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A Heart Of Sacrifice

1Thes 3:1-5

Paul the apostle as a loving Father was besides himself, in view of no knowing the spiritual state of the Thessalonians.

The apostle's attempts to return had been hindered by satanic influence, so now he communicates to the Thessalonians about his alternate plan of sending Timothy. 3:1-5

The plan of Paul was evident of his sacrificial loving care for the Thessalonians and it marked by three elements.

- I. The crisis: How it came about. vs. 1
- II. The commission: Why Timothy was sent. vs. 2-4
- III. The concern: What Paul wanted to know. vs. 5

I. The crisis: How it came about. vs. 1

A. The pressure was unbearable. vs. 1a-b

- 1. The circumstances were out of their control but not God's. vs. 1a
 - a. The word "Therefore" looks back to the preceding section.

b. They had been taken away suddenly but only in physical presence not in heart. 2:17-18

2. The conditions had reached such a critical point, that Paul says, "When we could no longer endure it". vs. 1b

a. They felt as parents bereaved of their children.

1) The word endure "stego" originally meant to cover or protect with the idea of bearing with and putting up with.

2) The word is used of Paul of not taking money for the gospel, enduring all things to not hinder the gospel. 1Cor 9:12

3) The word is used of agape love bearing all things. 1Cor 13:7

4) The word is used only two other times. 3:1, 5

b. They had been hindered by Satan in their attempts to return twice. 2:18

1) Paul had attempted to return, knowing the infancy in Christ.

2) They came to a point in time when they could no longer tolerate it or allow it, without doing something, present tense.

B. The plan was unselfish. vs. 1c

1. The evidence of being unselfish is in the phrase “we thought it good”.
 - a. Paul is using the plural pronoun “we” for a collective agreement or singular for himself.
 - b. The evidence is confirmed in verse five as Paul says, “When I could no longer endure it, I sent to know you faith”.
 - c. Though it is possible that the meeting at Athens was made collectively, yet Paul as the leader was the one who decided.
2. The evidence of having the interest of the Thessalonians in mind is in the words “good” and “left”.
 - a. The word good “eudokeo” is a compound word.
 - 1) The word “eu” well and “dokeo” to think.
 - 2) The idea is to prefer and choose rather with kindness as the motive for the decision.
 - 3) The choosing in other words, was not in view of their best interest but the Thessalonians!
 - b. The word left “katoleipo” means to leave down, abandon behind.
 - 1) It is used of severing one’s self from parents at marriage. Eph. 5:31

- 2) It is used of Jesus being left alone as the men who accused the women caught in adultery dispersed on by one. Jn. 8:9
- C. The place was ungodly. vs. 1c
1. Paul was in Athens.
 - a. The city was world famous but at this point though still admired it was living on it's past glory.
 - b. The city was the intellectual and artistic capital of the world.
 - c. It was the home of famous lawyers, historians, stage drama, poets, philosophers and orators such as Pericles, Demosthenes, Sophocles, Socrates and Plato to name a few.
 - d. The universities were still highly regarded by all.
 - e. The city was infested with 30,000 gods represented by statues of stone, wood, silver and gold and their accompanying temples.
 - f. One well known was the temple of Athena, the Parthenon on the Acropolis, the goddess of art and wisdom after who the city was named and is known as Ninerva in Latin.
 - * Xenophon the historian said, “The whole of it is one offering to the gods”.

2. Paul would be encountered by two groups of philosophers.
 - a. The Epicureans school came to be in 340-270 B. C., they believed that the creation happened by chance.
 - 1) They denied life after death.
 - 2) They were materialists and pleasure was their pursuit of life and tranquility.
 - 3) They denied punishment after death, they were allot like the Sadducees.
 - b. The Stoics were named after the founder Zeno who taught from a porch in 340-265 B. C.
 - 1) They were Pantheistic, identifying God with the material universe as a force embodied in nature.
 - 2) Everything happened by God's will and therefore were fatalist and pessimists who exalted reason and virtue.
 - 3) They were unemotional and indifferent to pain and pleasure.
 - c. Their ridicule of Paul was due to the fact of the resurrection.
 - 1) They called him a “babblers”, which meant a seed picker, one who would lounge around the market place picking up scraps.

- 2) Their plan was to bring Paul to the Areopagus.
 - * The Areopagus was the hill as well as the Supreme Court of Athens, it was the very place where Socrates was condemned.
- 3) Their appraisal was that it was some strange thing to their ears, therefore they wanted to know what those things meant, for they their time in nothing else but either to tell or hear some new things.
 - * The description sounds allot like the people of the United States of America today!
3. Paul was willing to be left alone at Athens knowing the Thessalonians would not be alone!
 - 1) Still acting as a faithful nursing mother to them. 2:7
 - 2) Still willing to impart to them not only the gospel but his very life because they were dear to him. 2:8

Illustration

The Chinese character for “crisis” represents two things, danger and opportunity. So it is with every crisis God allows and brings into our lives; the danger is that we will not respond in the Spirit but the flesh. The opportunity

is that we will see God work His way in faithfulness.

Application

1. What are some areas or events that have become crisis in your life unable to bear them anymore?

- a. Your marriage?
- b. Your children?
- c. Your inability to forgive someone.
- d. Your possible loss of a job, forced early retirement?
- e. Your refusal to deal with a particular sin or sinful life-style?

* God wants to bring you to the end of yourself and the beginning of life in the Spirit! Zach. 4:6, Eph. 5:18

2. Who is the one who gets the usual benefits by your decisions in life in general but especially in times of crisis?

- a. Regarding your family, is it you or them?
- b. Regarding other, is it you or others?
- c. Regarding ministry, is it you or others?

* The old man is everpresent and everwilling to live for himself, if we allow him. Rom. 6:6, 11

3. What has been your plan, has it been like Paul's?

- a. Has it been to abide in Christ and draw from Him? Jn. 15:4
- b. Has it been to be unselfish deny yourself and preferring others before you? Phil. 2:5

- b. Though dangerous as the crisis may be, it offers a great opportunity to see God work and to be transformed more into His likeness. Phil 2:3-5

The crisis of life will reveal who is living our lives, us or Jesus!

II. The commission: Why Timothy was sent. vs. 2-4

A. The person Paul was going to send was Timothy. vs. 2a-c

1. Timothy and Silvanus had met Paul at Athens, even as Paul requested that those who escorted him out of Berea to Athens, have them come to him with all speed. Acts 17:14-15
2. Timothy had been sent to Thessalonica from Athens and Silas to Macedonia, most likely to Philippi, so that Paul indeed was alone at Athens as he has just stated.
3. Timothy and Silvanus both met Paul at Corinth, after their missions, at which time Timothy delivered the report of the Thessalonians. Acts 18:5

* There is no contradiction between Acts and Paul's letter, only that Paul is giving greater detail which Luke omitted, supplementing the account.

4. Paul calls him our brother.
 - a. The word brother “adelphos” means from the same womb.
 - b. The apostle and Timothy had experience the same spiritual birth from above.
 - c. Those who are born into the family of God are equal in standing, even as Paul places Timothy on the same level.
 - d. Paul uses the word nineteen times in the epistle.
5. Paul calls him our minister of God.
 - a. A minister “diakonos” literally means one who run errands or a wait on tables.
 - b. Timothy was an errand boy for God as a spiritual waiter, feeding the people of God.
 - c. The word is used for the church office of deacons.
 - 1) They were chosen in the early church to serve the Hebrew Grecian widows. Acts 6:1-4
 - 2) They are to serve by qualification. 1Tim. 3:8
 - 3) Those who honor God are those who see themselves as God’s servants who run His errands.
6. Paul calls him our fellow laborer in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- a. The phrase fellow laborer “sunergos” means co-laborer, companion in labor, a helper.
 - 1) He was one of many servants.
 - 2) He had particular spiritual gifts.
 - 3) He had a specific call of God.
 - 4) He was not in competition with any other servant.
 - b. The phrase identifies Timothy with the same message of the gospel of Christ.
 - 1) Timothy was like Paul, he preached not himself, as servant of God.
 - 2) Paul calls the gospel of Christ.
 - a) “Our gospel” 1:5
 - b) “The gospel of God”. 2:2, 8, 9
* Timothy means he who honors God, this is a type of person that God uses and sends out.
- B.** The purpose for sending Timothy is two-fold. vs. 2d
1. To establish them in their faith.
 - a. The word establish “sterizo” means to set fast, solid and fix.
 - b. The idea is of undergirding those who are spiritual babes in the faith for stable perseverance. 3:13
 - 1) This comes by teaching the word. Eph. 4:11-16

- 2) The milk of the word for infants and solid food for the mature. Heb. 5:12-14
- c. The word is used by Jesus when he told Peter He had prayed for him and when he was restored after his denial, he was to strengthen your brother. Lk 22:32
- d. The faith is personal “your faith”.
 - 1) The faith speaks of their trust and confidence in Christ for their salvation before God.
 - 2) The faith is synonymous with the gospel of Christ and the gospel of God.
 - 3) The task was to aid each individual not just the elite.
- 2. To encourage them in their faith.
 - a. The word encouraged “parakalesai” means to call along side.
 - 1) The idea being to help to give comfort.
 - 2) To move forward in their faith in a stable progress.
 - 3) Insuring that they are not being hindered, gripped with fear, in order to be obedient to the word.
 - b. This is the responsibility of spiritually mature and seasoned young men and fathers.

- 1) The encouraging comes through establishing them concerning their faith by teach the word, this leads to encouragement not the reverse!
 - * Testimonies are not wheat, you can not grow by them!
 - 2) Encouragement without the teaching of God’s word is worthless, for the Holy Spirit will not bring to your mind what you have not studied or know!
 - * We are both exhorted and commended to obey, yield, fight, walk, press on, resist, believe and trust.
- C. The particular focus to be communicated by Timothy. vs. 3-4
- 1. To re-assure the Thessalonians in view of their sufferings. vs. 3
 - a. Timothy was to instruct them that no one should be shaken by these afflictions. vs. 3-a
 - 1) The word shaken “saino” originally meant to wag and was used of a dog wagging its tail, the idea is of agitation and motion.
 - 2) Timothy was going to tell them not to be moved or disturbed by the pressure, anguish and trouble by the teach of the Scriptures.

- * The word for afflictions “thlipsis” means to cause pressure and use for the crushing of grapes! 1:6, 3:3, 7
- 3) Remember the only thing they possessed was the Old Testament Scriptures, not the New Testament.
 - * It was full of the testings and afflictions of God’s people, such as Daniel.
- b. Timothy was to re-instruct them that they knew that believers are appointed to this. vs. 3-b
 - 1) The word appointed “kimai” literally means to lie outstretched.
 - a) It is used of a city “set” on a hill. Matt 5:14
 - b) It is used of Jesus “lying” in a manger. Lk. 2:12
 - c) It is used of the body of Jesus that “laid” in the tomb. Jn. 20:12
 - 2) They knew the believer is stretched out as a target of attack, for this reason they are not to be shaken!
 - a) Jesus said, “In the world, you shall have tribulations but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. Jn. 16:33
 - b) All that live godly shall suffer persecution. 2Tim. 3:12

2. Timothy was to remind them they had told them beforehand. vs. 4a
 - a. They had told them repeatedly when they were together with them at Thessalonica that they would suffer tribulation.
 - 1) The pronoun “we” refers to all Christians, Paul, his friends and the Thessalonians.
 - * The suffering is not due to culture, race or anything else but their spiritual identity with Christ!
 - 2) The word tribulation comes from the word “thlibo”, which again means to press together and cause pressure and is used of crushing grapes. 1:6, 3:3
 - 3) Paul told the converts in the first missionary journey, “We must enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation, Paul told the new converts on his first missionary journey”. Acts 14:22
 - b. They remind them of their own sufferings which they saw them go through. vs. 4b
 - 1) At Philippi, being beaten and imprisoned. 2:2
 - 2) At Thessalonica chased out. Acts 17:5-9

Illustration

Have you noticed the difference it makes to a child during a time of discomfort and difficulty if his father or mother is there just to speak to them and comfort them, yet nothing of the situation has changed at that point.

* So is Timothy to the Thessalonians!

Application

1. One key ingredient that no church can be effective without is men and women who are qualified and faithfully proven to be ministers of God.

- a. Like Timothy, having a good reputation from those who know them. Acts 16:2
- b. Like Timothy who was proven through time with Paul. Phil. 2:20
- c. Like Timothy who counted the prize, even to be imprisoned. Heb. 13:23

2. Another key ingredient for a healthy church to bear with the difficulties that will come is ongoing teaching of God's word to insure the ongoing growth, development and maturity of every believer.

- a. The purpose of the church is to mature the saints. Eph 4:11-16
- b. The believer is born into warfare and equipped for it. Eph. 6:10-18
- c. The war is winnable, it is a good warfare. 2Tim. 4:7

3. The most basic principle within the Scriptures that we need to remember is that tribulations will only transform me to be more like Christ, developing perseverance, character and hope. Rom 5:3-5

- a. We are not to think it strange concerning fiery trials. 1Pet. 4:12
- b. We are promise to never be tested beyond our ability to endure it but with every testing, shown the way of escape. 1Cor. 10:13
- c. We are not to loose heart, even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day...2Cor. 4:16-18
- d. We are told that these sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us. Rom. 8:18

The commission of sending Timothy was to point them to Jesus!

III. The concern: What Paul wanted to know. vs. 5

- A. To know the state of their spiritual condition. vs. 5a-c
 - 1. He once again mentions the crisis of unbearable pressure in anxiety for them. vs. 5a-b

- a. Paul is concerned about them as people not just numbers in evangelism.
- b. Paul was torn up. 3:1
- 2. He sent Timothy to know their faith. vs. 5c
 - a. He wanted to know how they had responded.
 - b. He wanted to know if they had responded in view of what they had been taught and received, turning to Christ and His Holy Spirit or not.
 - c. The word “faith” is key to the letter.
- B. To know the outcome of Satan’s attack. vs. 5d-e
 - 1. Their resistance to the enemies temptations was not automatic.
 - a. The tempter is Satan, as the source of the attack!
 - 1) Satan hinder the apostles. 2:18
 - 2) Satan is the prince of the air. Eph. 2:2
 - 3) Satan is the god of this world. 2Cor. 4:4
 - 4) Satan is as a roaring lion. 1Pet. 5:8
 - 5) Satan is able to transform himself into an angel of light. 2Cor.11:14-15

- b. The word tempted “peirazo”, means solicit to do evil. 1Chron. 21:1, Job 1-2, Zach. 3:1
 - 1) As he did to Eve in Genesis, “Has God said..throug subtle craftiness. 2 Cor. 11:3
 - 2) As he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Matt. 4:3
- d. He tempted married people at times by depriving one another sexually. 1 Cor 7:5
- 2. Their response to enemy could of made the mission a failure. vs. 5e
 - a. The word labor “kapos” means to toil hard unto exhaustion. 1:3, 2:9
 - 1) Their labor speaks of the work of the gospel being proclaimed to them.
 - 2) Their labor speaks of their work of teaching them after being saved.
 - a) The work of ministry is thought by many onlookers as easy.
 - b) The work of ministry from the perspective of some, is that anyone can do it.
 - b. The word vain “kenos” empty, fruitless, useless or ineffective.
 - 1) Paul has already stated that it was not fruitless but a mission accomplished. 2:1, 13-14

- 2) Their labor might be in vain if Satan had been successful.
- 3) For anyone to say that there was no possibility of failure is denying the aorist tense that indicates the anxiety regarding the potential.

Illustration

In a diary entry, Jim Elliot, the Auca Indian martyr, wrote, “God, I pray Thee, light these idle sticks of my life, that I may burn for Thee Consume my life, my God, for it is Thine. I seek not a long life, but a full one, like You, Lord Jesus.” #828 *The Bible Friend*

Application

1. We need to be concerned about people’s spiritual condition and back it up by investing our time and energies into people, particular Shepherds.
 - a. Paul demonstrated this in his going away speech to the Ephesian elders. Acts 20
 - b. Peter warns Shepherds of this responsibility. 1Pet. 5:1-4
* Timothy was such a man. Phil 2:19-22
 - c. Keep I mind that a Shepherd can not speak to every person in the church not visit them, not can the ministers on staff but they should be available at the church for those who want to come in.

2. We need to be concerned about people’s response to the enemies attacks.
 - a. Not to pry into people’s lives or rule over their lives.
 - b. But to encourage and pray for them and with them.
 - c. To warn them of the subtlety of Satan and his emissaries who can transform themselves into angels of light. 2Cor. 10:13-15
* Satan goes about as a roaring lion. 1Pet 5:8
3. We need to rejoice and give God the glory through the victories in people’s lives.
 - a. When member of the body suffers, we all suffer and when one member rejoices, we all rejoice. 1Cor. 12:26
 - b. When Paul received the good news from Timothy, he rejoiced. 1Thess. 3:7-10

The concern of Paul was to know if they had survived Satan’s attack!

Conclusion

The sacrificial loving care of Paul for the Thessalonians is three elements.

- I. The crisis of life will reveal who is living our lives, us or Jesus!
- II. The commission in life is to point people to Jesus!

- III.** The concern of believers is to know if others have survived Satan's attacks!