

# CLOSER LOOK



A LIFEGROUP STUDY ON THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

**Not Without Hope  
Community Development**

1 Thessalonians 3 - 4; Job 2:11-13; Revelations 21:1-5

January 22, 2023

Lewis Center

## MAIN POINT

The community of believers is a means God uses to uphold, support and provide spiritual sustenance to maintain and fortify the integrity of the gospel in the lives of believers.

## INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion..*

**What is the best team experience you have ever been a part of? What made it so great?**

**Have you ever felt helpless in a situation? Looking back, can you recall if you were helped out of the situation by others?**

**What dire situation(s) have you been in where the intervention of others through wise counsel, support, or otherwise changed the course of the experience? What was that experience like before and after the intervention?**

During the sermon, Chad said, "Sometimes we just need a person." God's design for the church and its individual members is inextricably linked and meted out in the context of "community." Paul's love for the churches he'd established is demonstrated over and over again throughout all his letters to them. We see his longing communicated to physically be with them in order to provide care, and most importantly, to affirm their faith in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says about a particular topic.

*Have a volunteer read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-7; Job 2:11-13*

**When Paul said, "...when we could bear it no longer" what was he referring to?**

**Why was Timothy sent to the Thessalonians? Why did Paul find it necessary to send him at that specific time?**

**What did Paul fear? What was he trying to prevent? How important was it for him to resolve the dilemma he feared?**

**What happened that caused Paul to not leave Thessalonica and not be able to return (Acts 17:1-10)? How does that inform what may have been going on in Thessalonica since Paul's departure?**

**How would you describe Paul's disposition toward the Thessalonians?**

**In the Thessalonians passage, Paul responds to the report Timothy gave to him. How are the Thessalonians doing? How did this encourage Paul?**

**In these two Scriptural examples (1 Thes 3 & Job 2), people come to the aid of fellow believers. Can you name a time when the saints comforted and affirmed your faith in a time of need?**

**Even when Paul could not physically be with the Thessalonians, he made sure they were encouraged, supported, and taken care of. Who in your life is in your corner like this? How have they shown you this kind of support?**

**In Paul's relationship with the Thessalonians, we see a community of people who mutually support and encourage one another. How can you participate as God's co-worker in "community" as a call to action for the Kingdom?**

Not only does community provide a source of comfort, but also, as Chad pointed out, it can be a catalyst for action toward participating in the work of the Kingdom. He said, "We aren't just called to spectate at an event but to participate in a mission." Paul trusted Timothy's firm foundation of the gospel! This is evidenced by him sending Timothy in his stead to "establish and exhort" the saints of Thessalonica who were facing affliction. Another way Chad emphasized "Christian community" was highlighting it as a source of hope. What a blessing it is, that God has given us a spiritual community, the church, to both bless and be blessed by. When we are facing trials, suffering, or persecution, we have a community of believers who can comfort us, and whose faith can encourage us to continue to walk in obedience and faithfulness.

*Have a volunteer read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Revelations 21: 1-5*

**What do these passages say about the future of those who place their Hope in Christ?**

**Concerning those who have preceded us in death, what would be our encouragement according to the Scripture?**

**How do the words, "...and so we will always be with the Lord" deepen your understanding of how Paul continually encouraged himself and the churches through trials?**

The outcome of our faith is that after all is said and done; after all the suffering; after the sustaining blows of affliction, we will at last meet our Maker and be face to face! Our blessed hope will transition to the reality of seeing Christ our Savior! This is what Paul was anchored to and to what he exhorted all the churches, including the Thessalonians and us to be established in.

## APPLICATION

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scriptures apply directly to their lives.*

**How can you apply what you have learned about Paul's example of hope in the gospel to a current situation of affliction in your life?**

**What steps of faith can you take this week toward anchoring your hope in the blessed hope of the future of our faith becoming sight?**

**Are you currently facing a trial or difficult circumstance? How can our group support and encourage you during this time?**

## PRAYER REQUESTS

Take a moment to ask your group if there are any prayer requests.

## PRAY WITH YOUR GROUP

*Pray over your group's prayer requests, along with the following prayer:*

Lord would You provide rest in our hearts and implore us to know You as good and trustworthy when our situations might tempt us to believe otherwise. Give us the grace we need to connect in our christian community whereby we find the strength and courage to stand by the hope of Your promise offered to us through the Gospel.

## LP PRAYER REQUEST

Here is the Luke 10 | 02 Missions Prayer Prompt for this week.

59% of the world today is considered unreached — meaning Jesus is not known or named among 4.7 billion people. Pray for organizations like the IMB that are sending people to these unreached places all over the world to share the Good News of the Gospel.

Uganda Mission Trip

\*Pray that the Holy Spirit would prepare the hearts of the people in Uganda to be blessed through the team and for the lost to respond to the gospel.

\*Pray that the team will experience safe travel and health while on the trip and that God will give peace to their families and protect and provide for them during this time.

\*Pray for the health, safety, and travel of the mission team.

Family Ministry

\* Please pray for protection for our kids, students, and their families as they head back to school. Please pray for our teachers and administrators. Please ask the Lord to protect them physically as there is much sickness going around. Please pray for spiritual protection as well.

\* Please pray for our Kids, Students, and 1825 Leaders. Please pray for spiritual momentum in their lives, as well as energy, zeal, and encouragement as they faithfully serve and lead. Please pray that they would continue to grow in their walk with the Lord, maturity in Christ, and in their dependence on Him. Please pray for godly wisdom as they pour into young people.

1825

Please pray for our 1825 Winter Conference on January 28. They will be walking through Matthew 28 and have missions partners on site for students/young adults to engage.

## LP REMINDERS

- January 29 - Kids Core
- February 12 - Starting Point
- February 12 - Lifepoint Students Super Bowl Party
- February 19 - CORE
- February 26 - Baptisms
- February 26 - Discovering Life
- February 26 - Jumpback Training

## MEMORIZE

“We sent Timothy, our brother and God’s coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this.” 1 Thessalonians 3:2-3

## COMMENTARY: Matthew Henry 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5 & 4:13-18

In this chapter the apostle gives further evidence of his love to the Thessalonians, reminding them of his sending Timothy to them, with the mention of his design therein and his inducements so to do (v. 1-5). He acquaints them also with his great satisfaction at the return of Timothy, with good tidings concerning them (v. 6-10). And concludes with fervent prayer for them (v. 11-13).

In these words the apostle gives an account of his sending Timothy to the Thessalonians. Though he was hindered from going to them himself, yet his love was such that he could not forbear sending Timothy to them. Though Timothy was very useful to him, and he could not well spare him, yet Paul was content, for their good, *to be left alone at Athens*. Note, Those ministers do not duly value the establishment and welfare of their people who cannot deny themselves in many things for that end. Observe,

I. The character he gives of Timothy (v. 2): *We sent Timotheus, our brother*. Elsewhere he calls him his son; here he calls him brother. Timothy was Paul's junior in age, his inferior in gifts and graces, and of a lower rank in the ministry: for Paul was an apostle, and Timothy but an evangelist; yet Paul calls him brother. This was an instance of the apostle's humility, and showed his desire to put honour upon Timothy and to recommend him to the esteem of the churches. He calls him also a minister of God. Note, Ministers of the gospel of Christ are ministers of God, to promote the kingdom of God among men. He calls him also his fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ. Note, Ministers of the gospel must look upon themselves as labourers in the Lord's vineyard; they have an honourable office and hard work, yet a

good work. *This is a true saying, If any man desire the office of a bishop, he desires a good work, 1 Tim. 3:1.* And ministers should look upon one another, and strengthen one another's hands, not strive and contend one with another (which will hinder their work), but strive together to carry on the great work they are engaged in, namely, to preach and publish the gospel of Christ, and to persuade people to embrace and entertain it and live suitably thereto.

II. The end and design why Paul sent Timothy: *To establish you and to comfort you concerning your faith, v. 2.* Paul had converted them to the Christian faith, and now he was desirous that they might be confirmed and comforted, that they might be confirmed in the choice they had made of the Christian religion, and comforted in the profession and practice of it. Note, The more we are comforted, the more we shall be confirmed, because, when we find pleasure in the ways of God, we shall thereby be engaged to continue and persevere therein. The apostle's design was to establish and comfort the Thessalonians concerning their faith, -concerning the object of their faith, namely, the truths of the gospel, and particularly that Jesus Christ was the Saviour of the world, and so wise and good, so powerful and faithful, that they might rely upon him, -concerning the recompence of faith, which was more than sufficient to balance all their losses and reward all their labors.

III. The motive inducing Paul to send Timothy for this end, namely, a godly fear or jealousy, lest they should be moved from the faith of Christ, *v. 3.* He was desirous that no man, no one among them, should be moved or shaken in mind, that they should not apostatize or waver in the faith. And yet,

1. He apprehended there was danger, and feared the consequence.

(1.) There was danger,

[1.] By reason of *affliction* and persecution for the sake of the gospel, *v. 3.* These Thessalonians could not but perceive what afflictions the apostles and preachers of the gospel met with, and this might possibly stumble them; and also those who made profession of the gospel were persecuted, and without doubt these Thessalonians themselves were afflicted.

[2.] By reason of the tempter's subtlety and malice. The apostle was afraid lest by any means the tempter had tempted them, *v. 5.* The devil is a subtle and unwearied tempter, who seeks an opportunity to beguile and destroy us, and takes all advantages against us, both in a time of prosperity and adversity; and he has often been successful in his attacks upon persons under afflictions. He has often prejudiced the minds of men against religion on account of the sufferings its professors are exposed to. We have reason therefore to be jealous over ourselves and others, lest we be ensnared by him.

(2.) The consequence the apostle feared was lest his labour should be in vain. And thus it would have been, if the tempter had tempted them, and prevailed against them, to move them from the faith. They would have lost what they had wrought, and the apostle would have lost what he laboured for. Note, It is the devil's design to hinder the good fruit and effect of the preaching of the gospel. If he cannot hinder ministers from labouring in the word and doctrine, he will, if he be able, hinder them of the success of their labours. Note also, Faithful ministers are much concerned about the success of their labours. No one would willingly labour in vain; and ministers are loth to spend their strength, and pains, and time, for nought.

2. To prevent this danger, with its bad consequence, the apostle tells them what care he took in sending Timothy,

(1.) To put them in mind of what he had told them before concerning suffering tribulation (v. 4), he says (v. 3), *We are appointed thereunto*, that is, unto afflictions. So is the will and purpose of God that *through many afflictions we must enter into his kingdom*. Their troubles and persecutions did not come by chance, not merely from the wrath and malice of the enemies of religion, but by the *appointment of God*. The event only came to pass according as God had determined, and they knew he had told them before it would be; so that they should not think it strange, and, being fore-warned, they should be fore-armed. Note, The apostles were so far from flattering people with an expectation of worldly prosperity in religion that, on the contrary, they told them plainly they must count upon trouble in the flesh. And herein they followed the example of their great Master, the author of our faith. Besides, it might prove a confirmation of their faith, when they perceived that it only happened to them as was predicted before.

(2.) To know their faith, that so he might inform the apostles whether they remained stedfast under all their sufferings, whether their faith failed or not, because, if their faith did not fail, they would be able to stand their ground against the tempter and all his temptations: their faith would be a *shield, to defend them against all the fiery darts of the wicked*, Eph. 6:16.

## Chapter 4: 13-18

In these words the apostle comforts the Thessalonians who mourned for the death of their relations and friends that died in the Lord. His design is to dissuade them from excessive grief, or inordinate sorrow, on that account. *All grief* for the death of friends is far from being unlawful; we may weep at least for ourselves if we do not weep for them, weep for own loss, though it may be their gain. Yet we must not be immoderate in our sorrows, because,

I. This looks as if we had no hope, v. 13. It is to act too much like the Gentiles, who had no hope of a better life after this; whereas we Christians, who have a most sure hope, the hope of eternal life after this, *which God who cannot lie hath promised us*, should moderate all our joys and our sorrows on account of any worldly thing. This hope is more than enough to balance all our griefs upon account of any of the crosses of the present time.

II. This is an effect of ignorance concerning those who are dead, v. 13. There are some things which we cannot be ignorant of concerning those that are asleep; for the land they are removed to is a land of darkness, which we know but little of and have no correspondence with. To go among the dead is to go among we know not whom, and to live we know not how. Death is an unknown thing, and the state of the dead, or the state after death, we are much in the dark about; yet there are some things concerning those especially who die in the Lord that we need not, and ought not, to be ignorant of; and, if these things be really understood and duly considered, they will be sufficient to allay our sorrow concerning them.

1. They sleep in Jesus. They are asleep, v. 13. They have *fallen asleep in Christ*, 1 Co. 15:18. Death does not annihilate them. It is but a sleep to them. It is their rest, and undisturbed rest. They have retired out of this troublesome world, to rest from all their labours and sorrows, and they sleep in Jesus, v. 14. Being still in union with him, they sleep in his arms and are under his special care and protection. Their souls are in his presence, and their dust is under his care and power; so that they are not lost, nor are they losers, but great gainers by death, and their removal out of this world is into a better.

2. They shall be raised up from the dead, and awakened out of their sleep, for *God will bring them with him, v. 14*. They then are with God, and are better where they are than when they were here; and when God comes he will bring them with him. The doctrine of the resurrection and the second coming of Christ is a great antidote against the fear of death and inordinate sorrow for the death of our Christian friends; and this doctrine we have a full assurance of, because we *believe that Jesus died and rose again, v. 14*. It is taken for granted that as Christians they knew and believed this. The death and resurrection of Christ are fundamental articles of the Christian religion, and give us hope of a joyful resurrection; for *Christ, having risen from the dead, has become the first fruits of those that slept; and therefore those who have fallen asleep in him have not perished nor are lost, 1 Co. 15:18, 20*. His resurrection is a full confirmation of all that is said in the gospel, or by the word of the Lord, which has *brought life and immortality to light*.

3. Their state and condition shall be glorious and happy at the second coming of Christ. This the apostle informs the Thessalonians of *by the word of the Lord (v. 15)*, by divine revelation from the Lord Jesus; for though the resurrection of the dead, and a future state of blessedness, were part of the creed of the Old-Testament saints, yet they are much more clearly revealed in and by the gospel. By this word of the Lord we know,

(1.) That the Lord Jesus will come down from heaven in all the pomp and power of the upper world (*v. 16*): *The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout*. He ascended into heaven after his resurrection, and passed through these material heavens into the third heaven, which must retain him till the restitution of all things; and then he will come again, and appear in his glory. He will descend from heaven into this our air, *v. 17*. The appearance will be with pomp and power, *with a shout*-the shout of a king, and the power and authority of a mighty king and conqueror, with *the voice of the archangel*; an innumerable company of angels will attend him. Perhaps *one*, as general of those hosts of the Lord, will give notice of his approach, and the glorious appearance of this great Redeemer and Judge will be proclaimed and ushered in by the *trump of God. For the trumpet shall sound*, and this will awaken those that sleep in the dust of the earth, and will summon all the world to appear. For,

(2.) The dead shall be raised: *The dead in Christ shall rise first (v. 16)*, before those who are *found alive at Christ's coming shall be changed*; and so it appears that those who shall then *be found alive shall not prevent those that are asleep, v. 15*. The first care of the Redeemer in that day will be about his dead saints; he will raise them before the great change passes on those that shall be found alive: so that those who did not sleep in death will have no greater privilege or joy at that day than those who fell asleep in Jesus.

(3.) Those that shall be found alive will then be changed. They shall *be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, v. 17*. At, or immediately before, this rapture into the clouds, those who are alive will undergo a mighty change, which will be equivalent to dying. This change is so mysterious that we cannot comprehend it: we know little or nothing of it, *1 Co. 15:51*. Only, in the general, *this mortal must put on immortality*, and these bodies will be made fit to inherit the kingdom of God, which flesh and blood in its present state are not capable of. This change will be *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (1 Co. 15:52)*, in the very instant, or not long after the raising up of those that sleep in Jesus. And those who are raised, and thus changed, shall meet together in the clouds, and there meet with their Lord, to congratulate him on his coming, to receive the crown of glory he will then bestow upon them, and to be

assessors with him in judgment, approving and applauding the sentence he will then pass upon the prince of the power of the air, and all the wicked, who shall be doomed to destruction with the devil and his angels.

(4.) Here is the bliss of the saints at that day: they shall *be ever with the Lord*, v. 17. It will be some part of their felicity that all the saints shall meet together, and remain together for ever; but the principal happiness of heaven is this, *to be with the Lord*, to see him, live with him, and enjoy him, for ever. This should comfort the saints upon the death of their friends, that, although death has made a separation, yet their souls and bodies will meet again; we and they shall meet together again: we and they shall meet together again: we and they with all the saints shall meet our Lord, and be with him for ever, no more to be separated wither from him or from one another for ever. And the apostle would have us *comfort one another with these words*, v. 18. We should endeavour to support one another in times of sorrow, not deaden one another's spirits, nor weaken one another's hands, but should comfort one another; and this may be done by serious consideration and discourse on the many good lessons to be learned from the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, the second coming of Christ, and the glory of the saints in that day.