

1Thessalonians 12-03-23b

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 3, Paul says, Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, 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 the faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For in fact, we told you before, when we were with you, that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.

For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain. Well, you would say, that makes perfect sense. I understand what he's saying.

Doesn't seem like there's much meat for application in there. Paul is just concerned about them. Decided to send Timothy to help, you know, kind of encourage them, and make sure that they didn't get overcome by the mockery, and the resistance, and the tribulation that was still coming their way.

Well, what's interesting about this to me is, when Paul says, we could no longer endure it, and we thought it good to be left in Athens alone. Now, does Paul really think it's good to be left in Athens alone? Just in the abstract, if Paul is there, and he's got Silas, and Timothy, and some other helpers and things, would Paul say, you know, what would really be good is, if I was here all by myself, why don't you guys just take a vacation, go to the coast, catch some rays. I really would just rather be in Athens.

Does he really want to be in Athens alone? Well, of course not. His team really facilitates what he does. They make arrangements.

They can multiply the number of speakers. They can cover more ground. They can minister individually to many more people.

Some of these guys can be an advanced party, go ahead to the next town, find accommodations, figure out where the synagogue is. Paul arrives. He's already got a speaking schedule set up.

He's, the last thing he wants is to be alone. Remember, in one of the later letters that he writes back to Timothy, he says, everybody has left me. Demas forsook me and these other guys are gone.

I'm here by myself and sure like to see you. Paul doesn't like being alone. So here's my question.

Why does he say, I thought it good to be left alone in Athens? Well, it reads more interestingly in Greek. We have, Dio mekhetes stegantes, ludo kesamen. And if you were listening closely, and I'm sure you picked this up the very first time, the verb there is from stego, as in stegosaurus, as

in something that sticks up.

It's stego originally had the idea of a roof or a covering or something. What is a stegosaurus? He's got stuff that sticks up down his back, right? Well, stegos means to endure, to, there's a big storm, but you've got the roof up. You're making it.

You're okay. You're still, you know, they had the song back in the 80s and one of these flash dance things, I'm still standing. All this stuff has hit me, but I'm still standing.

Over and over and over and over. I was kind of wishing they weren't because the song was so repetitive, but you know, this is the idea. Well, they've, they hit me with everything they've got and I'm still on my feet.

I'm still standing. That's what stego means. What Paul says, I stood it as long as I could and I couldn't stand it anymore.

I would make a Popeye reference, but I won't. There's a point at which Paul says, I really was moved to make a decision. And so he says, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone.

If it's we, you wouldn't be alone, right? We thought it good to be left alone. Maybe if you're a couple on your honeymoon, we want to be left alone. But he says, this is you do case on men.

And this is a, this is sort of a plural of, of courtesy. Sometimes when I write on behalf, I write an email or something on behalf of the sermon library, whatever. It's basically me.

I have made a decision. I've looked something up. I have fixed a thing or whatever.

But I say, we, we are glad to hear from you. I'm speaking on behalf of something bigger than myself. That's really only just me.

And so what this means is that Paul and his companions discussed this and decided that in the light of circumstances, it doesn't say, we thought it good. It's, it's a single word. And this is you, doke.

Oh, and doke. Oh, itself comes from, from deco. My, and it has the idea of EU, of course, is, is something good.

The you on galas is the good message. Or the you on Galia, actually. So, wherefore, no longer enduring.

And this isn't a, an heiress participle having no longer endured. It's a present participle. We were not able to keep on enduring it.

You do case. Amen. We were glad you do.

Okay. Oh, basically means to take pleasure in something or be glad. And Paul is not normally happy to be alone.

But in the interest of something, this important, he's glad to be left alone. If it means that he can send someone back to Thessalonica, he's glad to be left alone. Now, why am I belaboring this and going through the Greek and all the rest of it? What is the nature of Christian love? Love that follows in the footsteps of Christ? Well, what do we always say? Love is what? Sacrificial towards self, to be beneficial toward others, right? And that's what this you do.

Keo wraps up. It is a great inconvenience for Paul. He's going to have to do his own laundry.

He's going to have to figure out all kinds of things all by himself. I don't know exactly what all this would entail, but I know that he very much appreciated having companions with him. But he says, we were glad for me to be left alone in Athens.

For your benefit, I will gladly do without my companion, Timothy, my son in the faith. If it means I can, can renew contact with you. It's the essence of Christian love.

We become glad. Now, think about this. This is the application.

Things that would normally be odious. I don't think most ladies wake up in the morning thinking. Oh, it's a bright new day.

Where's that washing machine? Find me a basket of dirty laundry. I just can't wait to get into that laundry mode. Why do mothers and wives do laundry day after day after day for years? It isn't because they enjoy doing laundry, but they are glad to do it on behalf of the family.

They like their family to smell good and be clean and have fresh changes of clothes. And it is an opportunity to serve. It is an opportunity to benefit the family.

It's something they are able to do, know how to do, can do it well. Others can pitch in and fold or do laundry at different times. But whoever's doing it, you're doing something for others.

And left to itself, if this was laundry somebody dumped on my lawn, I didn't know where it came from. Here's all this old nasty, dirty laundry that came from somewhere. I wouldn't go out there and say, oh, thank you, laundry fairies.

I'm so happy to have this. I just love why we do it. It isn't the laundry itself.

It is the people for whom we do it. We are glad to do certain things. I'm glad to go to work and provide for my family, even when my job isn't that great.

Of course, I can't say that in a long time, but I've had periods where my job wasn't anything to look forward to, quite the opposite. But I'm glad to do it because of the result that it produces on

behalf of others. And this is the nature of our love.

And we need to remember this. It's easy to forget. We get myopic and we look at a thing.

We say, oh, this is terrible. I don't like this. I'm, I'm chafing.

It's a drudge. And we forget this is an opportunity to you, doke, oh, to stego. We continue to endure something for the sake of others.

Paul says, I couldn't endure not having some contact with you. And so I was willing to endure solitude for a time because I knew that Timothy would go and that Timothy would come back. And Paul's joy is their benefit.

And their benefit turns something that would normally be uncomfortable and very pessimistic outlook for him into something that he is glad to do. Your son or daughter is trying to go to college and has some kind of a vehicular mishap of some kind. It's the middle of the night.

Are you grouching and saying, well, I can't believe it's two in the morning. Gotta go down and fix a flat and it's clear off and, you know, God forsaken Texas someplace. Do you do that? Or do you say, I am glad to help by the last thing I want is my offspring out there in the middle of nowhere in the dark and no resources.

And I'm glad to. It doesn't put me out at all. Well, we want to some cases like that are obvious, but we want to remember that this is our opportunity anytime.

Remember what he just covered at the judgment seat of Christ. You are our joy. You are our crown of rejoicing.

You are our hope our hope of entering into inheritance and further service to the Lord. Jesus is that we've demonstrated faithfulness in serving you in being a benefit any blessing to you. Well, these things that sometimes get tedious or start to wear on our fruit of the spirit and our good mental attitude.

We need to stop and think now. Wait a minute. This is my opportunity.

I should be thinking the opposite way. I can't endure not doing this. I can't endure not entering into this as unto the Lord a reflection.

Hopefully of his love and his selfless compassion. I want to reflect that I want to be an extension of that. I want to enter into that and that also enables me to enter into his glory and his joy.

So there's a lot more here than just meet your eye with a quick read through. We thought it good to be left in Athens alone. 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.

Keep your finger here in Thessalonians and turn back to Philippians. We're going to look at something very familiar because we have memorized a big portion of Philippians chapter 2. You remember fulfill my joy by being like minded having the same love being of one accord of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit.

I'm not going to review that we've memorized that we've been over time after time after time. But look at verse 17 and following Paul says in verse 16 remember the end of our memory passage. He says holding fast the word of life.

You all hopefully are holding fast the word of life. This is what Paul is saying. So that what so that I Paul may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

Same sentiment that is expressing to the people of Thessalonica isn't it. If you all what is it that he's hoping for what is it when he says you're going to be my hope and my joy and my crown of rejoicing when when Christ is revealed. Why would they be just the fact that they showed up.

What is it. Well we have a little insight into it here. Do all things without complaining and disputing that you may become blameless and harmless children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you shine as lights in the world holding fast the word of life.

And when you are that kind of people Paul says then I can rejoice in the day of Christ that my labor as an apostle my labor as a teacher and a proto pastor and a trainer of pastors as an evangelist and a teacher was not in vain. I didn't run my particular race in vain. And if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith if my fulfillment of calling if my work and labor and patient running in my race results in you being faithful I am glad and rejoice with you all.

This is what your spiritual gift is designed to do whatever it may be spiritual gifts are given for the building up of the body of Christ you anytime you are in contact with another believer have the potential to be a blessing to them because you have a unique spiritual gift that is designed to edify and build up others. You probably don't know what it is especially if you're younger you may have not the first clue you say well I don't know I'm saved and I know some people are saved but I don't know that they're particularly blessed by me and I can't always tell if I'm blessed by them or not don't worry about it. It's kind of like you know how many gears in a clock know exactly what function they perform that they are stepping down a certain ratio so that the second hand is going to move exactly 60 times around the dial and that you know the time is going to be kept in an accurate fashion.

I'm just a gear with 164 teeth I don't know what I'm doing here I contact some other gears from time to time but I don't really we don't have to know you can't see the face of the clock suffice it to say God built the clock and every time your teeth intermesh with somebody else's and anytime

you touch someone else that contact is effectual God ordains good that comes from it. And you don't have to know what's going on on the other side you don't have to know what the larger machinery is doing all we have to do is be faithful you don't want your little teeth breaking off there's nothing more frustrating than trying to fix something that has gears in it and the teeth are broken on the gears that's one thing I cannot fix you can't get a dremel and just cut them a little deeper because they don't stick out far enough. You can't glue them back on there's no glue for that you can't manufacture another one I don't have the machinery to mill and machine something like that when a gear breaks when the teeth break off you're done every time that thing comes around under pressure it's going to slip more teeth are going to break it's going to break the teeth of other things and it's just a train wreck is depressing just want to pick up the whole thing and pitch it out don't be a broken gear.

This is this is the this is the message in the application for the second class don't be a gear that breaks. Anytime you contact other believers God is using you in some way you don't have to know what it is you probably never will know what it is. But God knows and it is an essential integral part of his plan nobody is here by accident nobody is spare parts just in a baggie off to the side waiting for something else to break and then I'll swap that one in everybody has a purpose everybody has a mission God didn't go to all the trouble to make us and put us in this generation in this location at this time with our particular unique individual human soul and makeup just to breathe air and take up space.

You're here for a purpose the Lord Jesus Christ purchased you with his blood it's the most precious price in the universe and you're here for a reason and you've got to take it seriously all of us do we have to take our presence. And our opportunities seriously always it doesn't have to make sense to us this is the problem with the atheist this is the problem with the agnostic this is the problem with the secular humanist godless communist socialist materialist rabble in the world is they refuse to have anything to do with God unless God will make it make sense to them. If God will explain it in terms that are acceptable to me then I might think about entering into it don't be a godless communist atheist don't partake of the secularist humanist mentality you don't have to understand it this is why we walk by faith trust that God is doing something important with your life.

Specifically in the area of ministry you remember the priesthood hat and the ambassador hat we're talking about ministry any time you're in contact with another believer your ministry radioactivity is somewhere in view God the Holy Spirit is going to be actively preparing to do something with your ministry function. Because believers are greater when they get together than the sum of the parts God the Holy Spirit is in the midst the Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst where two or more of you are gathered in my name the Lord Jesus said I am there and that puts something there that wasn't there before. Don't have to know what it is don't worry about what it is if you need to know God will reveal it just trust that it is so and concentrate on being faithful concentrate on you doke oh I am glad whatever this costs me however much this puts me out

whatever odious or whatever drudgery is involved.

This is why spouses godly spouses and men and women who love each other from the start and throughout their life and throughout their marriage they don't mind when it gets to the end and it gets ugly and somebody needs a lot of extra care I don't mind I don't like this job I don't find it fun but I will gladly do it because this is heart of my heart this is soul of my soul this is as Adam said this is bone of my soul. This is my bone and flesh of my flesh God has united us and I love this person and this is my opportunity to serve there is nobody else in a position to do this I am glad to do this very unpleasant and in some cases sorrowful task somebody has lost their capacity somebody is largely not there anymore we have this increasingly as our medical science so cleverly preserves the body and can't do anything about the mind. We have more and more people caring for each other in senility and Alzheimer's and what not but people do it willingly and in a sense gladly because it's an opportunity and when you do that as under the Lord if the Lord Jesus came in and said would you please take care of this person for me they are one of mine and I am not here to do it would you do it for me how eager and how anxious would we be to do it and do it well and do it thoroughly and do it excessively this is for the Lord Jesus.

Well that's exactly what we are called to so this is the mind that Paul is reflecting when he figures out a way to bless the Thessalonian believers he can't go Satan keeps thwarting him he has tried time and again to go and he can't get there and he says well let me try sending Timothy it will cost me something here but I will do it gladly if I can get through and be a blessing to them. And he covers this same thing in Philippians look at chapter 2 verse 19 talking to the believers at Philippi what does he say same guy I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. And you think about Timothy, Timothy can say well I feel like kind of a second fiddle here I am just being sent as sort of a go between and a messenger and I am not getting the props and the fame and the accolades and things that Paul is getting he just sends me when he can't go himself I am just sort of a lackey I am a gopher I am a factotum I am a messenger guy but Timothy is faithful and is useful in that regard.

I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly that I also may be encouraged when I know your state for I have no one like minded who will sincerely care for your state for all seek their own not the things which are of Christ Jesus. You know his proven character as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel therefore I hope to send him at once as soon as I see how it goes with me and I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly. So this is the concern that Paul expresses on behalf of the Thessalonians as he has done in other places and at other times and why that he may establish you and encourage you concerning your faith.

Now Paul has complimented them in the first part of the letter remember that when he said we remember in verse 3 of chapter 1 without ceasing your work of faith your labor of love and your patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. You became followers of us in the Lord you received the word in much affliction and so on he says you are doing well. What's Paul's concern past performance is no guarantee of future success.

I will say that again past performance is no guarantee of future success they have done well up to this point but they're under a lot of pressure and Paul says I want to come and if I can't get there I'm going to send Timothy. Why to establish you in your faith you need faith to continue under this pressure you've done well up to this point but I want to encourage you specifically in the area of faith that no one should be shaken by these afflictions. They haven't been shaken up to this point why would Paul be worried now what do we observe in that.

Well you can survive under pressure for a certain period of time and then fail just because you survived up to this point you know people say well I've been driving on that bald tire for six months and it hasn't popped yet. Well that's no guarantee that it's not going to blow out at high speed tomorrow right when there is pressure there is the possibility of failure and Paul is concerned because they continue to receive this persecution and affliction. And he's concerned that they need encouragement in their faith so that they don't crack so that they don't fail so that they'll eventually give up under this wearing pressure.

There's a principle there for us encouragement and refreshment in our faith is important this is why we come to Bible class. You say well you know I really feel like I've kind of got this whole spiritual life thing down for a lot of Bible class seem to be doing pretty well don't have it I haven't murdered anybody haven't stolen anything I'm pretty moral I'm pretty happy things are going pretty well and you know I kind of think I've reached a good happy plateau here I think I can just get along with what I've got. What's the problem we are always under pressure and if we are not renewed and if we are not strengthened and if we do not reinforce our foundation and our faith there is no standing still we are either progressing and adding and building or we're going to start to deteriorate and falling back.

And that's why because we are fallible we're human we're not made of granite you can't chisel us into a shape and we hold it from now on we're not some ancient statue that has survived real well you can look at Michelangelo's David looks pretty much now like it did when he carved it except where the crazy guy hit it with the hammer. But you know these things it's always something to look at things that are made I've got a nameplate of Dr. Criswell's it's just a sort of wedge shaped piece of nice wood and it's got a piece of lucite on it and his name you know how they used to do they would carve it out with like a drill bit it says Dr. W.A. Criswell and it's held on with two screws it's a nice just kind of a plain desk thing. Well I've got a picture of Dr. Criswell in about 1964 sitting at his desk at his house and here's that same nameplate and I've got the picture under glass and I've got the name deal right above it and you look at the picture black and white 1964 here's the nameplate I can see a little spot in one corner of it and here's the nameplate very same thing and there's a little spot right in the corner the camera picked it up it's a very same thing and I look here's the nameplate where's Dr. Criswell.

He lived another 40 odd years and he perished and here's this little stick of wood with a piece of lucite on it surviving just fine looks as good as when it was new. We just don't last we're

perishable and even in our spiritual life we need renewal we need refreshment we need reinforcement we need regular fellowship we need regular meditation we need regular immersion in the word of God. That's why we come to Bible class that's why we should meditate on the things that we learn in Bible class that's why we pray continually the Lord Jesus Christ himself in his flesh did these things went regularly to his heavenly father regularly reviewed every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God went through his Old Testament memory verses that's why he could quote them instantly when Satan tempted him because he reviewed them they were fresh.

That's what Paul is talking about here I want to send Timothy to you so that you are not shaken by these afflictions if we get lazy even if we just start going through the motions we show up and we're there but we're not really interested we're not really concentrating we're not really invested in our spiritual life our afflictions will beat us down and defeat us. How many believers have fallen by the wayside and decided their fit well you know they just didn't work for me you know why didn't work you weren't invested in it you didn't allow God to do his work you did not claim promises by faith and cling to them in patience and revive and restore and renew your hope you didn't avail yourself of what God has provided and of course it's not the arm of the Lord that's short it's not the ear of the Lord that's heavy it is we who allow our iniquities to build up and separate us. So Paul says I wanted to send Timothy so he could give you some fresh Bible class give you some fresh momentum renew your faith it's essential what you do when you come to Bible class what you do even more importantly when you carve out time for meditation listen to me now I would rather you spent one day with a good meditation on the Word of God session than spent two days coming to Bible class.

It is more important to meditate than it is to come to class more important without question without doubt think about Psalm 1 the man that doesn't walk in the counsel of the ungodly and so on his delight is in the law of the Lord and to the law of the Lord he listens day and night is that what it says. What's the verse say in that law doth he meditate day and night meditate more important to meditate than it is come class we pat ourselves on the back for getting the class that's great pat herself on the back even more if we stop regularly in the day in the week and think about what we have learned doesn't do any good to learn it you don't think about it take it to heart figure out how it applies how it pertains what difference it makes. Am I a different person because of Bible class last week what did I learn in Isaiah what did I learn in Thessalonians by getting anything out of it or I was just sitting there makes a difference to our faith we can hold up under affliction persecution testing challenge and what is all of this ultimately result in what's it going to be like on the day of Christ.

What's it going to be like at the payment the judgment seat of Christ is it going to be gold silver precious stones or is going to be a big flash fire of toilet paper what's it going to be we decided day by day the whole reason Paul is doing without his companions is to put some fresh Bible teaching back there in Thessalonica that's what their faith is he doesn't say to fluff up your hope he says to encourage your faith. So that you are not shaken we told you before that you we

would suffer tribulation just as it happened for this reason when I could not endure it I sent to know your faith he says it again he doesn't say sent to know your hope then they sent to know your love says we sent to know your faith because if your faith is strong your hope and your love are going to keep pace so this is our challenge this is our opportunity. We are here by the grace of God we are here through the work and the love and the compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ every day counts every day counts today counts today is in the books tomorrow is going to count tomorrow is going to go into the books what is going to be the judgment on the day of Christ are we filling up iniquity or are we laying up treasure are we going to be.

Judged faithful are we going to receive inheritance or are we going to be sent into the darkness which is outside of an apportioned our lots with the hypocrites you know what a hypocrite is looks good doesn't function well looks good going to class doesn't function well all the other hours of the week. We can't afford it it is my job to warn all of us including myself how important it is to pay attention to why we're here that's Paul's concern for these people and that's why he sends Timothy and Timothy is going to be a faithful emissary and is going to bring back some really good news well we'll pick up here in verse 5 and 6 next time. Father thank you for these powerful words of encouragement and exhortation from the pen of the Apostle Paul we pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress them on our hearts we ask it in Jesus name amen.