

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 31ST, 2021 // BOOK OF 1 THESSALONIANS

UNWAVERING (1 THESSALONIANS 3:1-5) "WHEN I COULD NO LONGER STAND IT"

Paul shares his genuine love and concern for the people in Thessalonica. The deep care he had for them and the desire to know how they were doing moved him to send Timothy to them.

- For the sake of the Thessalonians, Paul was again willing to make a sacrifice and be alone in Athens.

SENDING TIMOTHY

Timothy was sent with a couple of tasks to accomplish in Thessalonica. He was to strengthen (or establish) them, then he was to encourage them.

- Encouragement has to come after we are established in the right direction, because the opposite causes us to be encouraged in the wrong direction.

Timothy's ministry was to establish and encourage the Thessalonians so "that no one would be shaken by these afflictions."

- This gave them what they needed to endure their present hardships. **Without truth concerning the place of suffering in the life of the believer, we all are in danger of being shaken in our faith.**

APPOINTED TO AFFLICTION

Paul tells the Thessalonians, concerning afflictions, "we are appointed to this," meaning their present sufferings were in God's control and a normal part of the Christian life.

- Affliction is just part of following Jesus, therefore Paul recognized that Christians are appointed to suffer. **The symbol of Christianity is the cross, not a La-Z-Boy recliner!**

Affliction does not mean that God is angry with us. Though some suffering can be avoided by obedience to God's word, some suffering is necessary to teach us.

- Jesus was taught in the same manner. "Although He was the Son, he learned obedience from what He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8).

God means to teach us perseverance, obedience, how to comfort others, and deeper fellowship with Jesus in trials.

- "We rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope" (Romans 5:3-4).

FALLEN AWAY?

Paul was fearful that the Thessalonians may abandon their faith during their affliction, so Timothy was also sent to check on them.

- He recognized that the tempter, Satan, wanted to exploit this season of suffering and undo the work that Paul had done there. Jesus described the seed that withered under the heat of trials (Matt. 13:1-23).

STRENGTHENED (1 THESSALONIANS 3:6-10)

ENCOURAGING REPORT

Timothy had returned to Paul with good news about the faith and love of the Thessalonians.

- Despite their afflictions, they had remained faithful to God, and the love that Paul felt for them was reciprocated. They had not believed the false rumors but held Paul in high regard and wished to see him as well.

The affliction and distress that Paul was feeling in Corinth was relieved by this news of the Thessalonians.

- Paul gained a renewed strength and a freshness of life because of the faithfulness of the Thessalonians to "stand firm in the Lord." **Connection to the body causes us to share in the burdens and victories together.**

THANKS TO GOD

Paul recognized that he could not take any credit for the Thessalonians perseverance through suffering but gave thanks to God for strengthening them.

- He also gave thanks to God for the joy they experienced because of the Thessalonian's faith that allowed them to endure persecution.

PRAYERS TO GOD

Though Paul was relieved by the news and grateful for their perseverance, he recognized that they still had a need for further instruction.

- Paul prayed that God would provide the opportunity for them to see each other face to face in order "to complete what is lacking in [their] faith."

We do not know exactly what was "lacking in their faith," but we do see that they were not fully developed in knowledge and understanding.

- We should always be teachable, willing to grow in knowledge and understanding, while realizing our spiritual progress will never be completed until Christ returns.

OVERFLOWING (1 THESSALONIANS 3:11-13)

PAUL PLEADS WITH GOD

Paul recognized that Satan hindered his plans to return to Thessalonica (2:18), but ultimately it is God who directs his path and if He wills, a way will be provided for him to return.

- So, Paul pleads with God, asking that He direct his path back to the people in Thessalonica.

LOVE EVERYONE

Paul wished that the Thessalonian Christians would show love for one another and for everyone.

- This love starts amongst brothers and sisters but must go out to everyone. Jesus told us that our love is lacking and shallow if we only love those who love us also (Matt. 5:46-47).

Notice how Paul says, "**may the Lord cause you** to increase and overflow with love for one another and for everyone."

- The type of love we are being called to, which loves everyone, is only possible through the Lord. **We are incapable of radically loving everyone without the example and the power of God.**

Jesus taught that love is what identifies us as being a Christian. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

- "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1Jn 4:20).

Paul, in typical fashion, says, "to love everyone, just as we do for you."

- Paul once again sets himself up as an example to be followed on how to walk out the type of love they have been called to. As Christians, we should love in a way that we can invite others to, "Love other people just the way that I do."

ADDRESSING THE HEART

This plea from Paul that the Thessalonian's hearts would be blameless in holiness, is a call to be set apart from the world.

- This speaks to the importance of addressing what's on the inside. We cannot develop a holy exterior while neglecting the interior, like whitewashed tombs, full of death (Matt. 23:27).

COMING OF OUR LORD

Paul reminds the Thessalonians, and us, of Jesus' return. We are to walk in holiness with an expectation that the Lord will return, but a readiness that says "Lord, come now!"

- "For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2).

PROPER BALANCE

- We must approach people with a proper balance of truth and love. All truth without love is legalism. All love without truth is liberalism. **We must strive for neither of these!**
- **Are we teachable in our affliction?**
- **Are we willing to be sent to help others in their affliction?**

TRUE LOVE

- **Are we asking God to give us the ability to love everyone, even our enemies?**
- **Do we love without hypocrisy, selfish motives, reciprocation?**
- "Love your enemies, **do** what is good to those who hate you, **bless** those who curse you, **pray** for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27-28).
- **"Let us not love in word or speech, but in action and in truth" (1 John 3:18).**