

## **6 Traits of the Effective Church Leader, part 2**

(1 Thessaloninas 2:1-12)

2/20/19; Wed PM Pine Grove

### **Introduction**

On February 9th, the Houston Chronicle published an article that documented nearly 400 Southern Baptist church leaders and workers who have faced sexual misconduct allegations in the past 20 years.

According to their investigation of court and police records, the total number of victims was around 700 people.

Some were as young as 3 years old.

Needless to say, the article was alarming to many in the Southern Baptist church.

Are there false allegations within this group?

Sure, but I also assure that there are plenty of legitimate abuses as well.

Sadly, the sinfulness of man is often seen in the most unlikely of places.

Yet, that is a reality and has been a reality throughout the history of the church.

That is no excuse for it.

That is simply an explanation of it.

No longer is the Catholic Church the only one guilty of abuse.

Southern Baptist churches are also responsible for much guilt as well.

What the article pointed out is a need for a national database of abusers so that people guilty of abuse can simply run to the next church down the road and continue in their sin..

And though that idea is fine, I would argue that any seeking to be biblical should already be checking backgrounds and references..

Tragically, that hasn't been the case in every Southern Baptist Church.

Now the media has run with this story and called for all sorts of reforms and written all sorts of suggestions.

Some good and some bad, but in the end, the lesson to be learned is simple.

Not every church leader is as they appear.

As can be expected, some people are serving in leadership positions not in an effort to serve the Lord but to serve themselves and their sin...

For that reason, people have to diligent in their assessment of church leaders..

They have to keep their guard up and hold their leaders to high standards..

The Bible helps in this regard because the Bible offers standards for church leaders.

The main texts for these standards are found in 1 Timothy and the book of Titus, but there are also other places in Scriptures where God helps us understand what He wants in a church leader...

One of those place is 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, where Paul describes his ministry to the Thessalonian church...

Last week, we began to examine these 12 verses, taking note of what kind of leader was Paul...

As a man called by God to preach the gospel, what was Paul like?

What defined him during his time with the Thessalonian church?

And so we began to look what we called the 6 traits of an effective church leader...

Now to remind of the context of this passage, Paul is writing a letter to a church that was born of out his preaching the gospel to them..

IF you recall, the Thessalonian church was formed when God saved some in the Jewish synangogue there as a result of Paul's preaching Christ to them..

Here's a map that details the incredible ministry of Paul who literally traveled all over the Mediterranean world sharing the good news of salvation in Christ..

And during those travels, Paul made his way to the city of Thessalonica, which still survives today..

Here is a picture of modern day Thessalonica which sits on the Aegean Sea as part of modern day Greece.

In Paul's day, it was part of a region known as Macedonia, and it was rather large city being home to around 300,000 people..

Yet, the city was deep into corruption like most port cities of its day..

Crime, sexual sins, and selfishness were a way of life in Thessalonica..

Yet, God saved some out of that environment by sending Paul to preach the truth to them..

And that little church ended up making a big impact on their local area.

In fact, the opening chapter of this letter was Paul's glowing admiration of them.

They were a hard-working, Jesus- following, gospel-sharing church...

And Paul made that clear in the first 10 verses of his letter to them...

But last week, the tone of Paul's letter to them changed as he began to answer some accusations about his character.

Evidently, the Jews that remained in Thessalonica were trying to smear Paul in hopes of destroying the Christian church there..

So Paul began a defense of his ministry in verse 1 of chapter 2 last week...

A defense that runs all the way to verse 12, and his hope is to assure the Thessalonians that he is the real deal..

He is not a phony.

He is a not a fake.

He preaches a message that he believes himself.

He is not in ministry because he is greedy.

He is not in ministry because he is wanting to take advantage of women to satisfy his lusts..

He is not in ministry looking to spread error and gain a following...

And so last week, we began to look at these verses and draw some positives for them in terms of what effective church leaders do..

The first trait we noted is effective church leaders are courageous.

You see, Paul had every reason to leave the ministry..

He was benefitting financially from it.

He wasn't gaining popularity because of it.

In fact, he was suffering from ministry.

He was beaten, he was slandered, he was attacked.

In fact, he came to Thessalonica after having been beaten in the previous town of Philippi.

Yet, the gospel of Christ is worth the suffering and effective leaders show courage instead of fear.

The second trait of an effective church leader is that he is centered in the Lord.

In other words, a church leader can't be in ministry seeking to please anyone but the Lord..

And then the final trait of effective church leaders is that they must be content.

They must be content with what they have and with who they are in the Lord.

Paul didn't come to the Thessalonians for gain or glory.

He came to preach the gospel and grow the church, and that should be the aim of anyone desiring to lead the church..

But Paul isn't done defending his ministry to the church at Thessalonica.

Not only was he courageous and centered and content, Paul was also compassionate..

Let's look at verse 7 and 8...



#### **IV. Effective Church Leaders are Compassionate (7-8)**

Verse 7...

***7 But we [h]proved to be [i]gentle [j]among you, as a nursing mother [k]tenderly cares for her own children.***

Paul now moves from his inward qualities to his outward appearance by comparing his ministry in Thessalonica to the ministry of a mother to her baby.

If anything is a picture of gentleness, it would be the care of a mother to her infant child..

And though that may sound like an odd way to describe a church leader, it is an accurate picture of how gentle church leaders are to be with their people...

Yes, they are to be courageous but they are also called to be compassionate...

Preachers may thunder in the pulpit but they are tender with their people out of it..

They are called to be as gentle as a nursing mother would be to her own child.

Sadly, this is not the case with every church leader..

Some men become heavy handed leaders.

Instead of gentle, they are brutal with those around them.

Instead of compassionate, they are insensitive..

Yet Paul reminds the church at Thessalonica that he was not that way with them..

Instead, he was patient and kind and understanding.

Now look, this would be difficult with a group of new believers..

The church at Thessalonica was not a group of seasoned Christians.

They were new to the faith.

They were babies in Christ.

And look, let's be honest, newborns test your patience.

At 3 am, their cries don't wake us with a spirit of gentleness..

Their screams don't make us more patient but less patient.

However, Paul remind them the church that he was gentle with them, even though they were infants in the faith..

He continues in verse 8..

***8 Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own [l]ives, because you had become [m]very dear to us.***

This phrase, “having so fond an affection for you” is a really a Greek verbs that means “to long for..”

Paul is telling the Thessalonian that he longed for them..

It is comparable to the love that a parent has for their child..

On the rare occasions when we would leave Anna our first child with someone, we would often talk about what she was doing until we went back to pick her up.

And then when we picked her up, it was like she had been gone for days..

This is the love of a parent for a child..

Paul had so fond an affection for the Theslaonian church that he hated to be away from them..

This is the heartache of a pastor for his people...

He longs to get back to them because of the compassion and care that he has for them..

But not only does he have compassion for them, he is willing to invest his life with them..

At the end of verse 8, Paul writes, ***“we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own [l]ives..”***

If you want to know what ministry is, it is giving your life to serve others..

In this context, think about what a mother is called to do..

She is called to give her time, her energy, her whole life to serve the needs of her children..

But this is also Christian ministry.

Effective church leaders give their time, their talents, even their own lives to others for the sake of Christ..

Effective church leaders have a mother's heart of compassion for their people...

But that is not all...

Let's move to verses 9 and 10..

We will call this trait...

**V. Effective Church Leaders are Conscientious**  
**(9-10)**

***9 For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.***

As Paul continues to defend his ministry from the attacks of critics, he again points to the example he set when he was in Thessalonica.

Not only would the Thessalonian believers remember his compassion and tenderness, they would also remember his work ethic..

To be conscientious is to be concerned with how well a person desires to perform and behave well..

Conscientious people are wanting to do the right thing so that they others won't be disappointed or ashamed by their character or conduct..

And Paul makes it clear that he and his companions in Thessalonica had performed admirably in all their work while they were there..

You see, the church was just beginning...

And though was teaching the church to financially care for the leaders over them, most churches had zero financial resources...

As a result, Paul worked a normal job while preaching and teaching believers in whatever area of the world that he was in..

In other words, Paul didn't get rich while ministering to churches.

In fact, he had to work double shifts in the world and in the church to make ends meet..

And that is exactly what he is reminding the Thesalonian church of in verse 9..

“I worked night and day so that yall didn't have to support me while I was with you.”

“Look, I have to eat too, but I earned my own living so that you couldn't accuse me of doing ministry to get rich...”

So first of all, Paul was a conscientious worker, but he was also very conscientious in his behavior..

*Verse 10...*

***You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we [n]behaved toward you [o]believers;***

As we said last week, the best church leaders have a clean conscience..

Their lives are the best witness for their ministries and this was clearly true of Paul's life and Silas' life and Timothy's life.

The Thessalonians were witnessed that these men worked hard and behaved rightly..

A preacher or a parent who tells you to do what they but not what they do is full of baloney..

Good parents and good preachers and effective church leaders tell you to do what they do..

Men who preach one thing but practice another are not fit for the the pulpit..

Sadly, the church is full of hypocrites because so many church leaders are examples of hypocrisy themselves..

The call of the effective church leaders is to be a man who works and behaves in the asme way that he desires his people to work and behave..



No one will serve the church unless the leaders serve the church...

No one will work in a church where the leaders doesn't work in the church..

No one will behave properly in a church where the leadership doesn't properly obey the Lord..

This is the mandate for the effective church leader.

Work hard and obey harder.

Be a conscientious Christians who desires to work harder and behave better than the people you lead..

That was Paul.

That was Silas.

That was Timothy.

That is the command and expectation of anyone who desires to lead the church..

A final trait of the effective church leader is found in verses 11 and 12...

We will call this..

## **VI. Effective Church Leaders are Concerned (11-12)**

In verses 11 and 12, Paul moves back to the family to help us understand the nature of his ministry to the Thessalonians.

Verse 11..

***11 just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and [p]imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, 12 so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.***

Not only was Paul a gentle mother to the believers at Thessalonica, Paul was also a concerned father.

Fathers who understand their biblical role as spiritual leaders in their homes are constantly concerned for the spiritual welfare of their families..

According to the Scriptures, fathers set the spiritual standard in their families...

They do devotions.

They make sure that church attendance is a priority.

They lead their family in prayer.

They answer the questions about the Lord and the Bible..

This is what spiritual leaders do in the family, but this is also what church leaders do for the people in their care.

According to verse 11, they exhort, which simply means to come alongside someone to instruct them what to do..

They encourage, which means they motivate their children to obey...

So spiritual fathers and spiritual leaders teach the truth and then motivate their children to follow the truth..

But they also implore their children..

This is the idea of warning...

In other words, fathers teach the truth, motivate their kids to follow the truth, but also warn their children of the consequences of not obeying the truth..

And its not that mothers don't do this, but fathers are especially equipped to exhort, encourage, and implore...

Look, yall understand this in some ways..

Dad disciplines, and mom wipes the tears...

And in a sense, an effective Christian is both..

We beg, we plead with people to follow Christ like a concerned dad..

We teach, we encourage, we warn of disobedience like a concerned father...

We even have to act discipline folks at times...

But we are also the first to show up when our children fail.

And we are there to console them and comfort them and care for them like a compassionate mother..

This was the life of Paul.

HE preached and thundered away in the synagogues begging people to put their faith in Christ.

He warned people of not believing.

He warned churches that fell into patterns of sin..

Yet, he also cared for believers that fell into sin.

He showed compassion for folks who struggled to believe.

He was gentle with people who were struggling to get their lives on track...

So, what does all this mean for me and you?

## **Conclusion**

### ***#1 - Impatience with others ignores the patience of God with you.***

I understand the struggle to be patient with people who seem to never get it or have any interest in growing in the Lord.

I admit that I have lost my patience with people at times.

I have not always be as gentle as I should with others..

But the way to improve your gentleness with others is to recognize the Lord's gentleness with you.

You didn't get it all at once.

You didn't suddenly turn into super Christian overnight.

You slowly learned.

You slowly grew.

You slowly understood.

If you plan to lead others, you have to have patience and gentleness with them.

Yet, that patience and gentleness will never fully come until you appreciate the Lord's patience with you.

As a pastor, I have high expectations of believers.

I fully expect to read the Scriptures.

I fully expect them to be at church.

I fully expect them to fight sin and grow and holiness..

But those expectations are balanced with the realization that God has been so very patient with me.

Church leaders must be gentle and patient as a mother with her newborn.

And no mother expects her newborn to feed themselves and clothe themselves the first week or even the first year.

To lead the church, men must be just as patient with their people.

***#2 - Hard work and holiness are the foundation of church leadership.***

I hear all the jokes about how much a preacher works.

I hear all the comments about golf and fishing and sleeping in.

And if I didn't keep a clean conscience about my own work ethic, it would get to me.

But I thank the Lord and my father for a strong work ethic.

Effective church leaders work.

And it may not be physical labor, but that doesn't lessen the pain of it.

I study to show myself approved by God.

I labor for the church out of love for Christ.

And though no one sees that most often but me and the Lord, I have an obligation to Him and the church to work hard.

But I and other church leaders also have an obligation to behave well..

I can't call people to a standard of holiness that I can't follow myself..



I can get a wrong and come back next week and correct the error.

But I can't get my life wrong and stay in the pulpit.

Hard work and holiness have to be the aim of my life and the aim of anyone who leads the church.

***#3 - High standards are necessary in the church, but Christ is more necessary.***

Though leaders are called to be compassionate, they are never called to compromise God's standards.

This is why church leaders must exhort and encourage and implore their people to live to a high biblical standard.

When people ask about my preaching, I always tell them that I preach beyond what I can live.

That doesn't mean I plan to sin.

It simply means that proper biblical preaching puts a carrot in front of us that we can never quite reach.

But that is God's purpose.

We get his commands to see how we should live, but we also get Christ because we always fall short of that.

A church leader sets a standard for his people like any good father..

But he also points them to Christ since he knows that all will fall short of that standard..

Let me tell you something that you already know.

I can't live up to the traits in these 12 verses..

But along the same lines, no one can live up to all of Christ's commands either..

However, this doesn't mean we don't strive for it either.

My aim is to call us all to to a high standard while recognizing that the only one to ever meet that standard was Christ..

This is why we love him and worship Him and run to him for salvation.

Let us pray.