

We have been examining the next major section of 1 Thess., 2:17 - 3:13.

Paul focuses on bringing matters up to date, so to speak, focusing on the circumstances that led him to write the letter.

The section ÷ easily into 4 parts.

1<sup>st</sup> part, 2:17-20.

► In these vv, Paul mainly explains why he and Silas had not been able to revisit the audience personally, although they had longed to do so.

2<sup>nd</sup> part of staying in touch, 3:1-5, the sending of Timothy, last time.

► Team was concerned about the Thessalonians' loyalty to Jesus so sent Timothy.

▷ Concerned that these new believers may have renounced their belief in Jesus due to persecution.

3<sup>rd</sup> part of staying in touch, 3:6-9.

► Here we have Timothy's good report about their loyalty and love.

► Today.

And the 4<sup>th</sup> part of staying in touch, 3:10-13.

► Team's prayer for these believers. 1/9

Today, as noted, Timothy's good report about the Thessalonian believers, 3:6-9.

Overview to see the big picture.

Outline.

► The report & its contents, 6.

▷<sup>6a</sup> But now Timothy has come back to us from visiting you and has announced to us <sup>6b</sup> the good news of about your loyalty and love, <sup>6c</sup> and that you always carry fond memories of us. He told us how you long to see us just as we long to see you.

► The results T's good rpt had on the missionary team, 7-9. ☞ 3 vv, 3 results.

▷<sup>7</sup> So we were comforted about you, my dear brothers and sisters, in all of our distress and suffering since we were reassured about your loyalty. <sup>8</sup> For now we feel alive again, knowing you stand firm in the Lord. <sup>9</sup> In what way can we thank God in return for you, for all the joy we feel in the presence of God because of you?

Let's dig in.

In 6, report & its contents.

<sup>6a</sup> But now Timothy has come back to us from visiting you and has announced to us <sup>6b</sup> the good news of about your loyalty and love, <sup>6c</sup> and that you always carry fond memories of us. He told us how you long to see us just as we long to see you.

There are 2 aspects to this report as discussed here.

► The 1<sup>st</sup>, in 6b, is that the Thessalonians were spiritually healthy.

▷ Timothy announced the good news about their loyalty and love. 2/9

➤ The 2<sup>nd</sup> aspect to this report is that they still appreciated Paul & his colleagues, 6c.

▷ And Timothy announced that they always carry fond memories of Paul & his colleagues, & that they longed to see the team.

1<sup>st</sup> aspect of Timothy's good report, 6b.

➤ Timothy announced the good news about their loyalty to & love for Jesus.

➤ When Timothy witnessed the Thessalonians' loyalty & love, it was evident that they had not yielded to the tempter.

▷ Rather, they had tenaciously held to the gospel & to Jesus.

➤ Looks like Paul's teaching sunk in.

▷ When speaking about persecution he said, <sup>3b</sup> For you know quite well that we are destined for them. <sup>4</sup> In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.

▷ I.e., he taught them previously that persecution for believers is inevitable.

▷ It very much seems that they took it to heart.

▷ & it looks like they accepted persecution as a part of the Christian life.

▷ Recall the implication of this that we noted last wk.

▷ When persecution is expected, it won't take us by surprise & shake the foundations of our commitment to Jesus. 3/9

➤ These new believers were not taken by surprise.

▷ When persecution arose, they were not so emotionally disturbed as to give up their relationship w/ Jesus.

➤ They did not fall for the persistent lies of Satan.

▷ Remember, Satan is persistently engaged in the effort to destroy our commitment to Jesus.

➤ Again, they had tenaciously held to their loyalty to & love for Jesus.

➤ Job displayed the same tenaciousness in his relationship with God.

▷ Job 2:9-10 (CSB), His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" "You speak as a foolish woman speaks," he told her. "Should we accept only good from God and not adversity?" Throughout all this Job did not sin in what he said.

➤ As we noted, the NT makes the matter quite clear.

▷ Persecution, ranging from mild to severe, is inevitable in the Christian life.

➤ So the ques for us is not, "will we suffer?"

▷ But, "how will we respond to the suffering that we will experience?"

➤ The NT tells us how Jesus responded.

▷ 1 Pet. 2:23 (NIV), When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 4/9

›Instead of the physical pain and mental anguish he was feeling, Jesus kept His Father at the forefront of His mind and thoughts as he underwent unjust suffering.

›Jesus may have been suffering unjustly at the hands of men, but He knew He could trust that His Father would treat Him fairly

→And that His Father would set things right, because God judges justly.

▷& the author of Hebrews tells us an additional response of Jesus to suffering.

›Heb. 12:2b (NLT), Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

›The "joy" awaiting Jesus was no transitory pleasure but eternal joy with God.

→He entered into "joy" not as an alternative to the Cross but as its reward.

›These things are true for us as well.

▷God the Father will always treat us fairly.

▷In the end, he will set things right, because he judges justly.

▷And we have eternal joy awaiting us at the end of this life.

›Surely incentives to help us persevere not matter how hard it is.

2<sup>nd</sup> aspect of Timothy's good report, they still appreciated Paul & his colleagues, vs 6c.

›You always carry fond memories of us. He told us how you long to see us just as we long to see you. 5/9

➤ Paul was relieved and pleased to hear this good news from Timothy.

▷ They acknowledged and fondly remembered the team's love for them and they wanted to see them just as much as the team did them.

➤ The language of longing is the language of intimacy and close friendship.

▷ This is the same verb used in the Greek translation (Septuagint) of **Ps 42:1 (CSB)**.

➤ *As a deer longs for flowing streams, so I long for you, God.*

▷ The missionary team and the Thessalonians had a deep, almost unquenchable thirst for being in fellowship together in one place.

▷ These believers stand as a model for us in their attitude toward other believers.

➤ *As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.*

*Paul notes 3 results Timothy's good report had on the missionary team, vv 7-9.*

<sup>7</sup> So we were comforted about you, my dear brothers and sisters, in all of our distress and suffering since we were reassured about your loyalty. <sup>8</sup> For now we feel alive again, knowing you stand firm in the Lord. <sup>9</sup> In what way can we thank God in return for you, for all the joy we feel in the presence of God because of you?

*Paul first notes that the missionary team was comforted, vs 7.*

➤ So we were comforted about you, my dear brothers and sisters, in all of our distress and suffering since we were reassured about your loyalty.

➤ The news of the Thess' loyalty made the team feel better about them. 6/9

▷Paul's fear that they had abandoned their commitment to Jesus was put to rest.

▷This good news brought comfort to Paul & his colleagues in the midst of their distress and suffering.

▷Plus, no doubt this good report encouraged the team in their distress and suffering to remain faithful to God's mission.

▷This may be implied in Paul's next statement.

2<sup>nd</sup> result Timothy's good report had on the missionary team, vs 8,

➤For now we feel alive again, knowing you stand firm in the Lord.

➤They were standing steadfast in their Christian lives even in the face of pressure from outside the church.

▷As a result, the missionary team felt alive again.

➤What does Paul mean by this statement?

▷I think Proverbs helps us understand what Paul means.

➤Prov. 25:25 (CSB). Good news from a distant land is like cold water to a parched throat.

→Cold water revives a parched throat; it brings refreshing relief to the whole person.

➤And Prov. 15:30b (NLT): Good news makes for good health.

→Good news makes the person feel good in body and soul. 7/9

▷ The English idiom, a breath of fresh air, would work here as well.

▷ IOW, It was like a breath of fresh air knowing you stand firm in the Lord.

▶ All of this adds up to the great benefit good news is to one's spiritual, emotional, & physical health.

▷ It refreshes us & gives us great incentive to continue running the race set before us.

▷ And we have plenty of good news to share w/ one another.

▶ Plus, we are the bearers of the best good news ever.

▷ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

& in v 9, we have the 3<sup>rd</sup> result Timothy's good report had on the missionary team.

▶ Thanksgiving to God.

▷ In what way can we thank God in return for you, for all the joy we feel in the presence of God because of you?

▶ We see that the team found words inadequate to express their appreciation for what had happened in the Thess lives.

▶ The change in the team's mood was radical.

▷ All of our distress and suffering became for all the joy we feel because of the steadfastness of the Thessalonians. 8/9

▷ This was no superficial happiness but heartfelt and sincere joy in the presence of our God. ↪ Refers to prayer.

▶ There are many places in the NT where Christians who are faithful to God bring joy to other Christians.

▷ E.g., 3 Jn. 4 (NET), I have no greater joy than this: to hear that my children are living according to the truth.

▷ This is how we should be as well.

▷ Filled w/ joy when we see our fellow believers staying faithful to Jesus.

▶ & we can take this 1 step further.

▷ No doubt our heavenly Father feels overwhelming joy when his children are faithful to him.

▷ It must be so, since the opposite is true.

▷ When we sin, we grieve the Holy Spirit.

→ I.e., our sin inflicts pain on him.

▷ So let us make every effort to fill our heavenly Father's heart w/ joy everyday of our lives. 9/9