

SPARE TIME THOUGHTS OF A FULL-TIME PAUL I THESSALONIANS 2:17 - 3:10

We have learned that the theme of this book is EXPECTANT LIVING - A life awaiting Christ that pleases Him. In 5 chapters Paul gives the five aspects of this kind of living.

1. Ch. 1 - It starts by being BORN RIGHT and thus he teaches there are those elements of true saving faith.
2. Ch. 2 focuses upon being NURTURED or DISCIPLINED RIGHT.
3. Now our text this evening bridges the nurturing and leads us to the 3rd chapter's theme, BEING ANCHORED RIGHT.

Paul wants to teach nurturing by example and to help the saints to be firmly grounded or anchored. The Apostle gives us a slice out of his very personal life and shows us his activities while on standby - what he did while he was WAITING. Have you ever thought of how valuable those unplanned times of unexpected waiting can become?

- Its when someone doesn't show up for the appointment times.
- When your car isn't repaired by when you were told.
- It's those layovers at airport times.
- Sometimes its a Hospital and doctor's waiting rooms times.
- It's waiting to get picked up at work or school times.
- Just plain old waiting time that Paul models the best use of.

Now let's set the scene. In I Th. 2:17 it says Paul was bereft awhile, then in 3:1, he was left at Athens alone. So as we start this section remember, Paul left Thessalonica, and was at Athens alone.

Turn to Acts 17 and lets see the big picture of I Thessalonians and Acts.

- v. 1 Came to Thessalonica.
- v. 10 Sent away amid problems
- v. 16 Paul waiting
- v. 17-34 Paul ministering
- 18:1 goes to Corinth

Now back to I Thessalonians.

The setting is, Paul is WAITING at Athens - He MINISTERS - Done - goes to Corinth.

This passage 2:17-3:10 is his testimony to them of what a spiritual giant does and what we should emulate... seven pursuits of godly men and women in their spare time.

Paul directs his heart and mind toward his ministry to these saints... Things he did while waiting and out of their presence.

What a blessed endeavor to model in our lives... use those spare time thoughts for God!

REMEMBER, WE ARE READING THEIR LETTER!

Here we go...v. 17 has the first of 7:

- I. Paul remembers you as beloved family
 - A. The saints were his closest family
 - B. Orphaned is a strong word, "bereft" Out of sight did not mean out of mind.
 - C. Paul said v.7. He was like a mom and v. 11 a Dad - so they were family and he had a great desire to see them. Christian togetherness the most often prayer request in the N. T.
 - D. So, #1 Paul says - In my in-between times I think of you, my beloved family. Most get depressed. Paul got uplifted. Alone when God takes all away so he closes.
- II. Paul says in v.18 I spent time contemplating your spiritual battlefield.
 - A. Paul describes Satan's tactic as thwarting believers. EGKOPTEIN is a military word for a roadblock placed to stop an army in march; also, it is an athletic word "to cut someone off in a race setting".
 - B. LESSON ONE. Paul was aware of Satan's activity:
 1. 1 Thessalonians 3:5 For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain. (NKJV)
 2. 2 Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard [you] from the evil one. (NKJV)
 3. 2 Corinthians 4:4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. (NKJV)
 4. Ephesians 2:2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, (NKJV) So, Paul was aware of Satan's devices, but -
 - C. LESSON TWO. Paul didn't blame everything on the Devil! Paul saw divine hindrances as well as diabolical. Acts 16:6-7 Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. 7 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. (NKJV)
 1. Paul was prevented from ministry in Asia and Bythinia.

2. Hindrances to your well-intentioned plans are sometimes divine and other times Satan's!
 3. Paul now focuses on his third pursuit in his spare time in v. 19-20.
 4. Paul says [1] I think of you as my beloved family. [2] I think of you as involved in spiritual warfare and [3]
- III. I THINK WITH ANTICIPATION OF YOUR HOMECOMING.
- A. Did you hear that? Paul didn't look at them as they were -- but like they will be. Paul said you are:
 1. My hope - that's your anticipation
 2. My joy - that's fulfillment
 3. My Crown - that's final victory
 - B. Paul looked at life and death and saw ultimate joyous victory in the well done of God on a life poured into others. He measured life and estimated its worth by the only things you can take with you - others! Think about that. Dan 12:1-2, "turneth many". Quickly now. Paul's 4th pursuit

#452 "Make me a blessing!"