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**Overflowing, Abundant, and Selfless Love**

**I Thessalonians 2:17-3:13**

**Chapter 3 – Main Idea:** You and I Should Love one another with an overflowing, abundant, and selfless love!

***2:17 But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, 18 because we wanted to come to you —  I, Paul, again and again —  but Satan hindered us. 19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? 20 For you are our glory and joy.”***

**Vs 17 –** We were “torn away.” The Greek word is **ἀπορφανίζω** (ap-or-fan-id’-zo). This is a compound word that means to separate and orphan. Paul is painting a picture, of a child and parent being stripped apart, leaving the child orphaned.

We were town away from you brothers!

He goes on in verse 17b: This **tearing away** was only for a **short time**, although in person, it was not in heart (our hearts were always with you), and we have been working hard because we have a great desire to “see you face-to-face.”

**Vs 18 –** As Paul writes from Corinth, less than a year after the church had been formed, he says, we have wanted to come to you, in fact I myself, multiple times.

But… Satan hindered us. Remember back to spiritual warfare from Daniel. Things are happening in the heavenly realm that are having an impact on the spiritual realm.

The word **hindered** brings with it the idea of cutting off a person’s course.

*“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” (Eph 6:12 ESV)*

**Vs 19 -** Notice this is now the second time the return of the Lord has been mentioned:

The first time:

*“and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” (1Th 1:10 ESV)*

Here Paul paints the picture that these believers are his hope, his joy, his crown of boasting before the Lord (at Jesus’s coming).

The picture is Paul’s labor (these believers), being found in the Lord, at the Lord’s **coming**.

The **Greek word** translated **coming** is **παρουσία** (par-oo-see’-ah) and brings with the idea of the coming of Jesus, the idea of his presence **(para)** and his being and continuing with us **(ousia)**.

**Vs 20** - He concludes reminding the believers in Thessalonica, that they are his glory and joy!

The Greek word translated glory is is **δόξα** (dox’-ah) (fame, praise, or honor).

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***3:1 Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, 2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, 3 that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. 4 For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. 5 For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.***

**Vs 1a -** **Bear it no longer** – **στέγω** (steg’-o) – to cover, to keep silent, or to endure.

Here Paul says when I could not take knowing what was happening with you believers in Thessanlonica, any longer, it was then, my love for you forced me to act.

**Vs 1b -**I was so concerned, I was willing to be left behind in Athens (alone) – **μόνος** (mon’-os). **The idea is alone, without a companion, without help.**

**Vs 2 -** Here is the idea that should be developing. Paul is laboring for the gospel of Jesus Christ, he is going into cities where he is ministering and enduring persecution. He is with Silas, Timothy, and Luke for sure. But Silas and Timothy appear to be his main companions in the work.

Because of his great love for the believers in Thessalonica, he decides to send Timothy back, to see how the brothers in Thessalonica are doing.

He could not go back himself, so he sent this young man who he trusted, this young man who was very important to him in ministry, but he sent him back. Keep in mind, Paul needed Timothy.

**By way of reminder…** Timothy was a young believer from the area of Lysta, who joined Paul and Silas while on the second missionary journey as they passed through that area.

We would assume, he was likely a Jewish convert, but he was new to the Christian faith, having just recently placed faith in the Jesus as the promised Messiah. He was the son of a Jewish woman who had become a believer in Jesus and his father was a Greek. (Acts 16:1). He was well spoken of by the believers in that area.

Before taking him on the journey, Paul took and circumcised him. He did so because of the Jews in the region (Acts 16:3). He became one of Paul’s main protégé’s (Timothy and Titus) and later the Pastor of the church at Ephesus.

**Of Timothy Paul says:**

1. ***Brother -* ἀδελφός** (ad-el-fos’) We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We are part of God’s family.
2. He is also ***God’s coworker in the gospel of Christ***

Can you imagine how this made Timothy feel? But more importantly can you picture how Paul spoke about other believers.

He was the apostle Paul. Yet, as we continually see him do, he does not see himself above other servants, but rather right alongside them in spite of their youth or time as a professing believer.

The word translated coworker is **συνεργός** (soon-er-gos’). It is a true companion, a fellow laborer, a companion in the work of the **εὐαγγέλιον** (yoo-ang-ghel’-ee-on)- Paul has referred to the Gospel as our gospel, the gospel of (Theos) God, and now the Gospel of Christ **Χριστός** (khris-tos’) – literally anointed.

**Now, before we continue to advance, let me show you some other things Paul said about Timothy:**

*“That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.” (1Co 4:17 ESV)*

*“19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. 20 For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. 21 For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know Timothy’s proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.” (Php 2:19-22 ESV)*

Paul needed Timothy, but Paul was anxious to know how the believers in Thessalonica were doing, so although he needed his fellow minster in the gospel of God who could not take, NOT KNOWING, how they were doing. So, he dispatched Timothy to go back to Thessalonica.

**The goals or purpose of Timothy traveling alone to Thessalonica:**

1. **Establish you in your faith –** The Greek word is **στηρίζω** (stay-rid’-zo). To make stable, to strengthen, to establish, to make firm, or to settle.

This is the building of the correct foundation of their faith on the Word of God and the person of Christ.

1. **Encourage you in your faith – The Greek word is παρακαλέω** (par-ak-al-eh’-o). It is to call to one’s side, it is to encourage, it is to comfort or to help.

This is the verb form of the noun: **παράκλητος** (par-ak’-lay-tos). The word that is used to describe the person and work of the Holy Spirit!

Keep in mind, in context Paul knew they were suffering, and Paul sent Timothy to encourage them in their faith!

1. **That No one be moved by these afflictions –** This is the only place in the New Testament where this word is used. **In classical Greek, it was used of a dog wagging his tail.**

The idea is, I have sent Timothy, back to you, to ensure that you are not **shaken**, that you are not **disturbed**, that you are not **tossed about**, by the afflictions you are suffering.

The Greek word is **θλῖψις** (thlip’-sis) means tribulation, persecution, affliction, trouble or anguish. It has the idea of a pressing.

1. **For you know you were destined for this** – Now one might guess the word Paul would use for **know,** would be **γινώσκω** (ghin-oce’-ko) (to know intellectually), but it is not, he sticks with **οιδα** (oy’-da), something you know by observation.

You saw it and I have reminded you about it.

Persecution can cause us to lose sight of the Savior in the storm, and even through Paul knew that they “knew” (both intellectually and by observation) he was concerned, that all this persecution, might have shaken them!

**Notice what they know… Interesting Greek word, it means to lie in front, to be laid out in our path, to appoint!**

**Vs 4 -** Notice, one of the things, Paul kept telling them, in the short three weeks he was with them was that they would suffer affliction… Again, the idea of this Greek word is to **press** or **constrict**!

Come to pass – as it has come to pass…

As you know. Yes, as you see by observation, **οιδα** (oy’-da).

**Vs 5 -**Because we knew you were suffering persecution. We knew you were being pressed like a grape in a wine press. I could no longer bear knowing how you were doing.

I acted, I sent Timothy to know about your faith.

**For fear** – because **I was concerned that perhaps** **μήπως** (may’-pos), the Tempter had tempted you.

Obviously, Satan was also a topic of Paul’s three-week teaching blitz, and Paul was dead level honest. I was concerned that Satan, through the use of persecution, had caused you to turn from the faith.

And in your turning, you would prove (display by your actions) that our Labor **κόπος** (kop’-os). That is labor that accompanies trouble and Paul’s surely did would prove to be in vain **κενός** (ken-os’) – devoid of lasting results.

**This should remind us of the parable of the seeds: *18*** *"Hear then the parable of the sower:* ***19*** *When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.* ***20*** *As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy,* ***21*** *yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.* ***22*** *As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.* ***23*** *As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."” (Mt 13:18-23 ESV)*

Do you see why Paul is so concerned?

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***6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you —  7 for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. 8 For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord. 9 For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, 10 as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?***

**Vs 6 -** So Timothy came back to Paul with a good report of their:

1. **Faith.** You are walking by faith, growing in your faith, and living by faith.

*“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” (Heb 11:6 ESV)*

*“1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the people of old received their commendation.” (Heb 11:1-2 ESV)*

1. **Love** - **ἀγάπη** (ag-ah’-pay). Your love for one another and your love for God.

That selfless love that in spite of hot persecution is blooming and growing and greening and maturing.

1. **Remember us kindly** – This would be in spite of all the lies they are being told, that have a fond memory of God’s servants.
2. **Long to see us. -** The Greek word is to pursue in love, to have a loving and compassionate longing for.

**As we long to see you – As we lovingly long to see you too!**

**Vs 7 –** Therefore even in our:

**θλῖψις** (thlip’-sis) – tribulation, oppression, affliction, it is the idea of being pressed.

and

**ἀνάγκη** (an-ang-kay’) – calamity, distress, or straits.

In spite of all the hard things that we are currently enduring, the good news about your faith **Comforted us, παρακαλέω** (par-ak-al-eh’-o) – To call to one’s side, to help, or to bring comfort.

Again, this is the verb form of the noun: **παράκλητος** (par-ak’-lay-tos). The word that is used to describe the person and work of the Holy Spirit!

***Vs 8 -* Now we life.** The good news about their faith was like life giving water. We were refreshed, knowing that **you are standing fast in the Lord.**

It was like a breath from heaven to learn from Timothy that even through you are **enduring tribulation**, you are **standing fast in the faith**.

*“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.” (1Co 16:13 ESV)*

*“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Ga 5:1 ESV)*

*“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,” (Php 1:27 ESV)*

**Standing fast is the apposite of apostatizing**, which is to fall from a place of standing. Paul is telling them, that life to him, was knowing, that they were “standing fast!”

**Vs 9 -**Here we see Paul’s Selfless love for the believers in Thessalonica that is manifested in thanksgiving to God and great personal joy!

We are filled with thanksgiving to God and great joy, over you, before our God.

**Let me show you something that does not come through in the ESV**.

The word joy is the Greek **noun** **χαρά** (khar-ah’). The word translated **“feel”** is the Greek **verb**of the same root word,**χαίρω** (khah’-ee-ro).

**The NKJV:** *“For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God,” (1Th 3:9 NKJV)*

**Paul’s love for others, resulted in his joy when he saw them growing in the faith. But it is not just that, Paul’s love for others, resulted in his thanksgiving to God when he saw their spiritual growth.**

**Vs 10 - Here we see Paul’s love in his prayer life for the believers in Thessalonica.**

BUT NOW… We are praying **“most earnestly.”** It is a **double compound adverb.** It is like saying our prayers for you are **abundant** and the suffix **overflowing**!

Paul is saying our prayers for you are **abundantly overflowing**. This type of prayers is being driven, by his selfless love for them.

We are just begging God, abundantly and overflowing, both night and day, that we might **see your face**.

**Vs 10b** - **Paul’s love** is represented here in his desire to: **“supply what is lacking in their faith.”**

This is the first hint that everything is not perfect in Thessalonica.

Paul wanted to make it back to Thessalonica, in part, so they could supply what is deficient, in the believers in Thessalonica’s faith.

They are saved, but there are areas that need to be improved upon, areas that need to be strengthened, areas, in their faith that are currently a little anemic.

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***11 Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, 12 and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, 13 so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.”***

**Vs 11 -** We have talked about this **conjunction** of God and Jesus on equal footing as a reminder that Jesus is indeed God.

We have talked about the Greek word **κύριος** (koo’-ree-os). We have already stated that when the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek (the Septuagint), Yahweh’s name was translated as**κύριος.**

Now, notice here this is a prayer, that is being directed to God and our Lord Jesus. **The whole Bible screams that Jesus is God in the flesh!**

May our God and Father (himself) and our Lord Jesus - **Direct our way to you.**

**Vs 12 -**May the Lord make your love **increase** and **abound**. This is the root of all virtue. A love for God and a love for man!

Look at this, may the Lord **κύριος**,make you increase (overflow) and abound in an overflowing in **ἀγάπη** (ag-ah’-pay), selfless love for one another.

Do you hear what Paul is praying for these persecuted believers? **That they would have an overflowing, abundant, and selfless love!**

*“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."” (Joh 13:35 ESV)*

But it is not just one another and but for all.

Two circles: Believers, and everyone else! **Overflowing, Abundant, and Selfless LOVE!**

**Vs 12b** – as ***we do for you.*** Paul, reminded them… That is how we love you! **It is that love that has been driving everything!**

A superabundant, overflowing **ἀγάπη** (ag-ah’-pay). A superabundant, overflowing, and selfless love.

**Vs 13 -**For it is in this type of love for one another and for others, that God will use to establish your hearts blameless and holy before God our Father.

**I will say two things before we shift gears:**

1. Our Christian maturity is measured in our ability to love one another and others.
   1. This only happens by renewing our minds in the word of God and prayer.

1. Self-love is an enemy of our soul and is the antithesis of true Christian love.

When will our hearts be established? **Now and** **“*at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.”***

Here again, Paul refers to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In I Thess 1:10 Paul reminded us and the church in Thessalonica that they are waiting for Jesus who will come from heaven:

*“and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” (1Th 1:10 ESV)*

*In I Thes 2:19: Paul told the church that they were his hope, joy, and crown of boasting before Jesus “at his coming.”*

As we said at the start of the lesson, the **Greek word** is **παρουσία** (par-oo-see’-ah) and brings with the idea of the coming of Jesus, his presence **(para)** and his being and continuing with us **(ousia)**.

We like the believers in Thessalonica are waiting for the **coming of the Lord**, and here we are being told that when the Lord comes **παρουσία** (par-oo-see’-ah), he will come with all the saints with Him!

So, Paul is building a model for us, about his return. He has much more to say and we will to continue to develop his points in the coming weeks.

**Here is what you know, up to this point: We are currently waiting on the** Lord who is indeed himself coming, and in that coming is his presence with us as well as his continuance among us. When he comes, he is coming with his saints, those who had faith in God, but died before He returned.

At this point, he has told us nothing of what that looks like. Only those who on earth, are waiting for our great God and King to come. When he comes, He is bringing, in his train, coming with him, millions upon millions of believers who had died before this event.

Now we have many questions about all types of things. But Paul is going to build this out for us.

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**Faith Lessons from I Thessalonians Chapter 2:17 – 3:13**

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