

A Practical Study of 1 Thessalonians

Delighting The Heart of God “Learning to Bring Pleasure to God”

Question Number Five – Are You an Encouragement to Others in Your Walk with the Lord? – 1 Thessalonians 3:6-10

We come to study number 5:

Are You an Encouragement to Others in Your Walk with the Lord?

I want to read just a little story that I found out of World War II to show you how one guy, doing something, saved the lives of a lot of other people. And really what he did at the time didn't seem all that significant.

(*Simple Faith* by Charles R. Swindoll)

In his book *The Fall of Fortresses*, author Elmer Bendiner tells the remarkable story of a B-17 Flying Fortress that flew a bombing mission over Germany toward the end of World War II. The bomber took several direct hits from Nazi anti-aircraft guns; a few actually hit the fuel tank. Miraculously, the crippled aircraft made it back without exploding or running out of fuel.

After landing, eleven unexploded twenty millimeter shells

were carefully removed from the bomber's fuel tank! Each was dismantled and examined. To everyone's amazement, all eleven were empty of explosive material. Why? How could it be? Why would the enemy fire empty shells? The mystery was solved when a small note was found inside one of the shells, handwritten in Czech. Translated, it read, "This is all we can do for you now."

A member of the Czech underground, working in a Nazi munitions factory, had deliberately omitted the explosives in at least eleven of the shells on his assembly line. Not knowing if any of his sabotage efforts would prove effective, he slipped the note into one of the shells, hoping that someone who benefited from his efforts one day might discover why.

That same person may have died wondering if the quiet work he was doing to subvert the enemy war machine would ever make any difference to the outcome of the war. Nevertheless, he pressed on, doing what little he could each day, letting the future take care of itself...and indeed it did. There was a Flying Fortress crew who had him to thank for their lives and their future.

pp. 185-86

I found this little poetic piece called "Say It Now":

I would rather have one little rose
From the garden of a friend,
Than to have the choicest flowers
When my stay on earth must end.

I would rather have a pleasant word

In kindness said to me,
Than flattery when my heart is still,
And life has ceased to be.

I would rather have a loving smile
From friends I know are true,
Than tears shed 'round my casket
When this world I've bid adieu.

Bring me all your flowers today,
Whether pink, or white, or red;
I'd rather have one blossom now,
Than a truckload when I'm dead.

(From *InfoSearch 2.21*, original source unknown)

You know that's probably the feeling almost all of us have as we sit in the room.

Now do words make differences? Does our stability and steadfastness, as an example, mean something to people? I think you're going to find that in these verses.

One of the special passages in the Old Testament, that really I think helped David make it at such a critical time in his life is First Samuel 23. Here's poor David, he's being chased all over the land by Saul, and there's the feeling that at any time Saul's going to catch him. And in First Samuel 23 verse 16 we read this:

1 Samuel 23:16-18

And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. "Don't be afraid," he said, "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this." The two of them made a covenant before the Lord. Then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh.

You see Saul could look all over thunder and try to find him but God knew how to get Jonathan to David at a critical time. And Jonathan helped David find strength in the Lord his God. That's what I'm saying we ought to be doing for one another.

Now Scripture teaches us to bear one another's burdens but it also teaches us to bear our own burdens. And there comes times when the burdens we have to bear by ourselves are beyond our ability. And that's when we "bear and share" by words of encouragement—by prayer and by other means.

Philippians 2, verses 3 and 4 is the New Testament counterpart of that:

Philippians 2:3-4

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of

others.

We're probing in a spiritual check-up:

1. Did you make the right start?
2. Are you a phony?
3. Has Satan hindered you?
4. Are you discouraged by the problems?—as we looked at last night.

And now:

5. Are you an encouragement to others in your walk with the Lord?

Verse 6.

v. 6 But now Timothy, having come to us from you, also brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you are having a kindly remembrance of us always, eagerly desiring to see us as also we are eagerly desiring to see you,

You see we kind of ended the study last time with being in the middle of no-man's land. Timothy had gone and Paul is focusing on suffering—the fact that we're destined for these things. And then the little word “But” in the text this morning

forms the contrast. It changes everything.

But Timothy's come from you and when he came, he brought us a GOSPEL. That's the same word that Paul uses when he talks about gospel. I've translated it "good news" because the gospel is good news! But to Paul and to Silas, it was like GREAT NEWS had just come from Thessalonica.

And it hits TWO AREAS. The "good news" has been good news:

1. of your faith and love.

And then on top of that:

2. you've got a good feeling about us. You've got a "kindly remembrance" of when we were there with you folks.

Now, could I throw that in CONTRAST for just a second? What if indeed Timothy got back and he said "You know they wouldn't even let me in town. Everybody in town thinks you're a creep. That you rolled out of there just when it got hot and they needed you and they left. And everybody who made an emotional decision for Christ has thrown it in and they've been caught up by the false teachers."

What do you think that would have done? Probably something very similar to what happened to Paul when he heard that the Galatian Christians were being deceived by the legalists, and

so he writes a very scorching letter—probably his most scorching of all of the epistles is the epistle to the Galatian churches.

Here it's completely different. The fact that these people didn't fall victim to the temptation of Satan to take the easy route and to throw in the towel has meant a great deal to the apostle. And the apostle needed desperately to have some good news.

“And having come to us, you brought us good news of your faith and your love...”

But the good news basically came in these **THREE AREAS**:

1. their **FAITH** is standing strong,
2. their **LOVE** for the ministers, and
3. they have fond **MEMORIES**.

Now when it says he brought us a report of your faith, there is so much being said today about having enough faith to accomplish great things for God that we really don't have a real good definition of what faith is and what faith isn't.

The faith he's talking about here is the faith that unlocks the door that provides eternal salvation. And it's manifested in them.

C. Samuel Storms is a pastor in Ardmore, Oklahoma. He's been published by NavPress and Baker Book House and has done some things on healing and holiness and also on the doctrine of election. Listen to what he says:

(Healing and Holiness by C. Samuel Storms)

When the Bible speaks of faith, it means an attitude of humility and self-renunciation. Faith says, "Lord, I am nothing and you are everything; I entrust myself to your care, regardless of the outcome." [Now this is where we really need to have an understanding.] Faith isn't a weapon by which we demand things from God; it is the way in which we deny ourselves. Faith says, "Lord, you don't owe me anything; I, on the other hand, owe you everything." When we exercise our faith in God we submissively and sincerely acquiesce to God and his will, whatever that will may be. Faith does not dictate what God's will is. The spiritual posture of the child of God is one of quiet expectancy, ready to receive from God whatever he in his infinite wisdom and mercy designs to give, or for that matter, to withhold.

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Boy that statement helped me a lot because I've gotten so many questions in the classes over the last couple of years along this very line.

"now Timothy, having come to us from you, also brought us good news of your faith and your love,"

You see LOVE is the EVIDENCE that a work has been done. And the fact that they're manifesting one of these initial evidences of the new birth, it thrills them even more. Their faith is intact and their love is there, and it's spreading out and it's got him so excited. And here everything is dark and gloomy. In the city of Corinth they're having a hard time and here comes this wonderful report to encourage them.

Now is there any biblical precedent for that kind of thing? I think probably the greatest one is in the book of Genesis where Jacob has been lied to by his sons that Joseph is dead and then they run out of grain, and he sends them down into Egypt to get grain and they don't know that they're meeting with Joseph. So Joseph says "I'm going to keep Simeon hostage while you go get your brother Benjamin and bring him down." You can imagine what that did to Daddy Jacob. That would mean three sons out of there and Benjamin had taken Joseph's place because he was the only other son of his much-loved wife Rachel.

And so here comes this Egyptian monarch saying "Look, if you're going to continue to get food stamps and welfare programs from us man, you're going to do what we say. You're going to come on our terms."

And Benjamin says "Over my dead body. I ain't going to do it."—I mean Jacob. And finally they get so, so desperate, Jacob finally says "Okay, okay. If he perishes, if he perishes, let him go. If I'm bereaved, I'm bereaved." And he takes Benjamin and he goes down there. And then Joseph reveals himself to them.

And so what are they doing? They're coming back to tell dad the truth. And Simeon and Benjamin are coming back with them. And you can just see old Jacob, as the boys are coming in, he's counting one-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten-eleven. "Thank God they're all here."

And the fellows are saying "Hey no dad, it's cheaper by the dozen. You've got all twelve. Joseph is still alive and he's a monarch in Egypt and he really wants to see you. And if you don't believe us, there's Air Force One sitting out there in the driveway. Come on! We're going to Egypt!"

Now do you think that encouraged him? Listen to what you read in:

Genesis 45:27

But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts that Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived.

You see sometimes your greatest ministry can just be simply to come in alongside and revive the spirit and the heart of someone who is just about ready to throw it in and say, you know "Hang it! I can't go on any further!"

And yet that's the kind of ministry that doesn't make the spotlight and we miss that so many times. The very fact that some of us are sitting here today and still claiming the name

of Christ is because of some unseen and unknown person who came along one day and believed in you and spoke the words that encouraged your heart to continuing to keep on to fight the good battle and continuing to win the war.

Verse 7.

**v. 7 because of this we were encouraged, brethren,
about you in all our calamities and afflictions
through your faith;**

“because of this”—now here is your KEY VERSE to the study.

“because of this we were encouraged, brethren, about you in all our calamities and afflictions through your faith;”

You see “we were encouraged” to keep hanging in there because of this good report. You thrilled us by the fact that “you are standing firm.”

Now take your PREPOSITIONS in that verse and just kind of circle them. It kind of makes an interesting little meditation.

“because of this we were encouraged, brethren”:

1. “ABOUT you”,
2. “IN all our calamities and afflictions”,
3. “THROUGH your faith;”

“We were encouraged...about you” because of what we heard.

“We were encouraged...in all our calamities and afflictions through your faith;”

Now do you think that Paul ever had second thoughts about the fact that maybe he didn't see a man from Macedonia when he was over there in Troaz?

Maybe they'd gone out to the Mexican food restaurant that night and went to bed burping technicolor anyway and then he has this dream of this guy saying “come over to Macedonia and help us.”

You know, you do have second thoughts sometimes when it really gets rough, don't you. I mean, you start second guessing because, man, when you're on a roll and everything is going bad you really wonder, “man, was that the right thing to do and was God leading me or did my personal desires get into this thing?” You know you just stop and think about it.

1. He got on that little boat, he went over there to Philippi and man they got whipped in the street and put into prison.
2. Went on down into Thessalonica and stirred up all kinds of persecution and suffering for Jason and the rest of the people that lived there.

3. Got driven out of there, went to Berea and it was the same song, third verse.
4. They came from Thessalonica to Berea, drove him alone down to the city of Athens. Overwhelmed by the idolatry and the wickedness in Athens, he couldn't even put together a nucleus to found a church there.
5. Went forty miles down the road to Corinth and got kicked out of the synagogue there.

And here he is at the lowest point in his life and Timothy walks in. He says "Guess what man? We've had a victory in Thessalonica! It didn't seem that way when you were there. But I wanted to tell you something, there was some good things going on. And I'm here to tell you, they've got a fond remembrance for you and they sure would love to see you again Paul. Because they're excited. They're standing firm in the Lord."

Big question—spiritual check-up:

Are you an encouragement to others in your walk with the Lord?

You see what I'm talking about with regard to encouragement at this point of the study is not your LIP but your LIFE.

You see so much of Christian witness focuses on what I say with my lip that we play down what we do with our lives.

And I believe the Bible emphasizes more the witness of your life than it does your lip friends. And I know that runs contrary to so much of the emphasis of twentieth century Christianity.

But I still believe it and I want to show you why.

1. It's our LIPS and not our LIVES.
2. It's our CREED and not our CONDUCT—I mean, it's not our CREED, it's our CONDUCT.
3. It's not our WORDS, rather it is our WORKS.

You see, your witness is more what you DO than what you SAY.

And really if the truth is known, people are going to be looking at your life a whole lot more than they are listening to what's coming from your lips.

Now Peter believed that:

1 Peter 3:15

Set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

That tells me that you have earned the right to speak with your lips by what you demonstrate in your life.

Now I'm just asking you a question:

Is your life an encouragement to your brothers and sisters in the body of Christ? And is your life an effective witness to the world around you?

You see if fruit's not being born through your life, it probably has to do a whole lot with your life more than what you're saying with your lips. Because there are all kinds of people running around who can tell you the gospel with their lips but their lives are shouting so loudly, the sinners can't hear what they're saying.

And that's a sad, sad statement but too often it's true.

Now it's time to kick off the shoes and lay back and think about how I can be an encouragement.

I came up with FIVE THINGS:

1. I can be an encouragement with my life by becoming a SERVANT and giving myself unselfishly to others.

I can be an encouragement by becoming a servant and giving myself unselfishly to others.

2. I can be an encouragement by the SACRIFICES that I'm willing to make for the sake and comfort of others.

That's Philippians 2:17: "If I'm poured out as a drink offering I joy and rejoice with you all" Paul told those Philippian saints.

3. I can be an encouragement by being STEADFAST.

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

When people can see you hanging in there when it's raining on your parade and the wheels have come off of the wagon and you're still going, that's the kind of stuff that really carries credibility to people who see our lives.

4. I can be an encouragement by my STUDY.

2 Timothy 2:15

Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

Why? Because as you're faithful to study and to do and do and do it, eventually there'll come a day when some guy's going to

come walking into your life and you just memorized that verse and you've got just exactly the message he needed to know.

How can these guys run these incredible marathons? How can these Olympic athletes achieve what they achieve? It's because of years of plodding and planning and training by themselves and alone without the crowd! There finally comes a day when they shine as stars. And in your personal, disciplined walk with God, there comes a day when God's going to let you shine—when you study, study, study.

And then fifth:

5. **SHARE** your struggles—share your struggles.

You see, we don't talk that kind of language enough. And I think you can be a real encouragement to others when you get off of your pedestal and you start to demonstrate the fact that you hurt and it's hard to handle children and be consistent in this generation. It's tough to keep a marriage going. And it's tough to fill all the demands at the church.

Man it's almost like there's something wrong with us if we've got to struggle or we hurt or we suffer in some ways.

So I just came up with these five things. I hope they'll help you. I've really had some time to meditate on it and I think the five of them will help. I'll give you a verse on that last on the struggles.

Second Corinthians 1:8—Paul never hesitated.

2 Corinthians 1:8

For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;

Second Corinthians 1:8.

This came out of a book of Alan Loy McGinnis. He's written several books on positive thinking and is a psychologist in southern California. This comes out of his book *Bringing Out the Best in People*:

(Bringing Out the Best in People by Alan Loy McGinnis)

Scudder N. Parker once said, "People have a way of becoming what you encourage them to be—not what you nag them to be." It is a very basic human need—the need to have someone encourage us and spur us on to higher things.

p. 89

To appreciate the power of the motivator one need only picture the families of Britain as they gathered in their living rooms and listened to Churchill thunder out from their radios:

The Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the

survival of Christian civilization. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us on this island or lose the war. . . .

Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say: “This was their finest hour.”

pp. 17-18

That’s the kind of thing that’s needed in the realm of leadership to demonstrate courage and fortitude in the face of great adversity and difficulty.

You know, you just see the world doing stuff like that, it really gets to you. And you begin to recognize the fact that people really do know how to love and how to encourage.

You know you look at those things and you recognize that after a person has experienced encouragement, what incredible things begin to happen. What excitement! What enthusiasm. What a thrill.

I found this little story in Swindoll’s book.

I love this story.

(*Simple Faith* by Charles R. Swindoll)

It's about a farmer who wanted to breed his three sows. He had a friend who owned a few boars, so they made arrangements to get the sows and boars together. One afternoon the farmer loaded the sows into his pickup truck and hauled them over to the nearby farm. While the pigs were getting very well acquainted, he asked his friend how he would know if his pigs were pregnant.

"That's easy," said the man. "They wallow in the grass when it takes, but they wallow in the mud when it doesn't."

Early the next morning the farmer awoke, glanced out the window of his bedroom, and noticed all three sows wallowing in the mud. So he loaded them back into his pickup and took them for a second round with the boars. Next morning . . . same result. All three were wallowing in the mud.

Disappointed but determined, the farmer once again took them back, hoping the third time would be the charm.

The following morning the farmer had to be away from the farm on business, so he anxiously phoned his wife, "Are they wallowing in the grass or the mud, dear?"

"Neither," she replied. "But two of them are in the back of your pickup and the third one's up front honking the horn!" pp. 184-85

That's awful, isn't it?

Hebrews 10:23, 24

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate [that's the word for cattle prod]

one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.

Verse 8.

v. 8 because now we are living, if you are standing firm in the Lord.

See the intimacy? He was a nursing mother. He's been a father. He's been orphaned. And now he says when "we're living, if you're standing firm in the Lord."

That's exactly the way you feel about your children. You know you're living and life is great when your kids are "standing firm." And when they aren't it hurts! And brings great pain. And there are many who are sent to an early grave because of children who are unfaithful, who go off in different directions. How great the pain!

You see the intensity of Paul's love and relationship.

"we are living, if you're standing firm in the Lord."

And there is another KEY PHRASE. You see, "we are living." We're encouraged when you "stand firm in the Lord."

Ephesians 6:10, 11

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might...

First Corinthians 16:13 is a wonderful verse:

1 Corinthians 16:13

Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

Because you're our hope and our joy.

You see, it strengthens you to withstand the storms of life when you realize that in the midst of the storm you're not alone. When you've got somebody else who is right there alongside of you. And what a thrill.

There comes a time in all of our lives when we not only SEE it, but we need to HEAR those wonderful words of encouragement.

Verse 9.

v. 9 For what thanks are we able to return to God concerning you for all the joy with which we are rejoicing on account of you in the presence of our God,

We just can't tell you what a change has taken place in Corinth! And how can we thank you for all that has gone on in

your life? And what an encouragement it's been to us in the mist of our affliction.

It's almost like you want to sing "To God be the glory" here, "great things He hath done."

v. 10 night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith?

Now do you think it's possible to be "praying as earnestly as possible" and get a NO?

You know, he got one. He is convinced that he is indispensable to the further development—spiritual maturity—of the Thessalonian Christians. But as far as we know, he got a NO.

He's praying "night and day...as earnestly as possible" for something that is not God's will for his life.

That's Isaiah 55:8 and 9 my friends:

Isaiah 55:8, 9

"My thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"
sayeth the Lord.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts."

And sometimes we have to come face-to-face with the sovereignty of God and realize NO! This is not the way I'm going to take you. And it has nothing to do with how well you know Him or how long you've walked with Him. It's just that God's going to be God and He is going to do it His way.

And the apostle is wanting to come and to supply "what is lacking" in their faith and he assumes that means his being there on location.

What is God's purpose and plan? To send a couple of letters and then bless the rest of the Christian world with those letters so that you and I can sit here today in His greater purpose and study this message which supplies "what is lacking" in OUR faith.

You see, Paul couldn't tell that. He didn't know that you and I were going to be sitting here, studying one of these letters that was going to come out of this crucible of suffering from Corinth to help us along in our faith and to understand what we needed to do. But that was God's greater purpose in all of it!

That's why we've got to let Him be God. That's why we CAN NOT predetermine or assume that He's going to take us in some definite direction. Because our thoughts are not His.

Now I need to land for just a minute on this last phrase here in verse 10 because that's the KEY PHRASE to the whole book.

Why are we making a spiritual check-up? To supply “what is lacking in our faith.”

What he is saying here—there are two words that I want us to look at:

1. “COMPLETE” or SUPPLY and then
2. “LACKING.”

First, let's focus on the word “complete” or to supply.

That Greek word means reconciling factions. It's used to take two different groups of people and bring them together.

MEDICALLY it's used of “setting a bone” that has been broken.

MILITARILY it means to get the army ready for war or to “supply the provisions” to get them ready for war.

For the FISHING INDUSTRY the Greek word meant “mend the nets” so you can continue to catch fish.

And so the word has a very broad usage.

I think the word means here, the emphasis on the MILITARY. I think it's supplying what you all need up there in Thessalonica so you can fight a good fight and you continue to prosper in your faith and your walk with the Lord.

And so when we're looking at it in this passage, it has to do with that.

Now there's one other isolated use of the word and it's in Galatians chapter 6 and verse 1:

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, RESTORE such a one...

Here's somebody who's fallen into sin and he's repented, he's broken, he's acknowledged it, he's made himself accountable and he's put himself under the tutelage of his brothers in the body of Christ. Then what are you supposed to do? You who are spiritual, RESTORE.

That almost, all of those words, could mean it couldn't it? I mean, mend the net, fix the broken bone, reconcile the factions, bring him back into the body of Christ because it's been dealt with.

“restore such a one in a spirit of meekness...” (Gal. 6:1)

Now in order to distill my thinking and not to overrun my time in the study this morning, I believe to “supply what is lacking” involves two words and I’m just going to give you some verses on that.

“To supply what is lacking,” Paul wants to deal with their ROOTING and their FRUITING.

He wants to deal with the ROOTS that go down that produce an environment for FRUITING. And if he can accomplish that in this book, and we’re going to see in the later couple of chapters, he is dealing with the rooting in some of the things that he’s going to talk to them about.

Now let’s talk about the ROOTING. How are your roots?

Of course Psalm 1 tells us that the righteous man is like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings his fruit in his season. It’s because he meditates in the word day and night and he’s drawing nourishment so that their rooting is good. (Psa. 1:1-3)

Colossians 2:6, 7 talks about the rooting:

Colossians 2:6, 7

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

Then Ephesians 3:16-19 also teach that:

Ephesians 3:16-19

that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what the length, the breadth, the height, the depth, of the love God....

You see the problem with Christians is we can't see the other person's root system. And if you've got a shallow diseased root system, the first time a storm hits guess what? Your tree's going to be victim. You're going to get blown over. And it is so critical that we spend time with young believers rooting them

And you know you don't get to see much of the rooting. But you need to do that. You need to find somebody, if you're a believer—and shame on you if you don't have somebody like that—that you're rooting. You're helping them get their roots down. And it's great to have them to be accountable too and to talk to and to share with and to pray with. You get them rooted and then just let the fruit take care of itself. It's going to start coming. And boy when it does, you're going to get a real harvest.

Psalm 126:5, 6

They that sow in tears
shall reap in joy.
He that goeth forth and weepeth,
bearing precious seed,
shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
bringing the evidence of his sheaves with him.

Or his harvest.

Now in the FRUITING, here are a few verses just for you to meditate on to take with you.

Hebrews 12:11

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Galatians 5:22, 23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, ... [and so forth]

John 15:4, 5

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the

branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Than can I give you Old Testament ones? These are two that you ought to memorize. I'm trying hard on this.

Jeremiah 17:7, 8—now listen to the verse because the verse is going to give you a clue that the rooting has to do with the fruiting:

Jeremiah 17:7, 8

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.
He will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.
It does not fear when heat comes;
Its leaves are always green.
It has no worries in the year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit.

There it is.

You see, there is a primary concern of roots going out to the water, drawing the nourishment that leads eventually to a green leaf even in drought-time and bearing much fruit. Unaffected by the adversity that goes on around them.

You see that's all Paul's trying to do in supplying what is lacking. He wants to deal with the rooting and the fruiting as far as the Thessalonians are concerned.

Now I got 10 lessons and once again because of recording I must make these statements on tape but you can pick up your sheets here at the end.

Lesson #1: Paul's deep love and involvement in the lives of his young converts is a real inspiration.

Lesson #2: Our faithful walk with the Lord can be a real encouragement to other believers.

Lesson #3: We can use our life and our lips to be an encouragement to our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

Lesson #4: Calamities and afflictions are part and parcel of the Christian experience.

Lesson #5: Paul was so intimately involved with his young converts in Thessalonica that their "standing firm" affected his joy in living.

Lesson #6: Joy is the result in the lives of leaders who have seen God bear fruit through them.

Lesson #7: Paul prays earnestly when he prays.

Lesson #8: Many times our thoughts are not His thoughts and our ways are not His ways.

Lesson #9: Paul's desire to return to Thessalonica was to outfit them for their conflict in the rest of the journey.

Lesson #10: It was rooting and fruiting that was lacking in their faith.

I conclude with a couple of little stories.

(Why Christians Sin: Avoiding the Dangers of an Uncommitted Life by J. Kirk Johnston)

At a college summer retreat out in the mountains of California soon after World War II, among those present were a young man who had flown in Hitler's Luftwaffe, another who had flown with the Japanese, and a third who had been in the US Air Force and had bombed the cities of Germany. None of these knew that the others were present at the retreat, nor did they know each other, and none was a Christian. At the final meeting, any person who chose to accept Christ and give his life to serve the Savior tossed a stick of wood on a bonfire, symbolizing that his life would now be given to burn [out]for Christ. First, the German stood to accept Christ, walked to the fire and threw a stick in; a few moments later, the Japanese; then following him, the American pilot, all receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. Then the three ex-war pilots, with their arms around each other and tears streaming down their faces, sang with all those present,

“Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.”
p. 155

That’s what we’re talking about. A real, genuine experience with Jesus Christ that crosses all boundaries, and out of love endeavors to meet the needs of others.

Guy Doud who was the teacher of the year in Minnesota in the Reagan Administration has written a book called *Molder of Dreams*.

Guy Doud was 320 lbs. when he began to teach and he realized he needed to lose some weight but before he did they made him Santa Clause every Christmas. And this is what he said:

(*Molder of Dreams* by Guy Rice Doud)

“I looked at the line of kids waiting to sit on my lap. I grabbed the first little girl in line and set her on my right knee. She had her list in her hand. It even included her name and address and telephone number. I guess if I couldn’t bring what she wanted I was supposed to call.”

I explained some of the different requests Santa had heard. The students listened well, no doubt remembering a time not all that long ago when they, too, were children on Santa’s lap.

“A little girl in a white fur coat jumped up on my lap. Many children were hesitant about sitting on my lap. Many could never get out a word, but this little princess started

right in: 'I want an Easy Bake oven. A Barbie and Ken doll set. Clothes for them. Dishes. A new bike like my sister's. A mini-snowmobile . . .' She went on and on. "I told her I would see what I could do.

"She jumped off my lap, and I noticed the next two children in line. They stood holding hands, a sharp contrast to the little girl in the fur coat. The boy's coat was torn and dirty. The girl, obviously his sister, wore a coat that was once pink. I noticed the holes in the boy's tennis shoes and wondered why he wasn't wearing boots.

"Do you want to come sit on Santa's lap?" I asked.

"They nodded. I lifted the girl and put her on my left leg, and the boy I put on the right.

"What do you want for Christmas?" I asked.

"They exchanged looks. Both had sad brown eyes. 'You tell him,' said the boy to his sister.

"No. You tell him,' replied the girl."

I looked at the class.

I continued slowly, "The boy looked at me with his big brown eyes and said, 'We want our daddy to come home for Christmas.'

"Oh, where is your daddy?" I asked."

I saw some of my students look down at their desks.

"The little girl looked at me and said, 'Our daddy is in prison.'"

I paused, allowing the moment to sink in, before I admitted to my sophomores that Santa's eyes had filled with tears. I looked around my classroom.

"Did those kids get to see their father?" asked the girl who had asked me what I wanted for Christmas.

“I don’t know. I don’t think so.”

I paused long before continuing: “But that’s why I say I want something for Christmas that money can’t buy. It’s something we’ve already been given. It’s what was given at Christmas to begin with. It’s the gift of love, and it’s what Christmas is all about.”

pp. 143-44

Are you an encouragement to others by your life? Are you giving them the most precious thing in the world and that is a life that demonstrates that Jesus Christ died for you and you rejoice in loving them in the power of His Spirit.

Father, we thank You for the privilege of reflecting on scriptural truth. Father, we have to confess that the people who’ve made the greatest mark on our lives have made that mark more by what they were than by what they said. And I would pray that You’d teach us to keep those priorities straight. Lord that we would begin with our lives and then that our lips would only verify what our lives have demonstrated. Thank You for these dear folks and the privilege of spending this week with them. May this be a very joyous and blessed day for each of them. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

A Practical Study of 1 THESSALONIANS: Your Spiritual Checkup

“Victory in Areas of Vulnerability”

Key verse 3:10 — *“night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith”*

QUESTION NUMBER FIVE – ARE YOU AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO OTHERS IN YOUR WALK WITH THE LORD? – 1 THESSALONIANS 3:6-10

KEY VERSE 3:7

v. 6 But now Timothy, having come to us from you, also brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you are having a kindly remembrance of us always, eagerly desiring to see us as also we are eagerly desiring to see you,

v. 7 because of this we were encouraged, brethren, about you in all our calamities and afflictions through your faith;

v. 8 because now we are living, if you are standing firm in the Lord.

v. 9 For what thanks are we able to return to God concerning you for all the joy with which we are rejoicing on account of you in the presence of our God,

v. 10 night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith?

NOTES

QUESTIONS:

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-10 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What kind of report did Timothy bring back, according to verse 6?

3. What is the content of Timothy's report, according to verse 6?

4. What is Paul's response to this report, according to verse 7?

5. Can you think of someone you have encouraged in their tough times by your faith?

6. What do you think Paul means when he says: “because now we are living, if you are standing firm in the Lord”? (verse 8)

7. What two things is Paul praying for in verse 10?

8. What does Paul means when he says: “to complete what is lacking in your faith,” according to verse 10?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Paul's deep love and involvement in the lives of his young converts are a real inspiration.

LESSON #2: Our faithful walk with the Lord can be a real encouragement to other believers.

LESSON #3: We can use our life and our lips to be an encouragement to our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

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