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1 THESSALONIANS 2:7-12

Series: Real Christians in Challenging Times

Today we're going to look at 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12. If you have your book you can take it out and in this book you can not only read along; this is a workbook in the ESV version. You can read along, but also there's a place for you to take notes. So on the side there you can take notes. Now if you do not have a book and you would like one, you can email me at scott@takejesushome.com and I will send you a book so that you can follow along. If you're going to follow along in the study and do it with us, then I want to send you this book. We'll be happy to do that.

Today we're in chapter 2 of 1 Thessalonians, verses 7-12. The very interesting thing about God's word is that any time we come to it we can experience God's speaking to us. The word of God becomes real to us and we're able to walk away with applications that we can apply to our own lives every day. Today I'm going to look at a passage of scripture, which uses a number of metaphors of the family. Paul is describing his relationship with the Thessalonians in terms of a dad and how he related to them as a dad and as a mom and as their brothers. As we do that, we're going to learn some very important things, applications as it were, about how we can relate together to each other as we are understanding and ministering and so on.

So what I want to do now is I want to show you the passage of scripture we're going to read. The passage just before this one is a passage where Paul is saying we didn't come to you as greedy people. We didn't come to you out of insincerity. We didn't come to you with selfish desires. But, here we go. Let's read it starting in verse 7. *Instead, we were like young children among you. That is we were innocent of these other kinds of things. But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. What a beautiful picture. So, being affectionately desirous of you* (listen to these endearing words, family kinds of words), *we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.*

For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. Note believers. He's speaking to Christians here and describing the relationship he has with them. For you know how, 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, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. Three things about the Father. He exhorted, He encouraged, and He charged you. We're going to look at all of those.

In fact I'm going to take you now to seven words or seven ideas in this passage. These seven ideas describe how Paul is relating to the Thessalonians. As we look at these seven words or ideas in this passage, we're going to learn how we are connected together as a family. We're going to learn how to relate to each other and our relationship together is significant and powerful. It's that relationship that we have with each other that is strategic. Because what that relationship does is that it helps us to embrace the closeness that we enjoy. That God is doing some good things in our lives and strengthening us and helping us. So we're going to learn how to relate to each other in an important way.

We're also learning how we can relate to each other in our understanding of parenting. So we're also going to take this application and we're going to apply it to parenting itself. So notice what Paul is doing in the passage. He's not just looking at ourselves here and our relationships together, but what he's doing is he's helping us to understand how we can be parents. Because he's assuming the family's relating in a particular way. So you want to look at that. I'm going to give you applications for the family in our marriage, parenting kind of relationships that describe the family.

The third category... And I'm actually making this on a chart. I'm going to show you in a minute. The third category is looking at God as our Father. I want to take you to some of these exact words that are in this passage and see how God uses those words to describe His working relationship or His loving relationship with us.

So the passage in 1 Thessalonians 2 has a number of family metaphors that make it interesting for us to then apply this in three ways. One is to our relationship with each other. Secondly, he's assuming a family, so we're looking at the family dynamic itself. And then we're looking at our relationship with God.

Let me show you the chart that I've created and we're going to go through this passage verse by verse. Notice in chapter 2 verse 7 it says these words: *Instead, we were like young children among you. But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.*

The idea of taking care of her own children, notice I've divided it into three different applications. So let's start in the middle as we will on each of these different pages. When we look at that word *thalpe*, taking care of, it is this idea of gentle warmth and reflects the idea when we come together as believers there's this gentleness that we share and we appreciate. So I'm going to show you all of these together in groups. But right now I'm taking them and we're showing them as they come in the passage. So bear with me as we jump through these different categories.

Go to the first category there, the one about parents, where it's talking about cherishing like a nursing baby. So I want to suggest that as you're working with your children in your family relationships, think about that word 'cherish.' That can be hard to do when your children are annoying sometimes or they're being rebellious or disrespectful. Those are challenges that we have. So think about that term cherish because we want to be able to cherish in those relationships. And actually it's the cherishing that we do that helps us to overcome some of those

other weaknesses and challenges. The idea here is that we are nurturing, we're cherishing. Like the Bible says – *Love covers a multitude of sins*. So think about the cherishing there and that will be strategic.

Over on the other side you see the category about the Lord and how we can focus in on Him. The same word *thalpe* is used of God and His relationship with us. Notice it there. As we think about the Lord, this is a description about marriage and husbands and wives relating together and now husbands love their lives in the same way that they nourish and cherish their own bodies, just as Christ does the church. So Christ cherishes us. I want you to think about this in terms that God is inviting. He wants you to come into the living room of His presence. He cherishes being with you. We'll look at that more as we go on and look at them together.

But let's go to the next verse here and see how the idea is developed in the next verse in verse 8. It says – *So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us*.

That word *dear* notice in the center column is the word loving or to hold dear. It comes from the word *agapé*. It's *agapeittoi* notice there. But it's the word *agapé*, which is this loving nature that we have toward each other. You know when I connect with many of you, either on the phone or I've even seen some of you in person this week (although we're keeping our social distance), there is an endearing quality there in our relationships together. So think in terms of that. The loving relationships that we enjoy, they're just endearing.

When you come to the parent idea here, this is the idea of expressing value. So one of the things you're going to see when I bring all the parent ones together is that expressing value is a strategic way that you're going to relate to your children.

And then go to the third column where it says – *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children*. Again, think about the family room of God and how He's there and inviting you into His presence and you're one of the beloved children. You are welcome there. And the word is the same word. It's *agapeita*, but the ending of the word in Greek is just a part of the word. The real word is *agapé*. God loves us. We're His beloved children. So I want you to think in terms of that word as you're drawing from this verse 8. You're seeing *agapeittoi*, this idea of holding dear or being dearly beloved.

Let's go to the next slide and this is verse 9. I'm just doing a survey of all of the verses and I'm going to put them all back together here for you in categories. Verse 9 says – *For you remember, brothers...* Now there's another family word. Okay we looked at the nursing mom picture and we liked that word because when you see a nursing mom there's just that cherishing. We encourage moms of course to breastfeed longer not just because of the nutrient value but because of the bonding that takes place, the cherishing that takes place. And now this term *brothers* is used to refer to the relationships that we enjoy in God's family.

It says – *As brothers we worked night and day*. Now that word is the word *ergon* as you see in the middle column below and that's the word 'serving,' to invest in the lives of others. When you come to church on Sunday morning, you want to do so in a way that's looking for ways to give

and serve. That's who we are. It's not just on Sunday mornings though. In the course of the week we're serving each other. You're making phone calls and talking to other people and sharing your concerns for them. You are in a number of tasks that people are doing right now in Calvary Chapel even this week to bless the people inside of our church. So we're serving together in that regard.

Go to the parent side now because they're assuming this kind of parent picture in this whole picture. You know if you're a parent that you work night and day. When you get up at night to care for someone, your child who is having a hard time sleeping and you get up, that is work. When you're at home working with your own kids while you're also trying to do your work for your business, that is work. It is work to care for kids and that's just part of the parenting job that we have. It is work night and day that we do.

Notice in the third column there it refers to God's work. It uses the same word *ergon* there. It says – *He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*. So very important. We'll look at that verse in a bit, but I just want you to see when we come into the family room part of that there's a work area there where God is doing a work in our hearts. We'll talk about that some more. But just picture this family room as we enter into it.

Let's go to the next verse. As we go into verse 10 you're going to see there another idea. It says – *You are witnesses...* Let me pause there. Save the word *witnesses*. We're going to look at it in verse 11, but I want you to know it's the same word here. That's just a parenthesis. We'll come back to the idea of martyr or *martus* and that's the word used here. But the word I want to focus in on in verse 10 is the word righteous. *You are witnesses and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers*.

Look in the middle column. He says we're righteous. There's this sense of an example. One of the nice things about working with Christians, being with Christians, solving problems with Christians is that there's an ethical consideration. There's a blessing that we enjoy because we share this *dikaios*. That's the word there. This righteousness. That's the main Greek word that's used for righteous. We share that in our relationships together. That's the center column is relationships together.

Go to the first column. Because when we look at parents, parents have to make choices based on convictions, based on what's right. Not just to make children feel good. We're trying to instill convictions in our children. We want them to know what's right, so we're developing that in them. We'll come back to that as we look at the whole picture.

But look at the picture of God. I've taken a verse from the Old Testament, which of course is written in Hebrew. So the Hebrew word is *tsedek*. It's the main word for righteousness in the Old Testament. It says – *The LORD (Yahweh) our God is righteous in everything he does*. Do you know what that does for us? When we come into the living room of God, we feel this sense of integrity, of faithfulness, of reliability because God is righteous. It's a beautiful picture of the Lord.

Alright. That's verse 10. We're going to go on now to verse 11 and 12 and I want to show you the chart there. Now notice there's three different parts here because the Father is characterized by these three things. It says – *For you know how, 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.*

Look at the center column the three words that are used. The Greek words are in parentheses there for you to write down on the side of your little note-taking book. It says care or *parakaleo*. To come alongside to help, to take time. So when we're with each other, that's the center column. When we're with each other, we're caring for each other, we're encouraging. That has the idea with words. We're using words to encourage someone. And then we're urging them. The idea is witness, *martus*, there. The idea is that we're a witness to something. We're telling people about godliness. When we come together we encourage each other, as we looked at before in the passage, about being imitators of God and then an example to others. We're all doing that and we're a witness to God's greatness. We usually talk about witness in terms on nonbelievers, but notice that we're even a witness to each other as we gather together.

Go now with me to the first column which is about the parents. And the parents...as you know parents come alongside to help children. There's that attitude of coaching that takes place. That parents speak words of encouragement and parents urge their kids to follow the Lord. That's all kind of assumed in this passage as Paul is taking the ideas of the family and applying them then in our relationships with each other.

But let's go now to our picture of God. Do you see in John 14:16 it says – *I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper.* That word *helper* is the same word *parakaleo* which means come alongside and help. See what God does is He cares for us by bringing alongside the Holy Spirit to provide that nurturing, caring component that we need.

The word 'encouraging' is a similar word used and notice the words that Jesus said that are just so encouraging for us. They say – *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* So there's this idea that we come into the living room of God to experience His comfort, to experience His encouragement. And notice in the last verse it says – *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* Jesus is the way. God is pointing the way. He's this witness to us so when we come to the living room, there's this continual pointer that directs us toward the way of Jesus Christ.

Now I want to take all of those words, all the things we've done just by taking observations out of the text and I want to join them together in groups. The first group that I want to do is the one that has to do with our relationships with each other. When you come to church you are on a mission. I want to encourage you when we are able to gather together again on Sunday mornings that you don't come to church just to get something. Yes, we do come and we experience the worship and the teaching and the fellowship and it blesses our hearts. But I want you to think in terms of coming to church, coming to gather with this sense of mission. That we're coming to give. We have something that we want to offer to other people. We want to contribute to other people's lives. We're loving, we're being gentle, we're being righteous, we're serving, we're caring, we're encouraging, and we're being this witness. All of the words that we talked about

describe how we relate together it's one of the benefits to being God's church and enjoying Him. That's how we treat each other. We come together on a mission.

Now I want to go on and I want to show you this next slide that really looks at our report card for us in family relationships. Think about your relationship with your husband and wife relationship, think about the children that you have in your home, and ask yourself how are you doing in these things. I would suggest that as we're cherishing and expressing value, as we're serving and having convictions and being caring and encouraging, all of those words really describe the kind of relationship we want to have with each other. That's particularly difficult when someone has been offensive in the family. When someone's done the wrong thing and the brokenness comes through and they've hurt someone or they've hurt you. When a child has been disobedient or rebellious. When a husband or wife have hurt their partner significantly. It's then when this love and this cherishing and these other words become so powerful and all for real things like forgiveness to take place in a family. The family is this great place that God uses for spiritual growth and sanctification to take place.

I want to draw attention to the last one on the list, the urging to live the godly life. Because that one is this expression of our task as parents. That probably your most important job is to help our children grow in their personal relationships with God and to understand Him in a very personal way. That's our goal is to urge people to live this godly life and it starts as we're nurturing children and growing them to understand what it means to serve God with all their hearts. That's work. That's not easy and it requires a continual dialogue with children. Not just about the facts of theology and about the Bible, but we're talking about building this nurturing understanding of what it means to walk with God, to come into the living room of God's presence and be close to Him and talk to Him in our lives.

Which leads me to the third idea here. I want to take each one of these expressions of God's relationship with us independently before I share this surprise with you that I promised I would present to you at the end of my sermon.

But I want to take each one of these, as you come into the living room of God's presence and I want to amplify them just a little bit to try to give you a picture of God. Because I think our tendency is to not think about God in the way that is described in this passage.

The first one is that God is loving and in John 15:9 Jesus is describing this love. He says – *As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Now remain in my love.* The word *remain* is the word to dwell, like dwell in a tent, to get into it, to live in it. Remain in my love. You see I think we have a tendency, as I put down there, we want to move on. God wants us to move in. We need to move into the living room of God's grace and His presence and recognize that He's inviting us in because He loves us in such a strategic way.

Let's go to the second element. God is gentle. The verses I want to read to you that are on the screen come from a story of when Saul was chasing David and David escaped from Saul and David was so grateful that he had escaped from the enemy. There's an invisible enemy attacking us now with this COVID situation, and we are in the midst of that attack. But we can come to God and recognize what David recognized and this is what he said in Psalm 18.

Who is God, but the LORD? That is Yahweh. Who is God but Yahweh? And who is a rock, except our God?—the God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless. He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me (look at this next phrase), and your gentleness made me great. Oh wow. I love that.

You know when someone is gentle with you, it just warms your heart. It just makes you feel good. In the case of coming into the living room of God, it's His gentleness that gives us this confidence and makes us great. We tend to think of gentleness as weakness, but God uses it to make us strong.

Let's go to the next one. The third one that's mentioned in the passage is that God is righteous. It says – *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* Now this is so important. Because when you enter the living room of God when you're invited into His presence, you experience unworthiness. Because you look at yourself. Who am I to come into the living room of God because of my sin? Because of my brokenness? Because of my failures in life? That unworthiness that you experience needs to be addressed and it is addressed in this passage. Because it says that we don't come into this living room because of our own righteousness. It says – *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

God welcomes us into the living room. He doesn't look at our sin because if we have trusted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior then we have that personal relationship with God and God looks at the relationship with Christ that allows us to come into the room. He does not look at our sin. He loves us. There is no reason to feel unworthy when you come into the living room of God. We tend to focus on our own righteousness, but God looks at the righteousness that He gives to us through Jesus Christ.

Let's go to the next slide, slide number 4: God works hard. You see in the midst of this we come into God's living room out of the righteousness of God, but God does not leave us alone. He wants to grow up. He wants to help us overcome brokenness. He wants to do things in our lives. He's working hard and that's what Philippians 1:6 says. *He who began a good work in you will carry it onto completion until the day of Jesus Christ.* He is working hard in your heart and my heart to create and recreate and overcome and build His grace in us in ways that He needs to do to help us experience the fullness of life. We tend to focus on the work we do. God focuses on the work He is doing in us.

Let's go to the next picture of God. As you enter into the living room I want you to see that God encourages us. In John 14:16 Jesus says – *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.* This is the Holy Spirit. That's the word *parakaleo* – the one who encourages, who comes into our lives, who comforts us. He's the one who supports us. So we're in the living room of God, but He's given us the Holy Spirit inside of our hearts to go with us wherever we go. So we walk around continually as the temple of God and we contain this Holy

Spirit that provides this continual confirmation that God is right there. We tend to focus on God as distant. God wants us to know that He is with us always.

I hope you're getting a picture here of God is welcoming you into the living room where you stay and you enjoy. You don't earn the right to get there. You come because of Christ's righteousness and God does something amazing in your life.

Let's go to the next slide, which is the one about God comforting us. I want to read the whole passage to you, not just the last part. Because I want you to see what Jesus is saying to the people about the Father. He says – *All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* That's these words of comfort that God gives us that allows us to come into the living room of God's presence and experience rest together. That's big. The living room of God or the family room of God is just this beautiful place where we can enjoy Him, enjoy His presence, and allow Him to do that work in our lives. We tend to focus on God's demands. He focuses on our rest.

Let's go to the last slide, number 7, that God points the way. You know that word *martyr* or *witness* is used in the passage. But God does that with us as well. He points us to the way. Because notice this statement at the bottom. We tend to believe there are many ways to God. God reveals that there is only one way and urges us to take that one way. Jesus says in John 14:6 – *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* God points the way through Jesus Christ.

Maybe you're here today and you've not yet received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. I want you to know He is the only way into the living room or the family room of God. There are so many benefits to coming into that room and enjoying God's presence and experiencing His comfort and His rest and His encouragement. It is really powerful. It's in the midst of all of the challenges of life, all of the things that are going around. We can come right into that center place, that place of the living room of God and enjoy Him in such a special way. That's what we're talking about here in this passage. The passage of 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 is just illustrating that loving family dynamic that exists in God's family, it exists in the home, and it exists in our personal relationship with God.

Well I told you I was going to share with you a surprise today and give you a gift. I want to do that. I'm going to give you a link in just a moment. It's a link to the song *It Is Well With My Soul* sung by thirty musicians during this time of social distancing, singing this song into their cell phones and the producer puts them together. But before I share with you, I want to share with you a little bit of history of the song itself.

It was written in the later 1800s by a man named Horatio Spafford. It's a very sad story that takes place because he sent his family over to Europe. He was going to go with them, but had to stay back, and he was going to take a ship later. He sent them over on a ship over to Europe where he was going to spend some time with them. On that trip over, his wife and his children were travelling and there was a shipwreck and the terrible storm and the children died in the storm and

his wife made is safely to Europe. It was a tragic, tragic event. Horatio Spafford came on the next ship to go over and as he's crossing over the Atlantic Ocean, as he's passing by that place where he knew the shipwreck took place, he wrote this song *It Is Well With My Soul*. So you can imagine the pain and the suffering that he was going through and how he was trusting God in the center place, in the midst of the storm, and enjoying God, and relying on Him and trusting in Him and saying, "It is well with my soul."

That's not the only part of the story I want to share with you. This video that I'm about to share with you came to me through Lloyd Pulley on March 31st last Tuesday. On that day he sent this video and he said in his email to us, "Guys, I just listened to this video. I turned my volume up, put on my headphones, and was lifted up into the heavens by its power." You'll experience that too as you listen to it. The very next day on April 1st Lloyd Pulley's son died in a car accident. So Lloyd, Karen, and their family are grieving over the loss of their son this week. It's all the harder to grieve in this period of time when we're social distancing and you can't have a real memorial service like you would otherwise. So it's a very meaningful song to me as I received it from Lloyd on that day and then knowing what's happening in his life and also knowing how it was created.

But it's a beautiful song because the power of the song comes through and these artists who have majestic voices, and the producer takes all of their voices from their cell phones as they sang the song into their cell phones, and he puts all thirty voices together into this beautiful song. I want to share with you the link to that so you can find this song. You may find the link right next to you in this Facebook. In just a moment I'm going to sign off and you can listen to that link on your own. Or you can go to our webpage takejesushome.com and in the middle picture there's a "learn more" button (learn more about Calvary). If you click on the "learn more" then it will go to this video where you can watch this. I would encourage you turn up the volume and listen to the majestic voices of these people as the message of the gospel comes through. You can come into the living room of God and enjoy Him. That it is in the midst of the challenges that we experience. It is well with my soul.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we want to thank you for your grace in our lives and for the power that we have and the great privilege it is for us to come into your living room and just enjoy you and appreciate you. Thank you for that close relationship we enjoy. Lord, thank you for our church at Calvary Chapel. I pray that you'd continue to help us to grow and to experience your grace as a church scattered and a church gathered. In Jesus' name, amen.