a redeemed, elect church. He said to them in verse 3 that you have a work of faith, you have a labor of love and you have a steadfastness of hope that proves that you're genuine. In verse 5 he says you were the object of some powerful preaching. In verse 6 you became imitators of us and of the Lord. In verse 7 you became examples to everyone else. In verse 8 you trumpeted out the gospel. In verse 9 your life was transformed and you became servants of a living and true God. In verse 10 you're waiting for the return of Jesus. All this in a matter of a few weeks, a remarkable mission. They were a real church, a regenerate church, a powerful church.

And yet there were some detractors who apparently had come along and said to these Thessalonian Christians, now that Paul, Silas and Timothy had left town, Paul is no different than the rest of the charlatans and fakers and religious frauds of the world. All he wants is your money, your possessions. He wants to abuse you, to manipulate you. He wants power. He wants control over you. He may even want sexual favors from your women. He is a deceiver. He's like all of the rest of the fakers on every corner and in every *agora* or marketplace who are deceiving and beguiling the unwitting victims, capturing their bodies, their minds, their money, their possessions for himself. He's just another one of them.

And so, apparently in chapter 2 Paul has to remind them of the genuineness of his leadership, the genuineness of his heart. And so he writes in this chapter and says basically, "Please remember what you know to be true about me," and over and over again he says, as you know, as you know, as you recall, you are witnesses. He says it throughout that first part of the chapter. You remember how I was. You remember my leadership. You know I wasn't a fake. You know I wasn't a fraud. You know I took nothing from you. And so here in this marvelous section, verses 1 through 12, as he reminds them of the character of his spiritual leadership, he gives to us principles for effective, spiritual leadership. And in verses 1 to 6 we got the inside look at what characterized the inside of that man. And we saw tenacity, integrity, authority, accountability and humility.

Now starting in verse 7 we get the outside view and he shows himself as a mother and a father. He mothered them and he fathered them. Now last week I told you that we were going to give only one half of the picture, we were going to talk about the leader as a spiritual mother. And we did that. Let me just read the verses to you to set it in your mind again. Verse 7, "But we proved to be gentle among you as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children, having thus a fond affection for you, we were well pleasing to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives because you had become very dear to us. 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."

Twice he says the goal was to proclaim to you the gospel of God, God's good news in all of its fullness. That was our goal and in doing it we proved to be like a nursing mother. In verse 7 he says we gave you tender care. We gave you gentleness. In verse 8, "We had a fond affection for you and we gave you not only the message but our own lives because you were so dear to us." In verse 9 he says, "Like a mother we labored and had hardship and we worked night and day and we weren't the burden to you at all in this process." So there is the mothering aspect. Far from being a greedy, licentious flatterer seeking power, prestige, sex, and money, desiring to manipulate and abuse, he says we were a tender gentle nursing mother, around-the-clock, personal, intimate care. That's part of spiritual leadership, providing a haven for people's souls, providing security and peace and affection and kindness and gentleness and mercy and love. That's the mothering part. And every spiritual leader has to do that.

But this morning we come to the second part, the spiritual leader as a father in verses 10 to 12.

Now let's look at that...that male part of leadership, that father part rather than the mother part. And let me talk generally about what makes a man a man. May I do that? I think it's vital to our

understanding of this text. Now let me see if I can get you to gris...grasp this.

If I were to ask you, what is the most basic, fundamental virtue of manliness, I might get a lot of different answers, so let me help you. What is the one trait that evidences distinctive manliness? What is the solitary quality foundational to manhood? That's a fair question. Let's see if we can't find an answer.

Go to 1 Corinthians chapter 16. First Corinthians chapter 16, and please look with me at verse 13. Now if you know anything about the Corinthian church, you know that they were a church given over to compromise, right? They were weak, sinful, compromising, so forth. So in 1 Corinthians 16:13 Paul says something to them that is most interesting. After reminding them to be on the alert and stand firm in the faith, in verse 13 he says, "Act like men." Now let me ask you a question? How do men act? Now in our society they act any way they want.

I mean, if I were a leader in government and I said to the Congress, "Act like men," they would blink, look around and wonder: How do men act? Some of them are couch potatoes. Some of them are wimps, which is a combination of the old English word for an effeminate man, wet and limp. Some of them put on women's clothes. I mean how... Act like men. How do men act?

Would you please notice the next command in that verse which is an explanatory to the previous one. Act like men. Be what? Strong. The...the verb there, "act like men," that verb is a very, very interesting verb. It means to conduct oneself in a courageous way. It means to conduct oneself in a courageous way. You know how men act? They have courage and they have strength. Put those two words together and you have the old word “fortitude.” The dictionary says “fortitude” is courage and strength. They have strength of conviction and they have the courage to stand on it, fortitude. That's how men act. Men are strong. Men are courageous.

To put it another way, it's the willingness...no, it's the desire...no, it's the need to take risks. The more manly a man is the more he likes the adventure, the more he loves the risk, the more he seeks the challenge, the more he attacks the difficulty, the more he loves the obstacles. That's a man's man.

What do women seek? Well, the young man comes home and says to his new bride, "Honey, God's called me to the mission field and I've decided that God wants us in Irian Jaya, 100 miles from civilization. You have to walk there through a mud bed and we're going to reach a tribe that no one’s ever reached. Are you ready to go?" And she says, "Wha, wha, wha, where will we live? Wha, wha, who’ll take care of the baby?" She's thinking security, protection, affection, love, and he's thinking

adventure, challenge, risk. So he reaches back and says, "I understand, I understand and I'll try to bring you along," see. Women...women can best be defined... Their most fundamental need is security. Why? Because their most fundamental instinct is to provide security. Women have a nesting instinct. They need to be secure. If they're insecure they're basket cases. You want to make a woman a total disaster, get in a relationship and make her feel insecure. That violates everything about womanhood, everything. She wants security because she's made to provide it. And the man is designed to be out on the cutting edge. Now we live in an almost risk-free culture and that's why we don't have any real men left. I mean, what risk? You get a job now, they pay you a check every week, and they almost can't fire you or the ACLU will sue them. And then you're a member of an HMO. What risk? You have no risk. Risk about what? Risk-free living, it's a far cry from those days when you hacked out your living in a tough, primitive world and when you had to provide for your family and you had to be on the cutting edge and you had to make hard decisions that had tremendous implications for your livelihood and your life and your existence and there was nobody to catch you. There wasn't a net under your rope. That was a different kind of life and it produced a different kind of man. Women seek security, men seek accomplishment. God designed them. There's something in a man that needs to accomplish. That's why the man who doesn't hates himself, resents himself. The greatest leaders the world has ever known and all effective leaders are risk takers because they exhibit strength and courage. I mean, you know, it starts in...in the old pictures that you saw as a little kid with the guy standing on a rock beating his chest, looking at the world and taking it on as a challenge. They lead with strength and courage. And if a man doesn't have strength and courage, he's not a leader. Tribal people would always choose the man with the greatest courage and strength to be their leader. That's maleness at its epitome.

And when he says to them in verse 13, "Act like men, be courageous, be strong, take a stand, conduct yourself in a courageous way," but look at verse 14, "Let all that you do be done in love." Don't forget that.

So how do men act? They act with courage and strength. Men are not vacillating. They're not made by God to be weak, depressed, defeated. John Calvin said of this verse, "He stirs them up to a manly fortitude." A real man wants to face life with courage. He believes certain things and he's going to stand on his belief. He has been called by God to achieve certain things and he's going to achieve those things. He's going to be courageous whatever the opposition and he's going to make his move. He's going to do what he believes is right and he's going to pay the price. He's going to make the hard decisions and if he makes a bad first one, he'll make a quick better second one and he'll adjust. That's a man. That's a manly man.

Now, this little phrase here in 1 Corinthians 16:13 doesn't appear anywhere else in the New Testament. So if we want to get a little richness to it we've got to go back to the Old Testament. And the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint, because there were seventy men involved, that Greek translation of the Old Testament, of course, uses New Testament Greek and so we can see how the New Testament Greek terms used here were used in the Old Testament. And we see some very, very wonderful insights. Let's go all the way back to Deuteronomy chapter 31, Deuteronomy 31. Now follow closely because I want to move rapidly but I think you're going to be greatly encouraged by this.

Moses is speaking to Israel, reminding them he's 120 years old and he's going to turn the reins over to Joshua. Verse 3, Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you just as the Lord has spoken, and the Lord will do to them just as He did to Sihon, Og, the kings of the Amorites and to their land when He destroyed them and the Lord will deliver them up before you and you shall do to them according to all the commandments which I commanded you. Now look what he says, verse 6, "Be strong and courageous." There's the same terminology from 1 Corinthians 16. "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. Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, ‘Be strong and courageous.'" That's how men act. Act like men. Men act with strength and courage, they're decisive, they're leaders, and their leadership is based upon that strength of conviction, that strength of character, that strength of virtue, and that courage that will not compromise.

Down in verse 23 of the same chapter, "Then he commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, ‘Be strong and courageous.'" That's how men act. Look with me at 2 Samuel chapter 10 and verse 12, "Be strong and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God." Joab and the troops are moving out and he says, be strong and courageous. That's how men act.

First Kings chapter 2, 1 Kings chapter 2, David came near to the time to die. He charges Solomon, his son. What are you going to say, father, to your son? What are you going to say in your last hours? What's the most important word to give your son? You want him to be a man? Here's what David said to Solomon. Verse 2, "I'm going the way of all the earth, be strong therefore and show yourself a man." Men are strong and men are courageous. By God's design they are. That's how God designed man to be, strong and courageous.

First Chronicles chapter 22 opens that up to us even further. Verse 11, David talking to Solomon, "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." First Chronicles 22:12 now, "Only the Lord give you discretion and understanding and give you charge over Israel so you may keep the law of the Lord your God. 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."

The point is this, look, you're going to go out there and be a leader. You're going to have to face all kinds of opposition. You want to live for God, keep the law, observe the commandments, do what is right. And when you get attacked, don't waver, be strong and courageous. Let me tell you, the heart of every woman longs for that kind of man, a man who is strong and courageous. And, gentlemen, you want to know what kind of son you would like to produce? You would like to produce one who is strong and courageous, who is strong in his faith, who is strong in the things of God, who is strong in his understanding and discretion and wisdom and who has the courage of his conviction to live boldly the way he knows God wants him to live and you have the responsibility to teach your sons to live like that. That's your responsibility. That's what a father is supposed to do. And you do that by being strong and courageous yourself. You do that by living according to the courage of your convictions yourself. That's David's message to his son: Be a man, be a man, be strong and courageous, don't be fearful and don't be dismayed.

Second Chronicles chapter 32; 2 Chronicles in a completely different setting regarding Sennacherib, verse 7, we read, "Be strong and courageous, says Hezekiah, do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria, nor because of all the multitude which is with him." Listen to this, "For the One with us is greater than the one with him. With him is only an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God." Be a man, be courageous, be strong. Now that's maleness. And it transfers right over into the spiritual dimension.

Boy, I can remember when America looked at men as heroes because they were courageous, because they were strong. And now it looks down on men who have the courage of their convictions and elevates the compromisers.

But how can we be so strong? How can a man be strong and courageous? One last Old Testament passage which uses the same terminology, Joshua 1, Joshua 1 verse 2, "Moses my servant is dead, now therefore arise cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel." This, by the way, is the Lord speaking. "You're going to get every place the soul of your foot treads. I've given it all to you just as I told Moses." So they're moving into the land.

Now what is God's word to Joshua? Verse 6, "And this to him and to all the people, ‘Be strong and courageous,’" strong and courageous. Verse 7: "Only be strong and courageous," this time very courageous. Verse 9, "Do not tremble or be dismayed." Now here it is, compelling words, you're going to in to hard places, you're going in to a battlefield. You're going in to take a land, be strong and courageous. Act like men.

But on what basis? Where do I find this fortitude to deal with difficulty, face challenge, meet the enemy, contend with problems and obstacles, bear pain, press to a difficult goal? Follow the thought, back at verse 5. The first undergirding verity, God says at the end of verse 5, "I will be with you, I will not fail you or forsake you." The first thing that gives you courage in spiritual leadership is the presence of God, the presence of God. I'm there, He says, I won't leave you and I won't fail you.

Secondly, verse 6, "Be strong and courageous for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them." All you're going to do is take what I have promised. Second principle of fortitude, the cause was just, God is present and the cause is just, the cause is right.

Thirdly, verse 7 says, "Be careful to do according to the law which Moses My servant commanded. Don't turn to the right or the left and you'll have success." Verse 8 elucidates on it. "This book of the law, the holy Scripture, don't let it depart from your mouth, meditate on it day and night, be careful to do according to all that is written in it and you'll make your way prosperous and you'll have success." What moves me to courage and strength? One, the presence of God. Two, the cause is just. Three, the unfailing, sovereign power of God. He says you'll succeed.

Courage in spiritual leadership, the manliness, is undergirded by the presence of God, the just cause and the unfailing promise to be fulfilled by His sovereign power. People sometimes say to...to me, "Well, you know, sometimes you say things that cause problems and you get in trouble and you create issues, does that concern you?" Not primarily at all, what concerns me is: Is it right? Is the cause just? Is this the truth? Do I know that God is with me in this enterprise and do I have the promise of success because it is consistent with His Word? That's what matters. This is a virtue that makes a man a man, courage and strength. And this is very necessary in spiritual leadership. A spiritual leader is decisive, he is a risk taker, he is bold, he is strong, he is courageous. He doesn't fear making a wrong decision because he's humble enough to turn it around and make a right one. That's decisiveness.

If you want to raise a son who is a man who is strong and courageous in what he believes and what he lives for, then you must set the standard. That is true for a father and that is true for a spiritual leader. He sets the pace by example of life and precept. You teach your sons to be strong and courageous and you live with strength and courage and they catch both the example and the lessons. If you live boldly by the Word without compromise, if you resist the pressure to do as little as possible and you give your life to do as much as possible in a...in a great cause, if you resist the pleasure to please men and seek to please God and if you don't sell out integrity for comfort, then you live a strong and courageous life if you hold your convictions without compromise you fill the fatherly role of a leader. That's Paul.

Let's go back to our text. Paul acted like a man. There was a side of him that acted like a mother but there was another side of him that acted like a man, like a father with strength and courage. And he never flinched from the immeasurable risks of life and the challenges that he faced because one, he was assured of God's presence; two, he knew the cause was just; and three, he trusted an unfailing sovereignty. That's the man fit for spiritual leadership. He's a man of moral courage. And I say every father should be such a man if he expects to raise such a son.

Now let's look specifically at our text. With all that as a backdrop Paul says in verse 11, "I came to you as a father to his own children." And notice the strength of this, verse 10, "You are witnesses." And here again he's reminding them of what he said in verses 1, 2, 5 and 9 and will say again in verse 11, "I'm calling on your own first-hand knowledge." You saw me, I was there. You were witnesses and so is God. And that reverts back to verses 4 and 5 where he said I live very much aware that God examines my heart and God is my witness. So you know and God knows, watch this, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers. That's a father's responsibility. A father's responsibility is to set the standard of integrity in the family. That's a spiritual leader's responsibility.

The first word, "devoutly," means piously, holy. It has to do with my life before God. My duty to God was done. I did my duty to God devoutly. The word "uprightly," righteously, refers to how a man responds to the law of God, which is doing his duty to God and man for the law requires that we deal with God in a certain way and man as well. So he says from the perspective of my relationship to God, I was devout. From the perspective of my relationship to the law which considers God and man, I was upright, righteous. And then he says, "blamelessly." That word refers to one's reputation before men: Before God devout; before God and man, upright; before man blameless. That's a spiritual father. “That's how we behave toward you believers.”

Many people ask me, "What is the key to producing strong, spiritually solid children?" It starts with living devoutly, uprightly and blamelessly where there is integrity and where there is moral courage and the strength of conviction and you live that life, you build strength. You set a pattern, living an uncompromising life of fortitude, consumed by what is right, aware of the presence of God and trusting in unfailing sovereignty, you live the life. And so, fathering starts with modeling, modeling. You model virtue.

Look at verse 11, he goes a step further. It's not just modeling, it's also teaching. Verse 11, he says, "Just as you know," and reminds them again that it's nothing they're getting second-hand. They were there when he came. "Just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring," and here's another triad of virtues, just like the three in verse 10. "And we did it to each one of you as a father would his own children." I believe that God has designed the father in the family to set the pattern of virtue to live the life. He brings his wife under that pattern of virtue and she becomes so secure. You provide for a woman a devout, upright, and blameless life and she will find the haven of her security. That's the father's role. He lives the virtuous pattern the children are to follow.

But it has to go beyond that. It goes beyond pattern to precept in verse 11. "You also know it wasn't just the way we behaved when we were with you, we were exhorting, encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children." What do these words mean? The word "exhorting" means to come alongside, to move someone in a specific line of conduct. The Holy Spirit is called the paraklete. It's the same word, *parakale*, the one who comes alongside to move us in a specific course of conduct. A father gets alongside his child and moves that child in a specific course of conduct. Now whatever it takes it takes to do that, strong exhortation. Hey, I have preached some of my most passionate sermons to one child. You come alongside and you exhort that child in that path of conduct that you believe is right. That's instruction, personal instruction.

Then he says, not only did we do that fatherly task, but also not only exhorting but encouraging. Now we move from instruction to motivation. The father's role also is to come alongside, to encourage the emotion and the will to act in that course. Here is the specific course of conduct. I'm moving you in that direction and encouraging you to keep moving because of your own will, your own choice, because the way is hard. Exhortation says this is the way to walk. Encouragement says I know it's tough but keep doing it, right? Keep doing it.

And then he says there's a third thing I do as a father, imploring each one of you. You know what verb that is? *Marturomai*, witness. You say, "What do you mean? A father is supposed to witness to his

son?" Yeah, you know what he's supposed to say? "Hey, son, can I tell you something? I'm a personal witness to the fact that if you keep doing that this is what's going to happen. So you don't need to fall into the same hole I've been in." You know how your kids hate that when you say to them, look, when I was a boy. Ah, man, not this again. I would never have. I'll tell you what, I learned when I was a kid, don't do that because... Ah, come on, dad, everybody has got to learn. No they don't. You have a responsibility to a solemn charge. You are summoned as a witness to witness to the fact that any deviation from the prescribed course of conduct has very serious ramifications. That's the lesson. So you say, "Son, daughter, here's the course of conduct. I know the way is hard but keep doing it. And just to encourage you a little further, if you don't do it the consequences are severe." And that's where discipline comes in. And you do it with each one, that's the personal touch.

Every spiritual leader, every pastor is here to love his people, to embrace his people, to treat them with tender compassion, affection, kindness. But on the other hand, there's that balance that says this is the way you're to live. I encourage you to do it even if it's hard and I'm telling you if you don't do it the consequences are severe. Any father who is worthy a nickel knows you have to come alongside your children personally and pattern for them the course of conduct. You have to encourage them to be faithful to it when the choices are hard. And then you have to tell them, look, if you violate it I'm going to discipline you. Because that's exactly true in the spiritual dimension, and you'll build someone with courage and you'll build someone with conviction and you'll build someone who can act like a man. And even women have occasions in the spiritual dimension of course when they must act like men, with courage. And they will have seen it in their fathers and hopefully their grandfathers and their brothers.

So the father gives this enthusiastic affirmation and exhortation to his children and the mother is there for the tender security. You know how that works, you get your son and you give him that impassioned speech and you call him to courageous and strong conduct. And a few minutes later you see him in the kitchen and his mom has got her arm around him and he's run for a little balance. That's the way it is.

Verse 12 focuses it down. This is so good. Does this sound like a father? "Exhorting, encouraging, imploring each one of you as a father would his own children so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." Paul says the spiritual father is trying to produce the product. The difference between the mothering and the fathering is the mother wants to provide what is needed in the moment. The father wants to produce the product at the end. That's the balance. The mother wants to cherish and nurture and love and hold and affirm. And the father comes along and says that's all wonderful but we want to be sure at the end that he's living according to God's standards. A father wants you to walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you. And he reaches back again to that glorious election that he mentioned in chapter 1 verse 4 and

will mention again in chapter 5 verse 24, faithful is He who calls you. You're elect, the very fact that God has graciously elected an unworthy sinner should give you such a thankful heart that you need very little exhortation, encouragement, and imploring to walk in a worthy way. Walk means to conduct your life.

So, he says, look, you responded to God's call, chosen by Him, now live in a way that's worthy of it. The end of verse 12 says, "God has called you into His own kingdom and glory." God who calls you into His kingdom. When you were saved you came into the kingdom. When you were saved you entered into the kingdom. And you're now ruled by the King, Jesus Christ. You're not yet in the glorious fulfillment of that kingdom. You haven't yet seen the millennial kingdom and you haven't yet seen the eternal kingdom, but you're in the kingdom. You're in the kingdom. You're in the kingdom of God where God rules. You're in the kingdom of Heaven. Every Christian dwells in the kingdom. We're Kingdom citizens. And so we have been called into His own kingdom and there is an element of glory within us. We have the indwelling Spirit of God, who is the glory of God. And yet we wait for the full glory of the kingdom when Jesus reveals His glory and the full eternal glory when we share His glory. But we have been called to His kingdom and called to His glory, all because He chose us before the foundation of the world. And a father says, with all that has been done for you, don't you think you ought to walk like this? Does that sound like a fatherly speech? I heard that one a lot.

So, spiritual leader is a balance. He has a...a tender side, a mothering side, and he has a strong courageous side in which he demands the highest and lives by the highest and uncompromising life. That's the balance. The mother comes along with her tender love and the father comes along exhorting to the conduct God requires, motivating the heart to respond, solemnly showing the consequence of failure. And then he lives the life that he demands of his children. Beautiful balance God has designed.

And spiritual leaders must be that. It's not enough to just be compassionate and tender and caring. There's got to be that uncompromising, pure life that sets the standard to live by. And there's got to be the courage of conviction that comes alongside someone and exhorts and encourages and implores and demands that you live in a worthy way of the God who has called...called you to such glory. That's leadership by God's design. On the one hand a concern for the person, on the other hand a concern for the process. On the one hand a concern for kindness, on the other hand a concern for control. On the one hand a concern for affection, on the other hand a concern for authority. On the one hand embracing, on the other hand exhorting. On the one hand cherishing, on the other hand challenging. And where there is that balance God can work in a glorious way. Where there is that tender, considerate, gentle mothering brought alongside a holy, righteous, blameless, exemplary life where there's teaching and commanding and persuading with fatherly authority, you

have a leader who stands head and shoulders above. You have a Paul and because you have a Paul you have a Thessalonian church.

I ask myself the question you must be asking yourself. Is anybody sufficient? Certainly I'm not. Is anybody sufficient to be this leader? Wherein would our sufficiency lie? Let me give you some principles, just a handful quickly.

Number one, realize your inadequacy. If you're ever to be this kind of spiritual leader it starts when you admit you're not, because according to 2 Corinthians 12:9 and 10, "His strength is made perfect in our (what?) weakness," and "God exalts the humble." Realize your insufficiency, realize your insufficiency.

Secondly, be intense in the study of the Word because it's only the Word that can produce this balance. In 2 Timothy 3:17 Paul speaks about a man of God, which is a technical term for a spiritual leader, not just a generic term for anybody. But Paul speaks about a man of God being perfect, equipped for every good work. And he says what equips him is the inspired Scripture. Realize your weakness because in that humility you'll generate a life of prayer and study the Word.

Thirdly, accept suffering as God's tenderizing process. First Peter 5:10 in the beginning of the chapter he exhorts the elders and in verse 10 he says, "After you've suffered a little while the God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." But it can't happen until you've suffered a while. You will be perfected, strengthened, confirmed, and established in this life, I think he's referring to, but not until you've suffered.

One, realize your weakness; that will drive you to prayer and trust in God. Two, study the Word, because it is the tool which produces the spiritual balance in the spiritual leader. And three, let God come to you in any form of trouble He chooses to come in order that you might be tenderized in the process.

And then I guess fourthly, give your whole life, give your whole life to the process of becoming the leader God wants you to be. Paul says, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, only one receives the prize, run in such a way that you may win." He says I run in such a way, I box in such a way, I buffet my body and make it my slave because I don't want to be disqualified. Realize your weakness; diligence in the Word; allow God to tenderize you through suffering; and give your whole heart, soul, mind and strength to the process of spiritual development and leadership.

That's the leader God wants. And that's the model Paul portrays. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we can only think of Jesus Christ at this moment who had the perfect balance here. Jesus even when He walked in the world was so tender. Obviously women found in Him security, love, the purest kind. They wanted to be near Him. He was manliness at its epitome, unlike any they had ever seen in any man. And yet He was a tender, gentle person. We see Him relating to children. We see Him with that motherly, tender, forgiving compassion, drawing those around Him to love in an intimate fellowship, such as Mary and Martha. And yet we see His fatherly authority and His discipline and the demanding standard of holiness and the call to unwavering obedience and the establishment of a pure and perfect example that He set. And we hear His words of judgment and condemnation on those who fail. Lord, You've given us... You've given us such a magnificent analogy, metaphor of the perfection of spiritual leadership in this matter of masculinity and femininity, the mothering and the fathering picture. And the world is filled with it. In every family we can see that metaphor. And we would pray, first of all, Lord, that we would not only understand the matters of spiritual leadership but we would back in to the metaphor and understand what You're asking in our families. And may the mothers be all that a mother is designed to be, accepting that glorious, magnificent, God-given role and not endeavoring to be a man. And may men be all that men are to be, accepting that glorious, God-given role and not falling into characteristics that are anything but manly. Give us affectionate, tender, caring, compassionate, loving mothers and give us strong, courageous, virtuous teachers as fathers. And the same, Lord, may they be true of our spiritual leaders. We are not adequate for this. We acknowledge it. Give us Your Word in its richness, give us suffering to produce that perfection which suffering alone can accomplish, and may we have the energy of the Spirit to work diligently to be all we can be, that Your church might know the blessing the Thessalonian church knew and become as effective as they were because of the quality of their leadership. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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