

1 Thessalonians 2.17-3.13

Standing with Jesus

I had GREAT PLAN to Spend Entire Summer in BJ as a NEW Pastor here

Study thru Paul's Letters to Thessalonica > LEARN and APPLY

We'd meet each SUNDAY in Raycom Bldg A – New Digs for ZGC!

Here we are in good old Bldg C > I am making PLANS to LEAVE for Month

(Coming back in mid-August – Necessary to go USA for VISA Acquisition)

ALL of us SIMILAR Stories --- What we HOPED for and what HAPPENED

There is NOT ALWAYS a PERFECT FIT – Man's Plans / God's Providence

1. Plans: *Life looks Great...on Paper!*

a. Wanted to Remain

STRATEGIC City of Thessalonica > LEADING City in Province of Macedonia
Envisions as MISSION BASE – Like Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, Antioch

they came to Thessalonica...Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures...Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women Acts 17.1-4

Great RESPONSE to Gospel > Church FORMING > Needs TEACHING
Paul believes JESUS will USE THEM to CHANGE their CITY

But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here...They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus." When they heard this, the crowd and the

city officials were thrown into turmoil. Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go. As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away... Acts 17.6-10

MISSED Paul > SEIZED Key FOLLOWER > HOSTED Mtgs in HIS Home
 Dirty TRADE for Jason > If PAUL LEAVES CITY > Jason RELEASED
 PAINFUL – Paul NEVER ALLOWED to RETURN to THESSALONICA

2.17 Brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought)

b. Wanted to Return

2.17,18 out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again

African Young Man wrote LOVE Letter to his SWEETHEART

“Nothing can STOP Me from COMING to You – Not even LIONS!”

But He NEVER Arrived – Came Day Later – “It was RAINING!”

NOT Empty WORDS > Paul’s INTENSE Desire to SERVE and Support THEM
 STRANGE Word > lit. Paul is LUSTING to See them – PASSIONATE Concern

3.11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you.

c. Wants their Respect

STRONG & COURAGEOUS Leader like Paul > DEEP Emotional Attachments
 Not just GOSPEL MACHINE, or COLD THEOLOGIAN – REAL, Feeling, Man

3.1-3 So when we could stand it no longer...We sent Timothy...to strengthen and encourage you in your faith

Seems Paul waited ON PINS & NEEDLES – ANXIOUS ANTICIPATION!

3.6-9 But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you...For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?

GOOD NEWS > Only time in NT > EVANGELIZED

THEIR Faith ENERGIZES Paul's Faith > Lived & Died w/ their Ups & Downs
OVER the MOON > Work of God Alive – FAITH toward God / LOVE to Man

PAUL > Have you LOST IT!?! Our JOY, HOPE, PEACE in GOD ALONE!

UNHEALTHY to get so CLOSE – even DEPENDENT – on PEOPLE

NO Question – Paul's ULTIMATE Hope in God, not MAN

Also GAVE SELF w/out RESERVATION to Man – Poured his LIFE in Them

UNRESTRAINED Giving to People > CLOSER to God > More LIKE JESUS

Want to be LIKE JESUS > like Paul > LOVE People – even When HURTS

Even those HURTS build Spiritual HEALTH! Send us to GOD our COMFORT

The best way to help yourself in the Christian life is to help others. Yours Truly

the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, *so that we can comfort those in any trouble* with the comfort we ourselves have received from God

2 Corinthians 1.3,4

Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 3.13

Someone comes to me with DOUBTS – I ask about their SERVICE for Christ
Those BUSY helping others NO TIME to dwell on their OWN TROUBLES

2. Pain: *Those Bumps along the Road can Hurt!*

a. Separation

1) from Thessalonians

Paul described his LOVE for them as DEEP and SINCERE

2.8 We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because *you had become so dear to us.*

As CHURCH Planter was MORE than just a TALKER > was Mother & Father

2.7 we were gentle among you, *like a mother* caring for her little children

2.11 we dealt with each of you *as a father* deals with his own children

PROBLEM with People who Move Around World – Third Culture Kids

Hesitant to make DEEP CONNECTIONS – Pain of Saying GOOD-BYE!

2.17 we were *torn away* from you > STRONG Word – ONLY Time used in NT

Lit: ORPHANED! Separated FORCIBLY, UNNATURALLY, PAINFULLY

PARENT who LOST his CHILDREN > RIPPED Out from his ARMS

Of what fiery warmth is this! Never could either mother or father, yea even if they even met together, and comingled their love, have shown their affection to be equivalent to that of Paul. Chrysostrom

2) from Timothy

3.1,2 So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith

SILENCE Intensified Paul's ANXIOUS Concern for their WELFARE

Young People see PAIN of your PARENTS when you DO NOT Communicate SACRIFICED for his KIDS > ALONE in IDOL INFESTED City of ATHENS

SENT his BEST to Thessalonians > NO ONE as LOYAL at Timothy

Not JUST Paul's Companion > GOD'S Fellow Worker – Gospel of God JESUS

Paul thinks that ministry is a cooperative venture between God and some humans, and the latter have the inestimable privilege of working not only for but with God in spreading the Good News.
Ben Witherington III

Paul wrote their MACEDONIAN Neighbors in PHILIPPI

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. *I have no one else like him*, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.
Philippians 2.19-21

b. Satan

2.18 For we wanted to come to you...but Satan stopped us.

Speaks MATTER OF FACTLY about Real Person who Resists Work of God
Not from SKEPTICAL – SCIENTIFIC – MIRACLE-DENYING Society
Does NOT Clarify HOW the ADVERSARY Hindered work of GOSPEL

‘Stopped Us’ lit CUT IN our WAY // Guy who Pushed into Subway before You

? RELIGIOUS Attacks? / ? POLITICAL Opposition? / ? PHYSICAL Affliction?

3.5 I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you

It was FOLLOWING Jesus that brought TROUBLE to the Thessalonians

EASY & IMMEDIATE Solution would be to DENY Jesus & DECLARE Caesar

SATAN had NOT Forced them to Make that FATAL MISTAKE

RECOGNIZES Devil but does NOT RETREAT from him > STANDS in Jesus

Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. *Resist him, standing firm in the faith* 1 Peter 5.8,9

c. Sufferings

In that CULTURE > RELIGION should bring POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES
TRIALS they were ENDURING may mean they had made MAJOR MISTAKE

1991 IRON Curtain FELL > SOVIET ATHEISM was proven BANKRUPT
Followers of Jesus entered Central Asia > GOOD News of JESUS CHRIST
Great INTEREST > Many Evidences of FAITH > Churches Planted & GREW
TODAY > Interest DECLINING > Churches SHRINKING, some CLOSING
FALSE Expectation > SAVIOR would replace BROKEN STATE
HEALTH Care – EDUCATION – COMFORTABLE Life come from GOD
MANY – esp former Muslims – LOST Families, Jobs, Homes, Properties
Jesus was NOT the SUGAR DADDY they EXPECTED

Churches GROWING Biggest in Central Asia > offer Health, Wealth, Prosperity

Gospel of PROSPERITY quite DIFFERENT than Message of PAUL

3.3,4 ...so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that *we were destined for them*. In fact, when we were with you, *we kept telling you that we would be persecuted*. And it turned out that way, as you well know.

The WARNING was OFTEN on Paul's LIPS

Jesus never hides his scars to win disciples.

James Boice

I have *often told you* before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Philippians 3.18

d. Shipwreck

3.5 I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.

...fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith

1 Timothy 1.18,19

NOT Sure to FIT Seemingly CONTRADICTIONARY Ideas in Theolog System

But our SYSTEMS must SUBMIT to Scripture > Come FROM Scripture!

...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus

Philippians 1.6

Could Paul's labor really have been in vain?...The answer seems two-fold. On the one hand, these words only make sense if the possibility exists, on the other hand, Paul has such confidence in God regarding his converts that it would be unthinkable to him that the potential would ever be realized. Gordon Fee

3. Peace: *God's plans are Best*

a. **Patience** > just a 'season of an hour'

2.17 brothers, when we were torn away from you *for a short time*

Letter written SOON After his DEPARTURE from Thessalonica

May have SEEMED like FOREVER > But KNEW God's Time was BEST

For our *light and momentary troubles* are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 2 Corinthians 4.17

b. **Power of Word and Spirit** > almost FEEL the GREAT RELIEF of Paul

3.6 Timothy...has brought good news about your faith and love.

...your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ 1 Thessalonians 1.3

our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction 1 Thessalonians 1.5

2.13 ...the word of God, which is *at work in you who believe*

Paul's Last Words to the ELDERS of Ephesian Church were CONFIDENT

He was LEAVING them but he had LEFT THEM WITH the Word of God

"Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." Acts 20.32

Here, then is the double commitment of Christian pastoral leaders, first to the Word of God (as stewards and heralds) and secondly to the people of God (as mothers and fathers). John Stott

c. Prayer

3.10 *Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again*

NOT an IDLE Prayer > Paul could MULTI-TASK > Talk to God and Tent-make

2.9 *we worked night and day* in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

CALL Upon God & CARRY Out his Daily Tasks/ WORSHIPS as he WORKED

pray continually

1 Thessalonians 5.17

Lived Every MOMENT in the CONSCIOUS Presence of Omnipresent God

Every time Paul prayed to God, there was an acknowledgement of God's priority over everything else...bringing our vision and desires into line with God's will.

Michael Holmes

FIVE Years LATER – Prayer Answered – VISITED 2 X's on 3rd M Journey

3.10 and supply what is lacking in your faith > RESTORE, EQUIP, COMPLETE

Fisherman repairing Nets –Surgeon setting Bone –Politician reconciling Factions

If we learn to pray with Paul, we will learn to pray for others. We will see it is part of our job to approach God with thanksgiving for others and with intercessions for others...our profound desire to seek what is best for the people of God.

D.A. Carson

3.11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you.

WANTS Very STRONGLY to Go > But SUBMITS to GOD – Father AND Son

Him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. Revelation 3.7

IN Prayer FIND Peace and CONFIDENCE in God's POWER & PRESENCE
BALANCE between PRAYER and our PARTICIPATION > God works IN Us
Put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then Ephesians 6.13,14

d. Present before Jesus...with Others

AWARE of Satan but ADORATION is for Jesus

Sovereign Plan of Jesus > STANDING NOW in the Presence & Power of Jesus

2.19,20 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

Paul's MATTER OF FACT ref to JESUS as GOD and Coming KING

JOY in this WORLD & GLORY in NEXT > Connected to Thessalonians

YOKED Together with Paul through GOSPEL by the SPIRIT

They were CROWN – Laurel Wreath of VICTOR in the GAMES

POSITIVE Pastoring – They are HIS JOY – NOW and FOREVER!

He yearns for them in part because, as his converts, their steadfast loyalty to Christ means that his own life has counted for something. Gordon Fee

NO Followers – No Fruit – his Ministry would be considered a FAILURE

3.9 How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?

PRESENCE and GLORY of Jesus NOT ONLY Something in DISTANT Future
In the FINAL Day > Pray you'll NOT be ALONE

MOST of all LORD JESUS > “yeah, I know him...He's mine”

Also NECESSARY > Someone Else “Yeah, he got me HERE!”

3.13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

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17 Brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. 18 For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan stopped us. 19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? 20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

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6 But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. 7 Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. 8 For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. 9 How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? 10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. 12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. 13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.