

1/31/21 - 1 Thes. 2:7-12 - "Walking in Selflessness"

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[0 : 00] The church is God's treasured possession. The church is God's treasured possession. And this is a possession in which God has entrusted to faithful shepherds to endure with, to care for, and to protect.

In this reality, then, if God's treasured possession is the church, and God has given the church to these shepherds, then it should be known that for these shepherds, they are God's stewards of what he has given to them.

We have all those possessions, many plethora of possessions in our lives that we could probably think of, of which we are given this temporary entrusted stewardship over.

Maybe you're in a financial position where you can actually have a yacht, or a boat, or a nice sports car, or a nice house. But for many of us, we can all kind of relate to that of a parent and a child. When we think of this entrusting and stewardship, it brings to mind a child to a parent. That a parent is given a child for a certain amount of time to pour into that child, to raise that child, to provide basic necessities until they're able to care on their own.

[1 : 40] Last week, we studied Paul defending himself against charges. These charges included, in the beginning of chapter 2, were of greed, were of flattery, were of self-seeking glory.

And the defense that he provides to this young church in Thessalonica is to remind them of who they are. Remind them of the person that they have proven to be by their actions.

Last week, we saw plain and clear that in their character, their message, and their motives, those who oversee the church are not to be, or are to be contending for the gospel in everything.

That in their character, when they're proving their character, when they're contending for the gospel in their character, this would be expressed by enduring through various seasons and trials and situations with the body of Christ, the church.

And if the message is not deception, the character of that individual speaking will support the quality, the authenticity of that message. And obviously, it goes to say, it will naturally flow into the motives, all stemming from the character.

[3 : 01] And regardless of the accusations that Paul and his pastoral team were receiving at this time, they said, God is our witness. Who are they to say what's in our hearts?

God knows the hearts. From verse 1 all the way to chapter, yeah, verse 1 in chapter 2 all the way to verse 12 that we just finished reading today, Paul gives six of these reminders, six of them, saying words like, you know, or you remember, or you are witnesses.

And this is important because actions speak louder than words. Paul can say all the great things that he is and what he's about, and he can say, here, call the Philippians.

They support me personally in my ministry, just as Pastor Rick read. You know, they know that I'm honest. No, he said actions speak louder than words.

Just watch him by his conduct and then judge for yourselves. Today, we're going to study Paul's flow of thoughts in that while he contended for his character, his message, and his motives last week, now he moves forward and he focuses on an attitude.

[4 : 19] If last week was the character, message, and motives, this week is attitude. An attitude which placed the needs of others before his own needs, thus being the reason why the sermon title today is Walking in Selflessness.

Walking in Selflessness. In this, Paul shared himself with others. He shared himself with others.

A great testimony of a man of God is sharing yourself with others. Furthermore, what a man shares with others often predicates his heart for the gospel.

And something we're going to see in this, that if it was true for Paul, it's true for all. Because this is an imitative relationship, right, church?

It's what we've been talking about within the context since the beginning of the series. And elders, specifically, are stewards of God's great possession as shepherds over what to steward.

[5 : 28] We're going to do this today. We're going to break this section up, this passage up into three different sections. And the first section we have today is looking at a mother's care for children.

The verse says in verse 2, or verse 7, Paul makes it clear that this pastoral team is contrasting their behavior with all the accusations of their opponents.

this team, including Paul, Silas, and Timothy, are identified as gentle among the Thessalonians. We don't need to travel too far outside of Scripture.

I don't have to go to an illustration archive that connects with being gentle and motherhood and everything. It's right here within God's inspired word.

Paul's making it clear with illustrative examples of what he is trying to get at. Paul relates this special adjective, being gentle, with that of a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

[6 : 54] And I want you to think about that for just a moment. As God's treasured possession has been given to men to oversee, known as the church, their disposition, their behavior and attitude towards that stewardship and that which they have been stewards of is that of a nursing mother and her children.

Think of that. Paul and probably older elders even in the church.

Paul is, you're saying that Paul is like a nursing mother to these people that could be his grandfather. Yes. All the way down to the young ones.

Think about what it takes, the dedication, the attitude within a nursing mother. If we have nursing mothers, I know we have nursing mothers, the long nights, the endurance that it takes to endure to endure that, the seasons of when those teeth come in and then the longer nights ensue, when those boogie noses start running, running, all the way to when they feel scared at night and they come into your room and, or when they cry because they are scared of being alone, that motherly relationship is being drawn out of this text through that illustrative example of a nursing mother taking care of her own.

This is Paul's attitude, this is Paul's disposition with the church. Verse 7 mentions a unique term, you can't really tell within the English language, but if you do a little research, there's a term that's only used twice in the entire New Testament.

[8 : 54] it's in verse 7, it's the word care. This term brings to mind tenderness, this brings to mind affection, and best of all, which I believe is a profound example of that relationship and that endeavor with the children, is that of being cherishing, cherishing the children, like a mother cherishing of her own children.

The other usage of this term is also used relating to a husband cherishing his wife in Ephesians 5:29.

There's very little that a mother will not do for her children, right? this is a clear attitude that displays in wildlife and is ingrained within the protective quote, mama bear instincts, right?

The function that naturally occurs, that's an instinct that is not taught, but is just ingrained within the DNA of a mother to protect her young.

So, practical expressions of this, of that care and that cherishing, is that when a child is sick, a mother comes to aid in all of those instances.

[10 : 20] When they're hurt, when they're worried, when they're angry, and especially when they're in danger, a mother is there. You see, church, a mother's love has the power to reprioritize their lives around the needs of their children within any given circumstance.

Mothers have this way of adapting to their surroundings very quickly, suspiciously quickly. So, if it is the same for, if it's true for mothers, and mothers are used as an illustration of Paul's disposition to the church, it is the same for those who oversee the church as well.

As a mother is given stewardship to prepare her young, so, the church elders are called to lead, to feed, and to grow, nurture, cherish those under their care with the same manner of dedication.

Verse 8 says it perfectly, being affectionately desirous of you. Man, that's quite a term, right? Affectionately desirous of you.

Great translated word there. God, this team didn't just pop in, deliver a quick little pick-me-up message and say, Jesus rocks, see you later, going on to the next town, good luck with this church plant.

[11:50] No, they made it apparent. They shared their lives. They endured great persecution. We'll see more of that next week. And they were steadfast with this church.

They shared the gospel and their lives. They were ready to share with you not only the gospel, but their own lives because they had become very dear to us.

And so an elder worthy of appointments of God is one who clearly endures, is steadfast with the church. Just as a mother to a child, administers medicine when they're sick, and even though it might sting.

Binds up wounds when hurt, even though it might feel uncomfortable. Reassures when worried. Provides support in a means of venting when you're angry and especially guarding those within their care from danger.

Providing a defense for those under their care. In that, the undertone qualification of an elder is one who cherishes the church. We're studying, a group of pastors, elders, are studying through this book.

[13:13] It's probably been going on, I don't know for how long now, months. Every other Saturday is dedicated to this study. And as we go through this discipleship curriculum, this plan, we see all these scripture verses being brought up.

We find some in Timothy, we find some in Titus, and 1 Peter. That all display these qualifications similar to what we will read today. However, up until reading this passage, there's an undertone qualification within all of them.

And that's one that cherishes the church. It hit me very vividly this week. This is one who endures in suffering.

How can a pastor or elder endure in suffering? It's because that elder or pastor cares, cherishes their church enough to even endure an uncomfortable season.

They're not in it for themselves, they're in it for the church. An elder is called to cherish also the whole church, even those ones that keep voting against those things at the members meeting.

[14:28] It's just, they can't get anything through. They just keep voting against it. Yeah, cherishing the really difficult ones as well. All of them. Those who agree and disagree.

In this, we see that eldership of the church truly reflects Jesus Christ. When we're talking about selflessness, we're talking about Jesus Christ. It tells a story about God's affectionate, desirous pull to the church, disposition to the church, those who have turned to him, the one true God, and cherishing that relationship.

This tells a story of God's desirous care and cherishing relationship for all repentant wretched sinners. That is his great possession. Our performance, this is a great reminder for me, our performance is not a contingency upon God's administration of grace in our lives, and neither is the church's performance worthy, a worthy contingency for the cherishing care of an elder.

We're just supposed to endure. It's our calling. God has given that to the church. They're given that to the elders, which is the church, the steward. We see in section two, as we continue in verse nine, we see selfless gospel laboring.

He calls upon memory here again. He says, for you remember, brothers, our labor and toil. And then he continues in this passage in verse nine to explain what that labor and toil is.

[16:16] He says, we work night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. As Paul recalls upon their memory, once again, I can almost hear the opposing objections from his opponents of the church.

You can hear them probably being slung like mud. God, those guys, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, they're only after your money. Only one is your money.

They just want to buy another yacht, live the easy life. They're just collecting from city to city, using this guy named Jesus as their method.

They don't care about you at all. You can hear those accusations, couldn't you? If educational theorists are correct in saying that we remember 20% of what we hear and 50% of what we see, and a little bit larger percentage of what we hear and see.

For me this morning, I mean 20% is pretty good for you guys to retain off of my, you know, verbal lecture here of preaching the word. That's not too bad. I'll count it a success at 10%.

[17:28] But if educational theorists are true, that after observing the retention rates of people who are in classes and structures like that, 20% is retained of what they hear, 50% of what they see, and a larger percentage of what they hear and see.

And this is precisely why Paul mentions this here. This is why Paul mentions labor and toil. He's not calling upon just a verbal affirmation of his labor and toil.

I worked so hard, I was labor and sweating. No, he's calling upon imagery. Because obviously, they could see that when he was probably in the pulpit, when he was preaching the word, he was probably dripping in sweat.

You could probably see the fatigue in his eyes. Because he was so dedicated to the church in that manner. To even work on the side so that they can offset the cost of living.

And this team was not hungry for money, Paul, Timothy, and Silas. They even put their own money where their mouth is. I mean, pretty much so.

[18 : 40] Because they went out and worked as tent makers to provide food. To alleviate that financial burden of this young church plant. Paul did not ask for money.

Very strategically, because his opponents were after money. But he lived on what he earned. He labored and toiled.

And he also lived, as Pastor Rick read in Philippians 4, he lived on what the Philippians were sending to him in Thessalonica. So it was a collaborative effort in order to make the gospel message clear to these people.

It's not about money. It's about Jesus. It's about forgiveness. Obviously, it was not feasible for them to provide for them as it were for the Philippians.

But the point they were making by illustrating this in the passage was that Paul, Timothy, Silas, they were going to do whatever it took to do gospel ministry well.

[19 : 44] Whatever it took to plant the seed of the gospel in this community in Thessalonica. And man, it sure did take off, didn't it? Money is interesting. It's usually the central focus of the opponents of that church even back then.

And man, finding a TBN station near you, it's all about money. And a little bit of Jesus here and there. But money!

You want forgiveness? Sow a seed of faith. faith. This is not just a historic problem within the opponents of this early church.

This is almost the central identification of false teaching. When money becomes the central focus, not Jesus Christ. And what was central of this team was the gospel of God, which is Jesus Christ. And that reality revealed itself in how they labored, how they toiled to earn a living to silence any accuser that says that what they're teaching is false.

[20 : 50] There is no way that the opponents would be able to stand on an accusation because they were sweating daily, night and day, to alleviate that financial burden from the Thessalonians.

Now, if a false teacher is identified in devotion to money, a true teacher is one whose devotion is to the gospel of God. It's very simple, church. And we all have this as a method of measurement and way in balancing the attitudes and the actions, what's in the heart of those who are teaching.

The gospel of God is one of a true teacher. Money is that of a false teacher. And whatever means necessary to do so, a true teacher will make it sure that the gospel of God will be made known regardless of the cost, even if we have to go maybe pull some shots at Starbucks to make ends meet.

Verse 10 actually makes it very interesting, makes a very interesting remark. Look with me down at some terms. When we're talking about going through an eldership sort of training program and process, there's some words in here that come up in the qualifications of an elder.

Verse 10 says, you are witnesses and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.

[22 : 22] Verse 10, we see that the condition of their hearts were not enticed by this financial gain. It wasn't about money. It was about the gospel. And this is affirmed through a vertical witness a vertical affirmation between the laborer and God.

And it's also a horizontal witness that every sweat that dripped from their brow, that it would testify between the labor and man. It wasn't about finances.

And this triad of adverbs here, holy, righteous, and blameless. This triad of adverbs affirms a man of God in which he is a whatever-it-takes laborer.

He will do whatever it takes to make ends meet. Whatever it takes laboring is counted as holy, righteous, and blameless in conduct.

Echoing out of 1 Timothy 3 the qualifications of an overseer as we saw in our Titus series in Titus 1 and 1 Peter chapter 5.

[23 : 28] This was something that they had confidence in vertically. They knew that their hearts are being tested by God and if they were after financial gain and gospel wasn't centered that they would not be able to sleep at night.

It's pretty simple, church. This is the prime example of how this pastoral team shared themselves with this young church because a true gospel minister is one whose only end is the gospel of God. There's no hidden agenda of greed that lies behind the scenes. Their devotion is only God and solely to God and whatever comes if it does come with a following or believers or they're baptizing people like crazy, so be it.

It's not their goal. Their goal is the gospel of God to plant the seed to proclaim the mysteries of God which is in Jesus Christ alone. They are not laboring for man nor their own glory, but laboring for God alone and his glory.

And section three leaves with another interesting illustration, which is a father's instruction for children. Verse 11 concludes our time today as for you know, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God.

[25 : 04] If a mother's role was used as a cherishing example, that that word care, that's used also in highlighting the care of a husband to his wife in Ephesians 5, we understand that Paul brings into light a unique role that hits home with me, being a father to a child.

This is not to say that either of the two are exclusive to a mother and father, like I'm not getting into this debate that, well, you're saying that a father can't cherish their children, like you can put words in my mouth all you want, but that's not what I'm saying.

But a father can be nurturing, biblically speaking, in this context, a father father is being known as the head of the household, and within that role, it comes with specific functions and expressions within that household, and one that we're seeing a robust example of it here in this passage.

Paul brings together another triad of terms. This is a fatherly function expressed through exhorting each one of you, encouraging you, and charging you to walk in a manner worthy of God.

This is Paul's instruction. This is Paul's disposition as it was being expressed to this church. It's known in Judaism and in the Greco-Roman world, it was expected that a father would give moral instruction to his sons.

[26 : 44] This was not something new back then. It's something odd even in our culture today. But it is so interesting coming from a father's perspective. There's this natural pull and natural pleasure of having an opportunity and looking for opportunities of instructing my kids, encouraging my kids, building up my kids, charging my kids.

kids. It's at the bedtime pillow at night where I gently tell my children, both of my boys and soon my girls, but both of my boys, that you are strong, you are mighty, you are a man of God.

And they rehearse it and I make them finish it to make sure that they know who they are because this world is going to try to tell them otherwise. We see that when a father exhorts, he encourages a response of action.

When a father encourages, this alleviates sorrow or distress. It gives emotional strength. And when a father charges their children, this is to assert something, offering firsthand witness of the fact, any fathers in the room can probably attest to this natural fulfillment, having that opportunity and almost feeling like when you're doing that, you're doing as if God actually ingrained that deep within our hearts.

That is our job within the family. That's not to say that my wife can't do the same. She does it very well and that's sometimes very much better than myself. So it's not saying that.

[28 : 41] But so if this is true for a father to a child, this is the same for overseers of the church to their flock.

Similar to the father being the head over the household, the Bible encourages that the elders be faithful men who oversee the church as part of his creative design since Genesis preceding the fall. In this function, those under the elders care are called to instruct the gospel of God, to walk in a manner worthy of God, which is an ongoing process of sanctification after conversion, after we saw the conversion point in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verses 9.

This was a role and a task given to the overseers of the church. The overseers function within the body. God's possession by giving themselves over to the church in exhortation, giving themselves

over in encouragement, giving themselves over to charging them.

All in the gospel of God. This is simply just to say a child doesn't just wake up one morning and learn and know all of these things.

[30 : 03] just like this Bible isn't going to sit on your shelf and preach itself. The Bible doesn't grow a mouth and preach itself.

It takes men of the word to declare and proclaim the truth and conviction of the Holy Spirit inspired. So when the Bible speaks, you can forget all the convictions the world tries to pervert into the Holy Scriptures and just like wedging it in there as if the text means something completely different. As if this is an antiquated book that just serves as a dated historic paperweight on your bookshelf. God has organized his church in a way that sets them apart from the world since the nation of Israel and true today, Jew and Gentile.

God calls us into his own kingdom and glory. We can be assured that we will live apart. We will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

So in that, when we turn to Scripture after watching a full hour of news, whatever your vice might be, CNN on this side or Fox News on that side, whatever you're ingesting throughout the week of these narratives and secular realities, we subject them to the holy mark in order that the Scriptures define.

[31 : 31] It is not up for debate. It's not up for discussion. Yeah, it can be up for disagreement. But we know, being the church, we hold this to be true over any ideologies that the world comes up with.

Because nothing new is under the sun. If you have a problem with the instructive word of God, it is not the instructor that you deal with, but God himself. Every moment under the instruction of his word, we feel the weight of that kingdom of God and his glory found within, as verse 12 concludes. I want to close. But I want us to step back for a moment.

If you do have a physical Bible open, or maybe you have the Bible app, just kind of scroll up a little bit or just open to the beginning of chapter 2. Step back for a moment and look upon the past 12 verses that we covered starting last week.

Looking at Paul contending for himself in character, knowing that his character will support his message, and his message will be supported by his motives.

[32 : 50] Looking at this week, and looking at the disposition of a mother, that Paul, yeah, strangely enough, is a mother to the church. Just as Paul is also a father to the church, gentle and instructive.

Why? Why all of this? Why would he go to so much of this time to deal with this? He could have just left after the sense of opposition within Thessalonica and said, all right, peace out.

I am in it for the money after all, so I'm just going to go over there. Or just not endure at all, just saying that this is really hard. And I just don't feel like I'm needed here, and nobody likes me. I'm just going to go to the next town. Maybe they'll like me. I don't know about you, but I see something so vivid within this chapter.

And that is that God loves his church so dearly. God loves his church so dearly that he has given men within this world and this life to steward that, to steward each and every one of your souls.

[34 : 10] And when you understand that God's love is so dear, that he cherishes the church so much that he's given you somebody to pray for you, to exhort you, to encourage you, to come alongside of you in a gentle disposition as a mother, in a constructive manner as a father.

God cares for the church. Not only that, God loves utilizing regular folks. And he is able to raise up and equipped for his glory within this assembly, each and every one of you.

Even if this is your first time, welcome to the mission field. The church is truly God's great possession. Doesn't this create a sense of awe?

Ownership? Like heeding the moment just on the edge of your seat? Like, let's go for battle. Why are you preaching this long?

Let's go. Let's tell someone about this. Well, that's my end of standing up here, waving my arms around. We've got to tell people about this truth.

[35 : 28] This creates a sense of awe, of readiness, of excitement. Keeps us on the edge of our seat. So for us today, I hope that this reality can help us to sort of inventory our lives in a few different ways and manners.

Obviously, personally, and I'm included within this extremely, because when I read these passages and I see that imitative relationship between the church and those in leadership, that puts a lot of weight, appropriate weight, upon me as a leader, upon Pastor Rick as an elder, and upon all of those who we are trading up within this church to lead in that capacity, it's a lot of weight upon us, and I don't take it lightly.

So when I'm asking these questions to you, I'm asking it to myself. I ask myself after reading and studying a passage like this, am I giving myself, all of myself, for the sake of the gospel?

Are you dictating the terms of, yeah, you know, I think that the world would probably say it would be wisest to maybe do this or do that, or I read this little encouraging little footnotes that did not come from the Bible, but came from man's opinion of how I ought to live my life, how I might be able to steward my resources, my time, and things like that?

Are you allowing the Word of God to define that for you? Are you giving yourself, all of yourself for the sake of the gospel? Or at least, at the very least, we have to say, are we cognitively aware of making progress in this?

[37 : 20] We're not going to be perfect, trust me, we're going to have days when we're doing really well at that, and we're going to have days where we're pretty crummy at it, me included. This makes us inventory, even our vocations, our vocations, maybe in the medical fields, or working at Starbucks, or being retired, or working in schools, or working at a banquet hall and running that, or working as a coach for a high school.

How is my life exposing a co-laborer of Paul? When you're talking about being on the edge of your seats and ready to go, like, stop blabbering, Brent, let's go!

Okay, well, let's go. How is that looking? Are you consumed and steadfast in the standards and expectations that God has for you, or the expectations and the steadfastness that the world might have for you?

Are you selfless in all things, in the workplace, but also even stretching to the vocation of parenting? Yes, that is a full-time vocation, people.

I see it. Workplace, parenting, even with your neighbor, even those neighbors that don't let your dog on their lawn and threaten to shoot them.

[38 : 49] Yeah. How is the gospel being exposed in those? Are you meeting the expectation that God has for you of selfless ambitions in those? Giving yourself over.

This makes us inventory, even us, relationally here within our midst, called the assembly of Youngstown Metro Church. It stretches far beyond buildings or brick and mortar. This is the assembled people.

If we're here, we could be the church here. We could be the church over there. So when we're talking about relationally, we're talking about that collective body. Am I stewarding the family of God that God has given to me here and now at Youngstown Metro Church in service to the gospel work that expresses a cherishing attitude and instructive in nature?

Do we care about one another? Somebody might be missing in our midst right now might be going through a deep struggle in their life. And we should be the ones to recognize where people are, how people are doing, having prayer journals, wherever those prayer journals are that we're doing.

Having those up-to-date, current, week by week, day by day, looking through the church directory in prayer along with the pastors and elders.

[40 : 05] This is not just an exclusive task for the paid pastoral staff. This is the collective body. As imitators of Paul, we become imitators of him.

But maybe you're not even in Christ. Maybe as you inventory your life, you're saying to yourself, yeah, this is great. I want to know about God's cherishing relationship that he has for me because the fly.

Interesting. That's never happened. Back on track now. Maybe you're not in Christ.

And so when I'm thinking about these verses, I'm thinking about, I can't just assume that we're all coming into this building as if we're all rallying together.

We're having a great time as Christians. And yeah, it's just a cool thing. Yeah, the church assembles as a body of believers. However, maybe you're that person that has been attending, but just have been on the fence and only the Lord might know.

[41 : 12] Maybe you're new here today and you might not be in Christ. Maybe the gospel that you were exposed to was about money, that you gave your tithe, you gave your riches, and nothing happened.

Maybe this is the first time that you are experiencing the true gospel of God. Which is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Why I charge you to turn from your idols.

And idols are simply anything that you put upon the throne of God that only belongs to God.

Anything that you replace that can replace and distort the glory of God are idols.

Turn from your idols as 1 Thessalonians 1.9 says, And turn toward the living and true God in faith.

Yeah, there's great imposters, great imposters that exist in the world that are very cunning, very malicious, but none compare to the light of Christ that shines within your hearts and the truth.

When that truth takes root, it is inexplorable. Night and day difference. Simply speak your faith to God at this moment and turn your life to him.

[42 : 22] May we all be strengthened. May we be strengthened in might through the Holy Spirit to continue to walk in a manner worthy of God who calls us into his kingdom and his glory in verse 12.

May we be affectionately desirous. I love that term. Affectionately desirous for one another. If it was true for Paul, it's true for all.

Let's be affectionately desirous for one another and let that attitude be expressed as we endure together. Whatever may lay ahead, whatever the headlines of the news say, it doesn't bring fear upon the church because we know the gates of hell will not prevail.

History proves that to be true. And we recall upon the memory that we have of God's promises and we remain secure in that. May we hold fast to the word of God as supreme over our lives and our circumstances and especially over the meaning and the narratives that we find in the news.

And may we take to heart the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians. Philippians 2, starting in verse 14. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent children of God, without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ, I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

[43 : 55] Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

Likewise, you also should be glad and rejoice with me. How well, church, and how poor we all do this will often predicate our hearts for the gospel, just as it was for Paul's life.

Let's pray. Let's pray.