
IN THE WAITING

Build Each Other Up

Have you ever been away from your family and friends and worried about how they are doing? Have you spent time praying for them, looking forward to when you will see them again? Paul is in anguish over his desire to return to be with the church in Thessalonica. As we pick up in chapter three, we continue to see Paul's deep desire to see this early church not just surviving.

Paul desires to be with the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 2:17-18 NIV

This is a group of people that Paul has shared the gospel with, and they are now Christians who have left behind their other religions and beliefs - he was invested in them, but he left them in a state of persecution. It was so dangerous that he had to go, but he also left them to face hardships themselves, trusting that he had taught them enough.

Paul knows are going through a hard time, and he wants to be able to be with them and encourage them, but he can't, and he recognises there are other forces at play.

"The devil does not want Christians to thrive."

Paul warns us about...

- + Moral temptations
- + Persecution
- + Selfishness

A Busy Believer

What better way for the devil to get at us, than to render us too busy to think about one another! As we get busy, we get tired and overwhelmed, which leads to a change in priorities and so we begin to think about ourselves. Busyness leads to selfishness.

God has called us to love Him and love others. (Matthew 22) Both are very selfless things that need to be a priority. Paul was worried about the Thessalonians, that without guidance and continued teaching, the Thessalonians would start to be selfish again, not able to stand up under trials.

Paul sends Timothy to check on the Thessalonians and he receives such a different report back.

A Selfless Church - 1 Thessalonians 3 :6-10 NIV

The Thessalonians were thriving, not just surviving, and they were thriving because they were not thinking about themselves; they were thinking about each other - they were loving one another.

Later, in chapter four, verse nine, Paul speaks of their love for one another being taught to them by God. Paul was so encouraged to hear of their faith and love, and it gave him hope in his trials.

Model Love

Paul had modelled the way of love and Christian friendship - Thessalonians 2:9-12. He was busy, he worked day and night, so he was not a burden to the people, but he also made time to comfort them, encouraging them, and sharing the gospel with them. His priority was God and how he could share God with them.

He brought comfort and encouragement, and he shared the gospel.

Comfort – Hope

Comfort Brings Hope. Paul wanted to comfort the Thessalonians and let them know he was thinking of them, that he wanted to help them, and in turn, they comforted him.

Encouragement – Love

Encouragement helps us to feel loved. With prophesy, God encourages us into what He is doing. With correction, He encourages us back onto the narrow path, and with words that build us up, He encourages us to be who He has called us to be. It all encourages us to walk in step with Him. Paul was encouraging the Thessalonians and they also encouraged him.

Share the Gospel - Faith

Sharing the gospel is sharing our faith and building faith. Paul brought the gospel to the people in Thessalonica and they continued in faith once he was gone.

Paul brought this Faith, Hope and Love to the Thessalonians, and then he prayed that they would continue to endure in these things.

Prayer for Endurance - 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 NIV

Paul prays that while we wait, we would thrive. This looks like loving one another, that our love will increase and overflow. That we would not be too busy to comfort one another, or to share our faith with someone.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you feel when you are separated from loved ones? Do you think about them or pray for them?

2. Do you see any ways the devil might be trying to take a foothold in your life?

3. Would you say you are busy? Why or Why not?

4. What are your priorities at the moment? Is there room for God to bring in new things?

5. Do you think you are too busy to love others?

6. Share some testimony of times when God has brought comfort through someone else.

7. Share some testimony of times when God has brought encouragement through someone else.

8. Share some testimony of when you have shared the gospel with someone else.

9. What area of Faith, Hope and Love do you need God to help you endure in at the moment?