

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Read vs. 17-19

B. Today

1. The middle portion of this letter is intensely personal as Paul opens his heart to the Thessalonians.
2. While there's no stand-out preaching here, this passage is nevertheless deeply moving.
3. Reading thru the book of Acts, it's easy to get the impression Paul was a ministry-**machine**.
 - a. His zeal to plant churches kept him on the move.
 - b. While he spent months & even a couple years in strategic places, other times he stayed for no more than a few weeks – as in Thessalonica, where he spent **only a month**.
 - c. Paul met a lot of people on his journeys, but every time he moved on he left them behind.
4. Then, reading his majestic letters like Romans & Ephesians he can appear as an ultra-deep academic.
5. Put all that together & Paul comes off as the consummate **task-oriented, Type A personality**.
 - a. Warm & friendly is not how many would describe their impression of him.
 - b. So what we find here is an important filling out of the picture of what Paul was like.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 17-20

¹⁷ But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.

1. Everywhere Paul preached, while some came to faith, others went the other direction & **actively resisted** him.
2. In Thessalonica, these opponents hired thugs to start a riot, knowing the Roman magistrates hated nothing more than civil unrest.
3. Then they blamed the disturbance on Paul & Silas.
4. But unable to find them, the authorities arrested Jason, one of the leaders of the new church,
 - a. They beat him,
 - b. Then took a bond from him, making him promise Paul & Silas would leave town.
5. Having to leave abruptly in the midst of a crisis, Paul was concerned for how the Thessalonians were doing.
6. He hoped he'd be able to reconnect with them, but circumstances hadn't allowed it.

¹⁸ Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us.

7. Paul wanted them to know he'd not forgotten them.
8. He was looking for a way to get around the ban the authorities put on him.
9. But nothing worked out & he attributed that to the scheming of the enemy.
10. At first blush, that's troubling; to think the devil was able to get one over on Paul.
11. On the contrary – Look what came of Paul's inability to visit them This letter! Which not only blessed the Thessalonians but millions of believers since.
12. Note the **intense** words Paul uses to describe his yearning to see them in v. 17.

¹⁷ We . . . endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. ¹⁸ Therefore we wanted [ached] to come to you.

13. Connecting with the Thessalonians wasn't just a good idea, something he'd do if he got around to it.

14. It was a **priority**. He longed with all his might for it. // Here's why -

¹⁹ For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

15. Paul didn't count the value of his life by power, position, or prominence.

- a. It was about **people**.
 - b. He measured his life by the quality of his relationships.
16. Paul sent this from Corinth a few months after leaving Thessalonica.
 - a. As he thought about them, he was filled with **joy**.
 - b. He was so stoked by the way they'd responded to the Gospel, he counted them as **his glory**, like a precious ornament that enriched his life.
17. I wonder how many pastors today feel this way about their people.

18. The Thessalonians were Paul's glory & delight because of the love God poured thru him into them.
- It transformed them from hopeless idol-worshippers into faithful children of God.
 - Love has tremendous power to turn the lost into the saved & to transform the unlovely into glorious beauty.
 - Among the tribes of North Africa, men secure a bride by giving her father camels.
 - The more **desirable** the woman, the more camels pays.
 - The average is 5 camels while an especially beautiful woman can bring as many as 8.
 - A story goes that a young prince, knowing he'd one day reign in his father's place, wanted to learn how his subjects lived. So he'd often dress as a commoner & walk the streets unknown.
 - One day in the marketplace, he struck up a conversation with a young woman at a food stall.
 - She was quite plain of face but had a keen mind & the prince was impressed with her wit.
 - Over the next few days he returned & renewed their conversation.
 - By the end of the week he was deeply in love & told his father he'd found the woman he wanted to marry.
 - The next day he secretly followed her home to see where she lived.
 - Early the next morning he dressed in his royal garments & waited till she left for the marketplace then knocked on the door of her house.
 - When her father answered, he introduced himself & announced his love for his daughter, asking for her hand in marriage.
 - The father was excited so great a man would want to marry his commoner daughter & happily agreed.
 - Then came the difficult part; negotiating the bride-price.
 - Not wanting to miss out on the chance to see his daughter married to the future king, the father said he was pleased to take 4 camels for her, unattractive as she was.
 - The prince refused but before he could explain, the father quickly said, "Okay, 3."
 - The Prince said, "You misunderstand. I will give you **20** camels for your daughter."
 - The father was stunned & said that was too much, but the prince **insisted**.
So the father relented and the arrangements were made.
Word quickly spread & the talk of the town was the huge bridal price the prince had paid. Everyone assumed she must be a stunning beauty & were shocked when they finally saw her.
 - Finally the day came, they were wed & she left her father's house to move to the palace.
 - Time went by & the prince became king, his wife became queen & they had a son & daughter.
 - On their 7th anniversary the queen told her husband she wanted to visit her family & old neighbors – so plans were made for a royal visit.
 - When the day came, all the old neighbors, family & friends were there to greet her.
 - The royal couple arrived in front of her father's house riding on beautiful white horses.
 - A cheer went up as they rode in, but as soon as the crowd saw the queen, they went silent.
 - This queen was gorgeous & carried herself with elegant grace.
 - The people began to murmur. Had the king remarried?, What happened to the young woman they'd known?
 - The queen got off her horse & walked to the father.
 - He didn't recognize her, **until** she opened her mouth & said. "Hello Papa."
 - It **was** his daughter. But now she was a gorgeous beauty.
 - As she went round greeting old friends & neighbors, the father turned to the King & asked, "What happened? How did my daughter become so beautiful?"
 - The king replied, "You saw her as only a 4 camel woman. I see & treat her as worth 20. That's what she's become."
19. This fallen world says we're nothing more than a biological accident; the result of a blind process called evolution.
20. Biologists say were about \$37 worth of chemicals & several gallons of water.
21. **God** says we are like pearls of infinite price, a treasure beyond reckoning.
- He proves how valuable we are to Him by sending His Son to pay the bridal price & make us His own.

- b. That price was His blood, shed on the cross.
- 22. Paul knew that's how much God valued the Thessalonians, so he made himself the vehicle through which that extravagant love reach out & touch them.
- 23. God's love **transformed** them from hopeless idol-worshippers into the beautiful bride of Christ. And Paul couldn't help but delight in them.
- 24. I can't let this pass without saying "Ditto" to what Paul says here. **You** are our glory & joy.
 - a. Paul took delight in them because they were doing so well.
 - b. Though it was **difficult** to be a Christian in Thessalonica bcuz of persecution, the church was thriving.
 - c. Hardship is difficult to endure but a **benefit** it brings is the **proving** of our faith.
- 25. The staff & elders are blessed because even though these are difficult times for many, the generosity that's been demonstrated recently is amazing. // OCC Ornaments 31 Days of Service Feeding at the Senior Center Helping at the Mission People just generally looking out for one another

B. Vs. 1-5

- ^{3:1} Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, ² and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, ³ that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.
- 1. From Thessalonica, Paul's team went to Athens. then on to Corinth.
 - 2. It didn't take long to realize that for Paul & Silas, getting **back** to Thessalonica wasn't going to happen.
 - 3. Timothy hadn't been put under the ban so even though Paul needed his help in Athens, the need to check in on the Thessalonians was more urgent & he sent Timothy back to see how things were going.
 - 4. Specifically, Paul urged Tim to remind the Thessalonians that **opposition to their walk** was **expected**.
 - a. Paul knew from long experience that when he preached there were 3 basic responses.
 - b. Some got saved & added to the church; some were **indifferent**, but some rose up in angry hostility & took it on to **actively resist** the church.
 - c. So, while persecution is difficult, at least it's evidence they'd been born again.

⁴ For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. ⁵ For this reason, when I could no longer endure it,

5. Meaning the agony of concern for them -

I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.

- 6. Paul saw reconnecting with the Thessalonians with a word of encouragement as crucial to their remaining faithful.
- 7. He suspected his abrupt departure had left a gap in their understanding about how to deal with tribulation.
- 8. That's why he was so worked up about getting back to them – so he could shore up what he thought was a weakness in their understanding.
- 9. But, not able to go himself, he made sure Timothy carried them the message they needed to hear.
- 10. Tim went, saw how things were going, delivered the message, then returned to meet back up with Paul & Silas in Corinth.

C. Vs. 6-10

⁶ But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also *to see* you— ⁷ therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. ⁸ For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.

- 1. Paul heaved a huge sigh of relief at Timothy's report.
- ⁹ For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, ¹⁰ night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?
- 2. As good as they were doing, Paul had more he wanted to share.
 - a. His thought was, "If the Thessalonians are doing so well on **only a month's** worth of teaching,
 - b. Imagine what they could do with **another couple months!**"
- 3. All the words Paul uses speak of an **agony in longing** to see them.

4. So don't think of him as some kind of cold, church-planting machine who started up new works just so he could put another notch on his belt.

a. It was an **agony** for him every time he left.

b. Specially when he was leaving them in a place that was hostile, like Thessalonica.

D. Vs. 11-13

¹¹ Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. ¹² And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we *do* to you, ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

1. Paul urges them to keep **growing in love**.

¹² And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all

2. His deep love for the Thessalonians **derived from God's love for them**.

3. He wanted them to tap in to that love as well.

4. He knew if they do that, everything else will fall into place because love fulfills the Law.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Hosing

1. There comes a point in the believer's life where they realize that **it all boils down to love**.

2. Love for God, then love for others. // Jesus said this was the greatest command.

3. Everything else is going to pass away; the only thing that lasts is people & the love we've shown.

4. This building will one day lie in ruins, but the love we give & receive here, that we take with us into eternity.

5. There comes a point in our walk with God when that truth finally becomes clear & we realize the priority of love.

6. But being the knuckleheads we are, we **make a vow to love more**.

"I will love others with **more purpose, more determination**. I'm going to be more loving, more caring."

a. Our love is like **this Spray bottle**.

b. There's that much of it. And after about 30 squirts our finger is tired & we take a break.

c. Even if we can go longer, or switch to the other hand, eventually it's going to run out.

d. The problem with this kind of love is that we measure it out **by looking at the object being loved**.

e. We look for **results** or **worthiness** or **appreciation** for how awesome we're being in loving them.

f. We portion out **our love** because we only have so much.

7. But it's not OUR love God calls us to show; it's His. All we need to do is **tap in**.

a. We stop looking at the **object** being loved & instead **look to the Source of love**.

b. **Like a Hose**. [I love to hose! No end to supply & love what it does!]

c. This is better, good. But not the highest or best because while we can go on indefinitely loving like this, others might mistake the love we're showing as coming from us.

d. **WE** know it's from God, but they might think it's coming **from the hose**!

8. The best way to love others is thru the empowering of the HS. **Power-washer**!

a. When we love like that, those receiving it know for certain it's NOT just our goodwill.

b. It's God loving thru us.