

## How much do we care? (Isaiah 42:5-7 & 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5)

24-Feb-19

We're continuing our 9-part series on the Apostle Paul's letter to the church of Thessalonica - and we're looking at Part 4

[\[PowerPoint 1-Letter\]](#)

There are Bibles in front of you and a sermon outline in the bulletin if you want to take notes.

Let me pray for God's help before we begin. Let's pray...

### Context

[\[PowerPoint 2-Map\]](#)

The church in Thessalonica is a new church planted by Paul and his missionary mate, Silas. [\[Explain Map\]](#)

[\[PowerPoint 3-Riot\]](#)

Paul and Silas could only spend 3-4 weeks there - before they had to leave in a hurry due to life-threatening opposition - when a riot broke out in Thessalonica because Paul taught about Jesus and some of the Jews became jealous and angry with Paul (Acts 17:1-10)

The believers in Thessalonica had to send Paul and Silas away at night to the next town, Berea (Acts 17:10)

From the tone and content of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians

We can deduce that the Thessalonians still faced that same opposition that drove the missionaries out

[\[PowerPoint 4-Doubts\]](#)

And we can deduce that there were seeds of doubt sown in the Thessalonians' minds by this opposition - and by Satan - and even by their own personal doubts

They were wondering:

- If Paul really cares why isn't he here with us in Thessalonica now?
- How come Paul's has left us to our own devices?
- Is Paul just in it for money, or fame or favours - like the opposition says about Paul?
- How do we know Paul really cares about us?

## Intro

As a church family here at St. David's

[PowerPoint 5a-Intro]

We might have the same personal doubts and questions?

We might be kept awake wondering

Does God care about ME?

Does the minister care about ME?

Do the elders care about ME?

In fact, does anyone in the church family care about ME?

They're all valid questions - aren't they?

[PowerPoint 5b-different question]

But perhaps we should also be asking a different question:

*how much do we care about others rather than how much do people care about me?*

(pause)

Well let's have a look at how much Paul and his missionary mates care about the church family in Thessalonica and then see what we can learn from that...

### How much does Paul care? (1 Thess 2:17-3:5)

How do we know how much Paul cares?

[PowerPoint 6a-desire]

#### 1. He has an intense desire to return to Thessalonica (1 Thes 2:17-18)

Paul really wants to return to Thessalonica because

[PowerPoint 6b-family]

- he sees them as family

In V17-Paul refers to them again as brothers and sisters (in Christ) - He and they are part of the same **family** of Jesus

[PowerPoint 6c-orphaned]

Also, in V17 - He felt **orphaned** - separated in person (but not in thought). Basically, "out of sight but not out of mind". Orphaned conjures up the idea of parents ripped away from their child - or a child ripped away from their parents. We saw last week in chapter 2 - Paul referred to himself as being gentle like a child (a picture of innocence) and being like a nursing mother (looking after the needs of her child) and a loving father (encouraging his children) - all metaphors for a loving devoted family relationship.

[PowerPoint 6d-intense longing]

We see also an **intense longing** for them - [Illustration: missing my children and Leaving my cousins each holiday in Ireland - and really missing them]

Application - do we feel this way about our church family?

Notice - Paul doesn't seem to ever focus on how people care about him? He's all about caring for people and enabling them to come to faith in the Lord. And of course, he wants to see the Thessalonians again.

They are fledgling church - and in any ministry - we shouldn't just start a ministry and then walk away - there must always be **follow up** - to see how the ministry is going - how the people are going - to correct and change things if necessary

We know Paul cares

[PowerPoint 6e-tries to see them]

- **because he makes every effort to see them in v17 and he perseveres**

But- V18 - **Satan blocked his way**. We're not told how Satan blocked Paul's visit. It could be sickness - or the thorn in his side that he refers to (2 Cor 12:7) or it could be that the city rulers/magistrates [politarchs] of

Thessalonica asked for bond/surety as they did in Acts 17:9 - and Paul didn't have the money. Whatever it was - we need to realize:

Satan will try every trick in the book to prevent a church family from growing, to prevent a church family from being cared for, to prevent a church family from being shepherded and to prevent a church family hearing the Gospel.

Satan will attack the church family - through its leadership, through its members - especially when we're weak or tired or stressed or vulnerable.

In Paul's case we know he was persecuted, shipwrecked, imprisoned, falsely accused and had this thorn in his flesh - yet Satan did not get a foothold - Paul still managed to make 3 missionary journeys and write almost half of the books in the NT

AND - he did get back to Greece (in Acts 20)

Application - we should not let Satan get a foothold (Paul says in Eph 4:27) - we should resist the devil and he will flee from you (James says in James 4:7) - we should be alert and sober minded - because our enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (Peter says in 1 Peter 5:8)

Don't let Satan block our caring

Satan is defeated by Jesus on the cross

Yes - Satan can still do damage - but he has been overcome by Jesus

We need to persevere in prayer - and petition God to help us.

(pause)

How much does Paul care?

[PowerPoint 7a-Heading]

## 2. Paul sees the Thessalonians as his hope, joy and crown of glory (v19-20)

In V19 - The very people Paul is accused of abandoning are his hope and joy - Paul says.

[PowerPoint 7b-hope]

Paul's sole purpose is that the Thessalonians will persevere and stand before Jesus saved, when Jesus returns. That's the *hope* that drives Paul.

[PowerPoint 7c-joy]

That's where he will get his **joy** in ministry in knowing the Thessalonians are saved for all eternity through their faith in Jesus' death & resurrection

[PowerPoint 7d-crown]

and he pictures himself and his fellow missionaries receiving a crown of glory when Jesus returns - just like the *victor's crown (a laurel wreath)* in the ancient Olympics - Paul and the missionaries will receive a crown of glory because these Thessalonians that are so dear to Paul - have been victoriously saved from sin and death - and will spend all eternity with Jesus

Application- Is our church family our joy and crown of glory?

Is our crown of joy to see others come to a saving faith in Jesus

If not? Why not?

Do we long for our church family to stand before Jesus when He returns with the victor's crown on - ready to go into eternal Heavenly Glory

Do we long for our community - the ones lost from God - to stand before Jesus when He returns with the victor's crown on - ready to go into eternal Heavenly Glory?

Paul did - he went all across Europe and Asia Minor making sure no one got lost!  
(pause)

[PowerPoint 8a-Heading]

### 3. Paul really cares because he sends Timothy (3:1:5)

In V1 of chapter 3-Paul **can't stand not knowing** what's going on for them.

[PowerPoint 8b-knowing]

There were mobile phones, emails or video chat, face time - so in V2 Paul sends Timothy

In V2 - Timothy is a brother and **God's co-worker** in the Gospel. By describing Timothy, as God's co-worker, Paul is saying Timothy is like-minded and has the same mind-set as Christ - and has the proper gifts to go to Thessalonica

[PowerPoint 8c-high regard]

Even though, Paul has such a high regard for Timothy - as his brother and protégé - he is willing to send Timothy to Thessalonica - because of Paul's **high regard for the Thessalonians** too!

Application - if we can't see or visit someone, do we send someone with the proper gifts to minister to them?

[PowerPoint 8d-Timothy right man]

Paul really cares because **Timothy is the right man to strengthen and encourage them in their persecution**

See V2-3 - The Thessalonians could easily be unsettled by the opposition and trials they faced - they were new Christians in a new church - they needed someone to strengthen and encourage them in their faith -

Paul knows realistically all Christians undergo persecution - it's not a matter of if but when we experience persecution

According to 2 Tim 3:12

Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

Jesus Himself said in John 15:20:

If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.

Also, Paul never loses sight of the fact that his mission and the mission of his mission partners - Silas and Timothy - is to bring the Gospel of Jesus - the Good News - to the Gentiles - as our OT passage says - the mission for the Jews and Paul's mission are the same - Isaiah 42:6-7

"I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness;

I will take hold of your hand.

I will keep you and will make you  
to be a covenant for the people

**and a light for the Gentiles,**

**7 to open eyes that are blind,**

to free captives from prison

and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

Their mission was to call people out of the darkness of sin into the light of Jesus - and nothing is going to stop that - Paul's saying - that's why I sent Timothy

Paul can't return, so that leaves Silas and Timothy - Silas is from Jerusalem and Timothy is Greek - so Timothy is best suited for the environment he will go to.

In fact in v4 - Paul says he warned them when he was with the Thessalonians, at the beginning, he told them, they would be persecuted and it happened - they experienced the same problem as the Judean churches did - where their own people persecuted them (1 Thes 2:14)

Application - Are we there for those who need strengthening and encouraging through trials and persecutions - people going through trials and persecution need our support

Application - Friends, don't be unsettled by any trials and persecutions - we face- - they help us to **grow stronger**, to learn more about God and ourselves, and to grow spiritually - and to share with others - As James 1:2-4 says:

<sup>2</sup>Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup>Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Application - there is also another purpose in The Thessalonians' trials is - it prompted Paul to write his letters - which we all benefit from

[PowerPoint 8e-tempter]

Paul really cares because **he was afraid the tempter might tempt them** -see V5

Remember what Jesus said about Satan -in John 8:44

He [the Devil] was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Remember we are in a spiritual battle - so we need to put on God's full armour (Ephesians 6) for protection from Satan!

Application - Let us not be tempted by Satan's tricks and lies

Remember, Jesus overcame Satan's temptations with God's Words - we can do the same!

Also, we have a promise - 1 Cor 10:13:

<sup>3</sup>No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

### Challenge & Prayers

So back to the original question

How much do we care?

[PowerPoint 9a-heading]

No one in our church family should feel like no one cares?

Each one of us must show we care - Paul and his mates - give us an example of how to care?

Paul sending Timothy shows the practical and spiritual need to ***follow up and check how people are going.***

Currently, caring at St. David's is done by: The Minister, the elders, the carers, growth groups, and the ministry groups we're in together.

[PowerPoint 9b-Minister]

- a. **Minister** - *The Minister does not have a list of people to care for. The Minister goes wherever he feels the need is.*

[PowerPoint 9c-Elder]

- b. **Elders** - *The Elders each have a list of people in the church family that they are assigned to care for and visit. A person does not need to be sick to have a visit; as the function of the elder is spiritual encouragement as well as pastoral carer*

[PowerPoint 9d-Minister]

- c. **Carers** - *Each person in our Church family is assigned a carer. A Carer will only have a few people on their list to care for. The people on their list will usually be either people they have a connection with already or people in the same geographical location. Carers need not necessarily visit everyone on their list (as this is up to the elders) but they should at least keep contact via phone and church, to ensure the person is in good health and to check if they need any practical assistance*

[PowerPoint 9e-Pit Crew]

- d. **Pastoral Pit Crew** - *From time to time, there will be a need for some people in our church family to have intensive pastoral care for a period of time; such as if they are grieving the loss of a loved one; they are recovering from major surgery or illness. Once a month a team, called the Pastoral Pit Crew meet, to decide which people in our church family fall into the category of requiring intensive pastoral care and they are placed on a Pit Crew List; and their pastoral needs are reviewed. This may mean referring people to outside professionals or arranging appointments for medical attention or practical help for a while. When the person no longer*

*needs intensive pastoral care, they are removed from the Pit Crew List.*

**[PowerPoint 9f-Growth Group]**

- e. Growth Group** - *As Growth Groups meet each week, relationships develop and sharing takes place, and as a result first level pastoral care takes place*

There is a list on the noticeboard in the stairwell - showing each person's assigned elder and carer

So, the answer is YES we care! And we care in many other ways - through the groups and ministries we're involved in.

**[PowerPoint 10-Prayers]**

Finally, then, here's some suggested prayers...

In fact, 7 prayers one for each day of the week [[Listed on reverse of the outline](#)] - as we look to care for each other pastorally - like Paul and his missionary mates cared for the Thessalonians...

1. Pray we would develop an intense love and longing to be with and care for our church family
2. Pray we would persevere in our ministry together even when Satan tries to block our attempts
3. Pray that we would not let Satan get a foothold - that we wouldn't be tricked into thinking no one cares - and that we wouldn't be tricked into thinking it is not our job to care for our church family

4. *Pray our hope & joy would be to see our church family stand before Jesus, on His return, in glory, with their victor's crown/wreath on - saved for all eternity*
5. *Pray our hope & joy would be to see our church family stand before Jesus, on His return, in glory, with their victor's crown/wreath on - saved for all eternity*
6. Ask God to show us who needs strengthening and encouraging in our church family
7. Ask God - as we do each time, we recite the Lord's Prayer - to lead us away from temptation and deliver us from the evil one

Let's pray