

# **SPARE TIME THOUGHTS OF A FULL-TIME PAUL: HOW TO TURN SPARE TIME INTO GOLD I THESSALONIANS 2:17 - 3:10 PART TWO**

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
- IV. Paul says, I have times of concern for your needs. v. 1-8. He saw they:
- A. Needed encouragement [1-2]
1. Paul "stretched" to the limit in heart
  2. He must encourage his chosen
- B. Needed enlightenment [3-4]
1. They must realize affliction comes with the gospel
  2. They also must see Paul inherited a legacy of suffering kingdom. KEIMAI = immovable, unchangeable divine appointment.

3. "Affliction" no accident, but a very necessary part of man's life. I Pet. 5:6-9
- C. Needed endurance [5-8]
1. To resist the tempter v. 5.
  2. In their living testimonies v. 6.
  3. In their growing faith v. 7.
  4. In their firm stand. v. 8.
5. So Paul focused on definite needs and did something about it!
- V. Paul has a 5th pursuit - PAUL SAID I AM THANKING GOD FOR YOU [v. 9]
- A. He saw God's hand in saving them
  - B. He saw God's image implanted
  - C. He saw their worth because of that
  - D. He saw his account with God blessed by them
  - E. What are the last two?
- VI. I pursue directed praying for you, Paul said v. 10a
- A. What kind? Most earnestly [NAS] exceedingly [AV]
  - B. It's huperekperrisson I Th. 5:13 Very highly - strong adverb.
  - C. Paul meant business - he knew God asked us to pray to accomplish His will and glory and he did it earnestly!
- VII. And one final pursuit #7. Paul says I have [v.10b] one last spare time desire that fills my heart for you... I WANT TO SEE YOU COMPLETE
- A. I expect God to finish the job of equipping/mending you!
  - B. Render complete KARTARTIOZO equipping, mend nets Matthew. 4:21; Gal. 5:1 Restore; Hebrews 10:5 prepared; Hebrews. 11:3 Framed - supply what's missing.
  - C. Lacking HUSTEREMA come/left behind - despite all great achievements still needed to press on to mark, vital to start with praise, continue with need...
  - D. None of us have arrived, we all are following after Christ to be what He wants... Don't fall behind, be all He wants you to be by His power.
  - E. Well Paul - what do you do in your spare time? I practice this love for you that makes me have:
    1. FAMILY THOUGHTS 2:17 Warm thoughts of you as my family
    2. BATTLE FIELD THOUGHTS 2:18 Memories that we are in spiritual battle
    3. HEAVEN THOUGHTS 2:19-20 Great anticipation for your homecoming
    4. THOUGHTS OF YOUR NEEDS 3:1-8 Concern to meet your needs

5. THOUGHTS OF THANKSGIVING 3:9 Thanks to God for you
  6. THOUGHTS OF SUPPORT 3:10a Earnest times of prayer for you
  7. THOUGHTS OF MATURITY 3:10b Expectations for your growing in maturity!
- F. That's Paul's example to them! Let's heed this word and pursue these things today!

Think with me where you show up on a diagnostic test that detects this deadly condition called overload. Do you have any of these symptoms?

ACTIVITY OVERLOAD - we book our lives weeks into the future and often in the desire to be more efficient we book several things into the same time period. "Activity overload takes away the pleasure of anticipation and the delight of reminiscence." God says be still and know Me...Ps 46: 10

CHANGE OVERLOAD - "nothing defines our age more than the furious and relentless increase in the rate of change," summarizes historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. For thousands of years of recorded history change came in a slow, controlled and understandable rate, now we are brutally jerked forward at warp speed whether we like it or not. God says seek out the old paths where you find rest for your soul ...Jer 6: 16

CHOICE OVERLOAD - "In 1978, there were 11,767 items in the average supermarket; today [1992] the number is 24,531." This includes over 186 different choices of breakfast cereal you can find at your grocery store. A satellite dish can serve you up 1,500 movie choices per month. Futurist Allan Toffler warns, "We are , in fact, racing toward 'overchoice' ". God says seek Me first and most Mt. 6: 33

DECISION OVERLOAD - "every day we have more tough decisions to make and less time to do it in. The trivial ones are objectionable just because of how many there are [what flavor, which topping, mint or tartar control, low fat, low sodium, diet or regular...] But we also are facing new choices generations past never dreamed of: whether or not to wait to have children; whether to move and change jobs; whether both dad and mom should work outside the home; whether we should put grandma in the home or not. Too many decisions trivial or not in too short a time is vintage overload." If thine eye be single...Mt 6: 22

FATIGUE OVERLOAD - we are a tired society. Even leisure is often exhausting. With our generator indicator flashing discharge it's little wonder our batteries are drained. Our weary, withered state is not God's plan. It's not the fault of activities or friends, it's the result of overload. Jesus said rest for our souls...

HURRY OVERLOAD - "haste is a modern ailment. It is also fashionably American. Our lives are nonstop, lived at a breathless pace. We walk fast, talk fast, eat fast and then excuse our selves by saying, 'I must run.'" Alexander Solzhenitsyn accusingly said, "Hastiness and superficiality - these are the psychic diseases of the 20th century". Wait patiently for the Lord...Psalm 25:5; 27:14; 37:7,9,34; 62:5; 123:2

INFORMATION OVERLOAD - a single edition of the NY Times has more information than a seventeenth century Britisher would have encountered in a lifetime...

MEDIA OVERLOAD - 98% of Americans have TV; the average US home has 2 and both are on 7 hours a day...

I.

- II. Finally, SEVEN KEYS to find spare time to turn into gold invested with God. Tonight what can we do to start turning more of our time into gold? Here is a short list. Try some of these:
- A. EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED. Start some spare time by adding 15 to 20 minutes to activities and events you plan to do.
  - B. LEARN TO SAY NO. There are many good things that we must learn to say no to each day.
  - C. TURN OFF THE TV. While you are in the habit of saying no try the object that consumes 15 to 30 hours of a normal Americans week. Be abnormal and turn it off!
  - D. PRUNE ACTIVITY BRANCHES. One writer compares life to a tree. We have our family limb, our church limb, our job limb, our neighbors and relatives limbs. From these grow various commitments called activity branches. They grow and grow. Our lives go faster and faster until we have no spare time. Prune them. Cut them back until life slows down. Even if its painful. We do too much extra at work, church and so on that isn't the better part as Mary chose. Prune.
  - E. SIMPLIFY. Try to cut back on the complexity and maintenance of things. If we spend all our time with things how can we find time for the only part of life that lasts forever - people?
  - F. CUT THE CHAINS OF TECHNOLOGY. We easily get under the control of our tools. Try to turn or take off your beeper, cell phone, clock, alarms, faxes and telephones for a day, then try a week. Just as fasting from food purifies the body, so fasting from technology purifies the soul and purges the restlessness we pick up from society.
  - G. THIN THE CALENDAR. Did you know that anticipation enhances enjoyment? And memories are sweet when they are relished?

Too many back to back events drowns the anticipation and the memories.