

1 Thessalonians 3:2-5

Richard Cimino
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The Unbearable Care pt. 2

1 Thessalonians 3:2-5

REVIEW

Last week we saw Paul's UNBEARABLE CARE for the care and feeding of the Christians in Thessalonica

Paul was so overcome by this care that

he couldn't bear to go any further without knowing how they were

he couldn't bear to go any further without sending someone to care for them and feed them

he would willingly and gladly be left behind alone by sending someone to them.



But Paul didn't send just ANYONE —

He sent HIS BEST MAN — his own son in the faith — Timothy.

Philippians 2:19-24 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. 20For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. 21For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. 23I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, 24and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.

If I can't be there in person — I will send the MOST valuable asset I have. If I can't be there I want Timothy to be there. He is the only one who thinks about you as I do. He is the only one who seeks the interests of Christ. SO — Paul SENT Timothy.

REMEMBER — Last week we learned that the word SENT carries with it the meaning of SENDING someone to DO something. Timothy is the SOMEONE that he sent. So this morning we continue our look at Paul's UNBEARABLE CARE by looking back into Verse 2 to see the SOMETHING that Timothy was sent to do.

1 Thessalonians 3:2 (ESV)to establish and exhort you in your faith,

Out of Paul's UNBEARABLE CARE for the spiritual well-being of the Thessalonians, Paul was willingly left behind alone in Athens. He sent his BEST man — Timothy — to do 2 THINGS

- ESTABLISH them in their faith
- EXHORT them in their faith

A.) Establish = sterizo (from histemi = to stand)

- means to make firm or solid or stable

- to cause to be inwardly firm or committed, to strengthen.

The basic idea is that of stabilizing something by providing a support or buttress (a projecting structure of masonry or wood for supporting or giving stability to a wall or building), so that it will not totter.

Sterizo is employed frequently in the context of someone in danger of falling.

(LXX) of Exodus 17:12 - But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported (sterizo) his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady (sterizo) until the sun set.

William Barclay –

Suffering of body and sorrow of heart do one of two things to a man. They either make him collapse – or they leave him with a solidity of character which he could never have gained anywhere else. If he meets them with continuing trust in Christ, he emerges like toughened steel that has been tempered in the fire.”

Satan wants to see us collapse in the face of affliction. God wants to use affliction to grow us and perfect us as we face that affliction with faith in Christ. Timothy's mission was to strengthen them in their faith!

KEY QUESTION:

HOW can WE (like Timothy) co-labor with God to ESTABLISH men and women in their faith in Christ?

REMEMBER – The BIBLE is the BEST COMMENTARY on the Bible.

1) By PRAYING for them

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 (NASB) and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you that He may establish (sterizo) your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 (NASB) Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen (sterizo) your hearts in every good work and word.

2) By POINTING then to JESUS

2 Thessalonians 3:3 (NASB) But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen (sterizo) and protect you from the evil one.

3) By the God of all grace working through suffering...

1 Peter 5:10 (ESV) And after you have suffered for 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.

4) By reminding one another to be looking and living for the Lord's return...

James 5:8 (NASB) You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

“be patient” - (makrothumeo - have a “long fuse”), especially with difficult people;

“strengthen your hearts, - (sterizo - aorist imperative Do it now - it’s urgent!, active voice = you make the choice to do this)

“for the coming (parousia) of the Lord is at hand.”

5) By giving to them the truth of God’s Word –

2 Peter 1:12 (NASB) Therefore, I shall always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established (sterizo) in the truth which is present with you.

Romans 16:25 (NASB) Now to Him who is able to establish (sterizo) you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ...

6) By coming alongside of believers –

PETER –

Luke 22:31-32 (NASB) Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen (sterizo - aorist imperative conveys a sense of urgency. Do it effectively! When the opportunity presents itself, don’t delay) your brothers.”

TIMOTHY –

1 Thessalonians 3:2 (NASB) and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen (sterizo) and encourage you as to your faith,

PAUL –

Romans 1:11 (NASB) For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established (sterizo)

It is God Himself Who ultimately strengthens and stabilizes us – But we see in the use of this word that the NT teaches God allows us to CO-LABOR with Him in this work.

THAT is the ESSENCE of ministry - It is a redeemed man or woman co-laboring with God!

1.) The PRIVILEGE of ministry

I’m going to co-labor with God in the nursery and toddlers today!

2.) The POWER of ministry

Co-labor = sunergos >>>> synergy

- the interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations or agents..... to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects

When a redeemed sinner co-labors with God there is an outcome that is beyond their own ability and power! In reality – there is no power for ministry apart from co-laboring with Jesus

John 15:5 (ESV) “Apart from Me you can do nothing.”

Romans 7:18 (KJV) “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing...”

SO we co-labor with God

- Through encouragement and prayer
- By reminding one another of the certainty of Christ's return

Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV) And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

- Sharing the truth of His Word (like Jesus did on the first Easter)

Luke 24:32 (ESV) Did not our hearts burn within us as He opened to us the Scriptures

ALL of which have a **stabilizing** effect on our faith

B.) ENCOURAGE parakaleo

- the basic idea of calling one alongside to help or give aid

REMEMBER – From chapter 2 we learned how in classic Greek parakaleo was used to describe the exhorting of troops who were about to go into battle.
means to make firm or solid

CRUCIAL OBSERVATION:

1 Thessalonians 3:2 (ESV) ...to establish and exhort you in your faith,

NOT to establish and encourage them about they way they FELT about their faith – or to help pump up a “feeling” of faith.

- Faith = pistis

The Biblical sense of this word:

is not just a belief in facts but personal trust in Jesus to save me

involves personal trust in a PERSON

to trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God.

In our culture TRUST may be the best reading of the word – Because in our culture it is common to “believe” something to be true – with no personal commitment or dependence involved in it. Paul sent Timothy to establish and encourage them in their faith for a reason

1 Thessalonians 3:3 (ESV) that no one be moved...

- Moved = saino
- equals Being carried away emotionally by circumstances be shaken, be disturbed, be unsettled

The word pictures one who has become so emotionally moved as to be shaken in his/her beliefs and even to give up his/her beliefs.

KEY QUESTION:

WHAT is it that can cause one to be so disturbed that he / she might be

- shaken in their beliefs

- moved to give up his/her beliefs.

1 Thessalonians 3:3 (ESV)...by these afflictions...

- Affliction = thlipsis
- to crush, press together

It conveys the idea of being squeezed or placed under pressure or crushed beneath a weight.

ILLUSTRATION – In ancient England – those who willfully refused to plead guilty, had heavy weights placed on their breasts, and were pressed and crushed to death.

The idea here is that of great emotional and spiritual stress that can be caused by external or internal pressures.

1 Thessalonians 3:4 (ESV) For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.

You KNOW this – We made it plain to you! No doubt – Paul had instructed them. Without a doubt he was the living illustration of it.

1 Thessalonians 1:6 (ESV) ...for you received the word in much affliction,...

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 (ESV) For you yourselves know, brothers that our coming to you was not in vain. 2But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi,...

A COUPLE THOUGHTS ON THIS

1.) In MUCH contemporary communication of the Gospel the Christian faith is set forth as the panacea – the cure all – for affliction

2.) Some view affliction as God’s punishment.

The Bible teaches NEITHER of these

YES – The Gospel promises a PEACE that passes understanding – a JOY that is UNSPEAKABLE and full of glory Life that is ABUNDANT.

And NO – We should not go LOOKING for this affliction

The Bible is very clear that God does NOT punish His children for their sins. Jesus was PUNISHED in our place. Wounded for our transgressions – Crushed for our iniquities – the chastisement for our sins laid upon Him. God’s loving discipline is NOT the same as punishment!

Sometimes we suffer because it is the inescapable consequence of our own disobedience.

CRUCIAL:

THAT is not the affliction Paul is speaking of.

The promise of the Gospel is that we would experience PEACE and JOY and LIFE while we are IN affliction! ON THURSDAY – I literally had just finished typing this thought into my notes at Peets when a sister who fellowships here at Metro waked in – She had a SMILE on her face – I said “hi” to her and she leaned in to me and said – “I can’t hear anything!” Very rare inner ear condition and through the treatment has lost her hearing! I looked at her and told her I would pray and she SMILED!

REALITY – The night before Jesus died He made this PROMISE to His followers:

John 16:33 (ESV) I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation (thlipsis). But take heart; I have overcome the world."

AT the end of his first missionary journey -

Acts 14:21-22 (ESV) When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra (where he had been stoned and left for dead) and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, (exactly what he sent Timothy to do here) and saying that through many tribulations (thlipsis) we must enter the kingdom of God.

Do you think they had any doubt as to what he meant as they saw the horrific wounds on his head and body from the stoning they KNEW he had experienced in their city?

NOTE WELL:

For many believers around the world, LIFE for them involves suffering every single day.

Suffering because of their faith doesn't surprise them. And THAT is why they look forward to heaven. Where there will be no more suffering and no more pain and no more sorrow!

But here in America – suffering is so foreign to us.

We have historically known NOTHING of the the crushing pressure of tribulation / affliction –

There are two outcomes from that –

1.) The moment we suffer the first thing we say is -

Lord, where is your love? How could you be letting this happen to me? I thought you were on the throne?

2.) The RETURN of Jesus for the Church – the HOPE of heaven – Biblical prophecy – are not burning issues in the hearts and minds of the average American Christian BECAUSE heaven is a distraction from all the comforts of HERE.

90% of the Christian world today is living in the face horrific affliction. For them - It is a different warfare there! THERE it is knowing in the face of war or famine that God loves them in those circumstances. HERE the warfare is waged in the realm of DEVOTION.

Because we have:

- so many distractions
- so many things that appeal to our flesh.

REMEMBER - Jesus tells us in the parable of the sower and soils that the Word of God is like seed. There is LIFE in the seed - there is POWER within it - and it is sown into the HEARTS of men and women, He said that the enemy comes to SNATCH it away so that it wouldn't bear fruit. He also described the way that some fall away when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word. Jesus said **when** tribulation arises, not **if**.

Faith will be tested.

Paul knew this. And as a good pastor – he warned the Thessalonians about the CERTAINTY of affliction!

1 Thessalonians 3:5 (ESV) For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you

Paul recognized that the tempter – Satan – wanted to exploit this season of suffering.

REMEMBER - The enemy KNOWS how to tempt us.

We need to know that we are constantly under the SCRUTINY and attack of our adversary.

REMEMBER - Satan testing *Job*.

God said - Have you CONSIDERED my servant Job?

Satan replied - Yes, I've been SCRUTINIZING him - like a military commander scrutinizing his opponent for weaknesses.

KEY APPLICATION:

If he sees you standing around the pornographic magazines in a store or surfing through pornographic website - he KNOWS your weakness. If he sees you stopping off for a 12 pack he KNOWS your weakness. If he sees you blowing your top - he KNOWS your weakness. He knows what fire to feed. He knows what suffering he can exploit!

So - Paul is concerned for them!

1 Thessalonians 3:5 (ESV) ...and our labor would be in vain.

Paul did NOT want their labor in Thessalonica to be in vain. When they came to LABOR in Thessalonica they arrived there beaten and bruised for their labors in Philippi. They suffered persecution in Thessalonica too. So Paul sent Timothy to them.

- to KNOW OF THEIR FAITH!
- to KNOW that they were still STANDING in the faith and in the grace of God.
- To ESTABLISH them in their faith so they wouldn't collapse in the face of affliction!

In our next study we will see HOW Paul's UNBEARABLE CARE for them moved him to PRAY for them – And WHAT he prayed out of his UNBEARABLE CARE for them

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