

The Shining Light of a Father

Scripture Reading: I Thessalonians 2:1-20

As Paul encouraged the Thessalonian church, he reminded them of the sincerity of the ministry that was delivered unto them (By Paul, Silvanus [Silas], and Timothy – I Thessalonians 1:1). As he described their motives and integrity in their service towards them, Paul compared their ministry to the functions of a loving father with his dear children. We are focusing on I Thessalonians 2:11-12 (Some translations divide these verses differently, but they basically all say the same thing). The three stated characteristics of a Father's love are...

1. Exhorting / Encouraging

To call someone to come along side you; to desire and seek someone to do something. It implies comforting, encouraging, strengthening, teaching.

2. Comforting / Encouraging

To calm / console; to admonish (warn with counsel); to give incentives / encouragement.

3. Charging / Imploring

To testify / to bear witness to something experienced or learned; to have a good report; to stir up someone to action; to earnestly beg someone to do something.

The definitions of these words seem to overlap. They really go together almost like they are one thing. It describes a person who is carefully attentive, personally involved, and passionately trying to help someone do the right thing. **I Thessalonians 2:18** implies that, as Paul and the others desired to minister to this church, there was spiritual warfare going on. **I Thessalonians 2:19-20** shows the heart-felt investment they made for the welfare, prosperity, and blessing of God on this church and each member individually.

Now let's consider this, directly applying it to earthly fathers.

A father is not so much a general, commanding his troops from behind, as he is a file leader. This means he is like a commanding officer that is leading the charge, in the battle with his soldiers. He will be exhorting, comforting, counselling, encouraging, calling (not sending) to go forward, providing leadership on-site. This shows the availability, intimacy, involvement, and investment of a faithful father.

So it is with Christ. He says,

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”
(John 10:27-28)

“I will not leave you comfortless (like orphans). I will come to you.” (John 14:18)

“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” (John 14:20)

“... If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” (John 14:26)

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” (John 15:11)

“I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

A father has the opportunity to be like a light. In darkness, people want to be near light. Light brings people together. In darkness, people are paralyzed. Light can cheer, comfort, motivate, and give a sense of direction.

The wonderful qualities of a father, which we have described, may seem difficult to attain. Fathers may sometimes feel like they have failed so daunting a task. The battle in the trenches can be very discouraging. Many a battle did not go as planned, but the war was still won. God, our general, has given all authority to Christ, our captain, who is with us and leading us (Hebrews 2:9-18; Matthew 28:18-20). As with Paul, fathers can expect the interference of Satan, as we do the sacred work of caring for marriage and family (Ephesians 4:27; 6:10-18; James 4:7; I Peter 5:8-9). Christ will oversee and help us to victory (John 16:33; Romans 8:31-39; Ephesians 5:8-33; Hebrews 13:20-21). He is coming again, not to scold us, but to bring us His reward (Revelation 22:12 cp. Hebrews 6:10; I Corinthians 3:5-15). Our hope is that, if we sow in tears, we will reap in joy (Psalm 126:5-6).

So let us encourage and cooperate with fathers (of all ages) as they seek to be a light shining in a dark place – a light of encouragement, and counsel, a light that helps others to function and to go forward, a light that protects others from the dangers of the darkness that is in this world.