

9/21/25

A Heart Of Sacrifice

1Thess. 3:1-5

Paul the apostle as a loving Father was be-sides himself, not knowing the spiritual state of the Thessalonians.

* The attempts of the apostles to return had been hindered by Satan, so now he communicates to the Thessalonians about his alternate plan of sending Timothy. 1Thess. 3:1-5

The plan of Paul was evidence of his sacrificial loving care for the Thessalonians, characterized by three things.

- 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. 1Thess. 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. The three missionaries had 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 for 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. 1Thess. 3:1, 5

b. The three missionaries had been hindered by Satan in their attempts to return twice. 1Thess. 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 or allow it without doing something, the present tense.

B. The plan was unselfish. vs. 1c

- 1. The evidence of being unselfish is marked by the phrase "we thought it good".

- a. Paul is using the plural pronoun “we” for a collective agreement or singular for himself. vs. 5
- 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 “to be left”.
 - a. The phrase “we thought it good” is one word in Greek “eudokeo” and is a compound word.
 - 1) The word “eu” well and “dokeo” to think, decide or determine.
 - 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 own best interest, but the Thessalonians!
 - b. The word left “katoleipo” means to leave down, abandon behind.
 - 1) It is used of severing one-self from parents at marriage. Eph. 5:31
 - 2) It is used of Jesus being left alone with the woman accused of being caught in the very act of adultery, as all the men dispersed one by one. Jn. 8:9

- C. The place of Athens was ungodly. vs. 1c
 - 1. Paul arrived to Athens and was left “in Athens alone.”
 - a. Timothy had been sent back to Thessalonica from Athens and Silas to Macedonia, most likely to Philippi.
 - b. The city was world famous, but at this point though still admired it was living on it's past glory.
 - c. The city was the intellectual and artistic capital of the world.
 - d. It was the home of famous lawyers, historians, stage drama, poets, philosophers and orators such as Pericles, Demosthenes, Sophocles, Socrotos and Plato to name a few.
 - e. The universities were still highly regarded by all.
 - f. The city was infested with 30,000 gods represented by statues of stone, wood, silver and gold and their accompanying temples.
 - g. 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.
 - h. 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 materialist, pleasure was their pursuit of life and tranquility.
 - 3) They denied punishment after death; they were a lot 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 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 "babbler", which meant a seed picker, one who would lounge around the marketplace 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 spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or hear some new things.
 - * The description sounds a lot 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!
 - a. Still acting as a faithful nursing mother to them. 1Thess. 2:7
 - b. Still willing to impart to them not only the gospel but his very life because they were dear to him. 1Thess. 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 will in our lives faithfully.

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 into early retirement?
- e. Your refusal to deal with a particular sin or sinful life-style?
- f. Jesus wants to bring you to the end of yourself to live life in the Spirit! Zech. 4:6; Eph. 5:18
 * “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit”
- 2. Who is the one who gets the usual benefits of your decisions 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 serving Jesus?
 * The old man was crucified when we repented no longer being slaves of sin nature, but we must reckon the Old man dead to sin nature daily, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. For it is everpresent and everwilling to live for self, if we allow him. Rom. 6:6, 11
- 3. What has been your plan, has it been like Paul?
 - a. Has it been to abide in Christ to draw from Him in everything, especially difficulties? Jn. 15:4
 * “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.”
 - b. Has it been to deny yourself preferring others before you, unselfishly, with the mind of Christ? Phil. 2:5-7
 * “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God,

- did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance.”
- b. Though dangerous as your crisis may be, it offers a great opportunity to see God work and to be transformed more into His likeness. Phil. 2:3-5
 * “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

The crisis of the Thessalonians revealed who was living their lives, them or Jesus!

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

- A. The plan of Paul was to send Timothy. vs. 2a-c
 - 1. Timothy is first identified by his first name, “and sent Timothy”. vs. 2a
 - a. Timothy “timotheos” means honoring God or he who honors God.
 - b. Timothy and Silvanus met Paul at Athens, as Paul requested those who escorted him out of Berea to Athens that they come to him with all speed. Acts 17:14-15

- c. Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica from Athens and Silas to Macedonia, probably to Philippi, so that Paul indeed was alone at Athens as he has just stated.
 - d. Timothy and Silvanus later met Paul at Corinth after their mission and Timothy delivered the report of the Thessalonians. Acts 18:5
 - e. There is no contradiction between Acts and Paul's letter, only that Paul is now giving greater detail which Luke omitted, supplementing the account.
2. Timothy secondly is identified by his relationship to the family of God, Paul called him "our brother". vs. 2b
- 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, using the word nineteen times in the epistle.
3. Timothy thirdly is identified by his service, Paul called him, "a minister of God." vs 2b
- a. The word minister "diakonos" literally means one who runs errands or to wait on tables.
 - b. Timothy was a spiritual waiter, God's errand boy, feeding the people of God.

- c. The word is used for the church office of deacons. 1Tim. 3:8
 - 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 see themselves as God's servants to run His errands.
4. Timothy is fourthly identified as a messenger of the gospel, "and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Jesus Christ." vs. 2c
- 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 as a laborer in 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" 1Thess. 1:5
 - b) "The gospel of God". 1Thess. 2:2, 8, 9
- * Timothy means he who honors God, true to his name God sent him out!

B. The purpose for sending Timothy was two-fold.
vs. 2d

1. The first to ground them, “To establish you concerning your faith”.
 - a. The word establish “sterizo” means to set fast, solid and fix, everyone of them.
 - b. The idea is of undergirding those who are spiritual babes in the faith for stable perseverance. 1Thess. 3:13
 - 1) This comes by teaching the word. Eph. 4:11-16
 - 2) The milk of the word for infants, 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 the trust of the Thessalonians and confidence in Christ for their salvation before God.
 - 2) The faith is synonymous with the gospel of Christ and of God.
2. The second was to press them forward in their faith, “to encourage you concerning your faith.”
 - a. The word encouraged “parakalesai” means to call along side.
 - 1) The idea being to help to give comfort and move forward in their faith in a stable progress.

2) Insuring they were not being gripped with fear or hindered, in order to be obedient to the word.

- b. This is the responsibility of spiritually mature and seasoned young men and fathers to new believers.
 - 1) The encouraging comes through establishing them concerning their faith by teaching the word, this leads to encouragement, not the reverse!
 - * Testimonies are chaff not wheat, you cannot 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 exhorted and commanded to obey, yield, fight, walk, press on, resist, believe and trust!

C. The particular focus to be communicated by Timothy. vs. 3-4

1. Timothy was to reassure 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. 3a
 - 1) The word shaken “saino” originally meant to wag and 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 anguish, pressure and trouble for embracing the gospel and teaching of the Scriptures.
 - * The word for afflictions “thlipsis” means to cause pressure, use for the crushing of grapes! 1Thess. 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, as Daniel!
 - b. Timothy was to reinstruct them, “for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.” vs. 3b
 - 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 a target of attack, so they were 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) Paul said, “All that live godly shall suffer persecution.” 2Tim. 3:12
2. Timothy was to remind them they had told them beforehand. vs. 4
 - a. The three apostles had repeatedly told them when they were together with them at Thessalonica, “For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation.” vs. 4a
 - 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 except their spiritual identity with Christ!
 - 2) The word tribulation comes from the word “thlibo” means to press together and cause pressure and used of crushing grapes. 1Thess. 1:6; 3:3
 - 3) Paul told the new 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. The three apostles remind the Thessalonians of their own sufferings that they knew they went through, “just as it happened, and you know.” vs. 4b
 - 1) At Philippi, being beaten and imprisoned. 1Thess. 2:2

- 2) At Thessalonica and Berea chased out.
Acts 17:5-15

Illustration

What an incredible God we serve taking the crisis of the violent martyrdom of Charli Kirck to comfort, encourage and ignite the work and preaching of the gospel to the entire world this morning at his funeral, opposite of what the enemies of the gospel intended to happen!

Application

1. One key ingredient that no church can be effective without is men and women who are walking in the Spirit and faithfully proven to be servants 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 the 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, not to be deceived. Eph. 4:11-16
 - b. The believer is born into spiritual warfare and equipped with the armor of God. Eph. 6:10-18
 - c. The war is winnable, 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 these sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us. Rom. 8:18

The commission of Timothy was to make them stable in their suffering and mature in their faith in Jesus!

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

- A. Paul wanted to know the state of their spiritual condition. vs. 5a-c
 1. Paul once again mentions his crisis of unbearable pressure in anxiety for them. vs. 5a-b
 - a. Paul was concerned and tore up about them as family, "For this reason, when I could no longer endure it."
 - b. Not just numbers of evangelism!

2. Paul sent Timothy to know their spiritual state, “I sent to know your 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 a key word appearing eight times in the letter.

B. Paul wanted to know the outcome of Satan’s attack. vs. 5d-e

1. Their resistance to the enemies temptations was not automatic, “lest by some means the tempter had tempted you.” vs. 5d
 - a. The tempter is Satan, as the source of the attack!
 - 1) Satan hindered the apostles. 1Thess. 2:18
 - 2) Satan is the prince and power 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, Zech. 3:1

- 1) As he did to Eve in Genesis, “Has God said”, through subtle craftiness. 2Cor. 11:3
- 2) As Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Matt. 4:3
- d. He tempted married people at times by depriving one another sexually. 1Cor 7:5
2. Their response to the enemy could have made the mission a failure, “and our labor might be in vain.” 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, literally might become ineffective.
 - 1) Paul has already stated that it was not fruitless, but a mission accomplished. 1Thess. 2:1, 13-14
 - 2) Their labor might have become in vain, if Satan had been successful.
 - 3) For anyone to say that there was no possibility of failure is to deny 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 as servants not lords, being examples to the flock. 1Pet. 5:1-4
 - c. Keep in mind a Pastor cannot speak to every person in the church nor visit them, nor can the ministers on staff, but they should be available at the church for those who want to come in.
* Timothy was such a man. Phil. 2:19-22
2. We need to be concerned about people’s response to the enemies attacks and teach them God’s word.
 - 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 seeking whom he may devour. 1Pet. 5:8
3. We need to rejoice and give God the glory through the victories in people’s lives.
 - a. When a 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 inspite his persecution and sufferings. 1Thess. 3:7-10

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

Conclusion

The sacrificial loving care of Paul for the Thessalonians was marked by three elements.

- I. The crisis of the Thessalonians revealed who was living their lives, them or Jesus!
- II. The commission of Timothy was to make them stable in their suffering and mature in their faith in Jesus!
- III. The concern of Paul was to know if they had survived Satan’s attack by abiding in Jesus!