

1 Thes 3:1-13 A PASTOR'S DEEP LOVE

PRELIMS. We can see from this chapter alone, that Paul was **not** a **cold-blooded** theologian without a heart (as some think he was). He had a warm heart and loved those he ministered to with a deep love. There was a **bond** between him and his readers. What we learn in this chapter should be applied to **all Xns** for we are **all** in some kind of **relationships!** A relationship is a trusting

WHAT WAS IT THAT PAUL COULD NOT BEAR

He could not bear being “**torn away**” from those he was **united** with in Christ! Look at what he wrote “*since we were **torn away** from you...we **endeavored the more eagerly** and with **great desire** to see you **face to face**”[2:17] Paul was **desperate** to see them in the **flesh!** He remembers how he had left them so suddenly, and was **bundled away** by his friends in **secret**, at **night** to Berea! [Acts 17:10]*

The **believers** in Thess were being **persecuted** by the Jews, so much so that the friends of Paul **insisted** on, and **assisted** in, his immediate and sudden overnight **escape** - how lovely of them! It seems that Paul **felt** bad about the way he left them! **Perhaps** even **guilty** about leaving them to the mercy of their persecutors! In fact some of Paul's enemies were saying this very thing, that his sudden departure from Thess meant he did not really love them! Satan ensured Paul would be troubled by this thought and harassed him often with it. That was why Paul assures them that he “**wanted to come**” to see them “*again and again - but **Satan hindered**” him from getting there!*[2:18]

However, Paul was also very concerned about their **spiritual state** since he left. **Did** the persecutions cause them to **abandon** the faith? Were they **growing** in faith and knowledge despite the difficulties? Were they “*moved by these afflictions*”? So Paul now comes to the point where he says he “*could bear*” this **ignorance** about their **spiritual** state “**no longer**” - so he had to do something about it - this: I am **sending** you “*Timothy, our brother and **God's** co-worker in the **gospel** of Christ*”[2] He will let me know about you!

APP Have **you** got this concern for **your loved ones** who are

‘separated’ from you? Are you worried about how they are doing spiritually? Do you long to hear some positive signs that their faith is still holding up? You see, **if** you are **not concerned** about the spiritual welfare of your loved ones, you are **very likely** not concerned about your **own growth** and **maturity** in the Lord! Friends, we have to **grow** and **mature** in the Lord! If we are not growing we are going back the way! Xnity is **not** a **stagnant** thing! Xnity has **vitality** and life and dynamism! It **pushes forward**!

Paul was **prepared to endure** being “*left behind in Athens alone*” [1], than not hear some news of their spiritual welfare. Paul did not enjoy Athens - he was so upset at what he saw there “*his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols*” [Acts 17:16], but nevertheless, he was willing to endure it in order to hear how his Xn brethren in Thess were doing! **APP** ?!

PAUL’S EMPHASIS IN HIS MINISTRY

Now what do **you** think Paul **emphasised** most in his ministry - especially to **new believers**? What aspect of the faith would you think he focussed on? Well, he tells us here what he “*kept telling*” them! It was not that the Xn life was full of never-ending joys! On the contrary “*when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction*”[4]

Now Paul is **not** a ‘wet blanket’, or a ‘prophet of doom’! Paul is **not** saying ‘Look, I warned you, life is going to be terrible now’. No, Paul is using the fact that they went through hardships and **still remained faithful**, as a matter for **praise** and **thanksgiving**! Look:- “*What thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel?*”[9]!! What does Paul mean? This: You are true Xns! If people, because of their faith, go through hardships, and **still remain faithful**, then surely they have something **more** than a **superficial** faith! Surely they must have something with **substance** - something with **meaning/significance**! Because no one **continues** holding on and trusting in something that on the surface looks **ineffective** unless they are **convinced** there is something solid **underneath**! ****Despite Paul** being the **source**, and the **one person** who brought this gospel

to them - they still **loved** Paul! If it were not for Paul they would **not** have had to suffer the difficulties they were in. And yet they still **loved** Paul! In fact, Paul said “*you always **remember us kindly and long to see us***”[6b] They **wanted** Paul **back**! Isn’t that **lovely**!

What **means** did God use to **strengthen** the Thess’s faith in God? One was Paul’s **prayers** for them! “*as we **pray most earnestly night and day***” [10] and “***constantly mentioning you in our prayers***”[1:2]! God **always** uses means. Sometimes by a miracle, but that is so rare! God’s usual method is through the **prayers** of God’s people - that some way would be opened **in Providence**!

Listen to his request from the Cols “***pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison***”[Col 4:3] Note how Luke **described** the way God worked with the Apostles on their first missionary tour: “*they declared all that **God had done** with them and how **He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles***”[Acts 14:27] Yes, there were miracles, but the **whole mission** was upheld **daily** in prayer by the Church! They were **sent out** with prayer and fasting [Acts 13:3]

APP Do you know anyone going through a hard time? Do **you** pray for them - ie, for their **faith** to be **strengthened** in the trial? In times of difficulties, **Satan** is **more active** than normal! It was Satan who “*hindered*” Paul several times from going to meet the Thess earlier! [2:18] It is important that when trials come on believers, that they are **supported in prayer**. *Satan makes things **worse** than they are. Satan specialises in **exaggerating** and **exacerbating** a situation! He makes you think of all the **possible tragic** things that **could** happen! Satan is at his **strongest** when Xns are going ‘thru the mill’! He is **encouraged** and gains strength when he sees believers struggling!

This is what **true fellowship** is all about! Praying for one another in our time of need. You can be a **great blessing** to someone miles and miles away from you - **if** you are praying earnestly for them! This is the **bond** that Paul had with the Thess! He suffered with them. **Always remember** this - if you suffer with someone, and you have **prayed** for them - you will yet **rejoice** with them! You will meet

them in heaven and you will rejoice together.

PAUL'S PRAYER for THEM

Now Paul was a **conscientious** pastor! He was not satisfied with just knowing they still believed and loved the Lord. He knew they must **go on** from there! He wanted to meet with them in **order to** “*supply what was **lacking** in your faith*”[10] He knew they were not perfect, some things were lacking. He knew they had to **develop** and **mature!**

What was lacking? Surprisingly it appears it may have been love to one another! Paul prayed: “*may the Lord make you **increase and abound in love for one another***”[12] In the **next** chapter he says “*Now concerning **brotherly love** you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been **taught by God** to love one another, for **that indeed** is what you **are doing** to all the brothers in Macedonia. But we **urge** you brothers, to do this **more and more***” [4:9,10] They do seem to have love for each other, but perhaps Paul recognised some things which could, if not prayed about and ‘spiritually monitored’ could develop into ‘fall-outs’!

APP Important for **us** as a congregation to **pray** for each other, **naming each of our names before God!** That itself will **help** us to have more love for each other! Prayer **creates** a **bond** between people - that was why it was a **wrench** to be **torn away** from them!!

What **motivated** Paul? How did he have so much **energy** regarding his responsibilities? This: His **belief** in a **future accountability!** We live in an **age** where there is **little accountability!** Paul believed he would have to give an account of his stewardship of the gospel, so he wanted to **establish** their “*hearts **blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ***” [13] Paul believed in a **Day of Reckoning**, therefore “*Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone...that **we may present everyone mature in Christ***”[Col 1:28] + “*I charge you in the **presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom***”[2Tim4:1] **Let us pray for each other by name at the throne of grace!