

1 Thessalonians 3:6-10

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Sunday Morning
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“Comfort for the Crushed”

1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

REVIEW

We have spent a couple of weeks unpacking the record of Paul’s CARE for the believers in Thessalonica found in the beginning in 2:17.

1 Thessalonians 2:17 (ESV) But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face,



A care that centered upon the AFFLICTION (Thlipsis – crushing affliction) that the new born Christians in Thessalonica were facing. Remember (Acts 17:5-10).

Acts 17:5-10 (ESV) And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, 7and Jason has received them (Paul - Silas - Timothy), and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” 8And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. 9And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. 10The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.

It was a care that became UNBEARABLE – So UNBEARABLE that Paul tried time and again to return to them. But at each attempt Satan HINDERED him – like an army tearing up a road to prevent the opposing army from advancing

Finally – that care came flooding in upon them like the wind and rain flood into a house when the roof is torn off by hurricane force winds. And Paul, Silas and Timothy were moved to act selflessly and sacrificially for the welfare of the Thessalonians. They sent SOMEONE to do SOMETHING – leaving Paul alone in Athens.

The SOMEONE was his best man – his “son in the faith” – Timothy

The SOMETHING – 3:2-3; 5

1 Thessalonians 3:2-3,5 (ESV) and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, 3that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this...5For 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 and our labor would be in vain.

As we pick up in v.6 Paul has left Athens — Gone to Corinth (*Acts 18*) where Timothy returns and tells Paul about the spiritual condition of the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 3:6-8 (ESV) But now that Timothy has come to us from you (at Corinth), and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you— 7for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. 8For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.

TWO THINGS TO NOTE:

1.) All the while that Paul was filled with that UNBEARABLE CARE for the Thessalonians because THEY were facing DISTRESS.....

Paul, himself, was being CRUSHED — facing his own DISTRESS and AFFLICTION! A new word for us here — DISTRESS. Primarily the INWARD response to OUTWARD forces.

Job 27:9 (NASB) "Will God hear his cry, when distress (Lxx = anagke) comes upon him?"

Psalms 31:7 (NASB) I will rejoice and be glad in Thy lovingkindness, Because Thou hast seen my affliction (thlipsis); Thou hast known the troubles (Lxx = anagke) of my soul,

Psalms 107:6 (NASB) Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He delivered them out of their distresses

Psalms 119:143 (NASB) Trouble (= thlipsis) and anguish (= anagke) have come upon me;

CRUSHING circumstances producing DISTRESS

REALITY — THLIPSIS (*affliction*) is a GIVEN in the Christian life. Jesus made this clear *John 16:33* ..In this world you will have THLIPSIS..

Paul had made it clear vs. 3-4

1 Thessalonians 3:3-4 (ESV) that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. 4For 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.

Romans 8:35 (ESV) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

Romans 12:12 (ESV) ..be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

REALITY — THLIPSIS is especially a given for the man or woman serving the Lord. THAT is why Paul said — I will ENDURE all THINGS for the sake of the elect.

NOTE: ENDURE and THINGS

The word ENDURE tells us that the THINGS are not good things.

You don't ENDURE your honeymoon.

You don't ENDURE a week at the beach.

You don't ENDURE a steak and lobster dinner (unless you're a vegan).

It is AFFLICTION — and the DISTRESS that follows — that we must endure

2.) The SOURCE of COMFORT for the CRUSHED servant.

FIRST — The MEANING of COMFORT

- Parakaleo — We have seen this word already in our study — but a quick refresher
- To call one alongside to help or give aid
To comfort or encourage in a way to give them new heart.

QUOTE: One Greek historian uses parakaleo in a most interesting and suggestive way. There was a Greek regiment which had lost heart and was utterly dejected. The general sent a leader to talk to this regimen. He spoke with such purpose that courage was reborn and a body of dispirited men became fit again for heroic action. And so in classic Greek parakaleo was used of exhorting troops about to go into battle.

POINT:

Timothy's report not only brought comfort to Paul — but it gave him Paul fresh courage for the ministry.

KEY QUESTION:

WHAT was it that conveyed comfort to Paul — enabling him to march on into battle? It doesn't say that he was comforted because he got a 3 month furlough to Maui, a better home, or car that helped to distract him somewhat in the midst of his crushing affliction. Nor did the church in Antioch give him an increase in missionary support. NONE of THOSE things would or could truly comfort him because - NONE of those things was the essence of real life for him.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (ESV) So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Romans 14:17 (ESV) For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit

1 Thessalonians 3:6 (ESV) But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news...

The CRUSHED servant was COMFORTED by good news.

*Proverbs 25:25 (NASB)
Like cold water to a weary soul, so is good news from a distant land.*

WHY was Timothy's report GOOD NEWS?

WHY did it COMFORT Paul?

1 Thessalonians 3:6-8 (ESV) The good news of your faith and love and reported THAT you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you— 7for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. 8For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.

Paul was comforted — he even said NOW WE LIVE — because Timothy brought him word that the Thessalonians had not failed under testing were standing firm in their faith CONVINCING Paul that their conversion was genuine and they were God's elect — his labor was not in vain.

1 Thessalonians 1:4 (NASB) knowing (absolute beyond of a shadow a doubt knowledge), brethren

beloved by God, His choice ("election") of you.

THIS was written after Timothy returned to Paul.

As parents — Valerie and I are happy when our children succeed and are in good health. But if Deb and Wells became famous and successful in the world of fashion design but became disinterested in spiritual things... Or if Daniel Lanois invited Sean to be his guitarist but Sean stopped reading his Bible.. We would be CRUSHED — we would be less alive — if they walked away from Christ. As servants of the Lord — Valerie and I share the same heart with Paul concerning you!

Spurgeon -

Never is the servant of God so full of delight as when he sees that the Holy Spirit is visiting his hearers, making them to know the Lord, and confirming them in that heavenly knowledge. On the other hand, if God does not bless the word of his servants it is like death to them. To be preaching and to have no blessing makes them heavy of heart: the chariot-wheels are taken off, and they drag heavily along: they seem to have no power nor liberty.

WHAT is it that COMFORTS you — MAKES you LIVE?

IF - it is an earthly value system THEN it will be earthly things that COMFORT and VITALIZE you. (good luck on that lifestyle)

But if it is the GLORY of God and the EXALTATION of Jesus in the saving and preserving of souls THEN It will not be the value of your stocks or the equity in your house that comforts you. It will be the good news of souls saved — souls continuing in Christ — souls bearing fruit — that will COMFORT you when you are DISTRESSED and CRUSHED.

1 Thessalonians 3:9-10 (ESV) For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, 10as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?

KEY OBSERVATION #1 -

He prays for them. Paul was a man of prayer

1 Thessalonians 1:2 (ESV) We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers

Colossians 1:3 (ESV) We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,

Philippians 1:3-4, 9 (ESV) I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy,...9And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,

Ephesians 1:16 (ESV) I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,

Ephesians 3:14 (ESV) For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,

And on and on and on.

1 Thessalonians 3:10 (ESV)..earnestly night and day ...

KEY QUESTION:

Was all of this praying done in a room alone, or in a prayer meeting? Perhaps some of it was - but no doubt

the vast majority of it was done while traveling or making tents!

KEY APPLICATION:

Jesus said in Luke 18 that we ought to ALWAYS PRAY

We should avail ourselves of those times set aside for prayer here at Metro. Like Paul - we can do it when driving, while at work.

CRUCIAL POINT:

What an UNDERVALUED thing prayer has become in the Church in 21st century America. (Not in times past - NT – not today in India or China or Africa).

CRUCIAL QUESTION:

HOW VALUABLE is prayer? All we have to do to answer that is look at the NATURE of prayer and the COST of prayer. Look at the NATURE of prayer - what it is.

Prayer is coming before the throne of the living God - the creator of the universe - for a private audience.

Look at the COST of prayer. What did it cost for you and me to have the privilege of asking God to take away a headache? We have this access ONLY because of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

Ephesians 2:13; 18 (ESV) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.... 18For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. .

Ephesians 3:12 (ESV) in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

ACCESS = access entrance based upon privilege.

BOLDNESS = freedom to speak.

KEY POINT:

BECAUSE of what Jesus accomplished on the cross on our behalf - We can in a moment come before the creator of the universe and SPEAK with Him and ASK of Him.

KEY APPLICATION:

You can actually be a part of what God is doing – right in your car – or in your shower – or at your desk.

The FAILURE of the Church to pray lies in great part on the FAILURE of the believers to appreciate those realities (Ignorance and Indifference)

KEY OBSERVATION #2 -

WHAT it is he prays for them? –

1 Thessalonians 3:10 (ESV) ..see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith

For all that he sees that COMFORTS and VITALIZES him – Paul understood that: there was still work that the Lord wanted to do in their lives. NONE OF US are a finished work on this side of heaven. There is never a time to say – “I’ve arrived – I lack nothing”

NEXT WEEK we will finish Chapter 3 by walking around in his prayer for them

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