

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13 Running Against the Wind

Intro: Is there anyone here who likes to sit in traffic?

A) The longest traffic jam on record – China in 2010 - It all happened on the Beijing-Tibet Expressway near Beijing

B) The cause of the traffic jam was road work on the express way and coal trucks that were a part of the road work

1) The traffic jam lasted 12 days, traffic was tied up for 62 miles and cars were only able to travel 2 miles per day.

C) Talk about Road rage!

Sometimes the Christian life can feel like a traffic jam!

A) Seems like it is taking forever for growth to happen – or change to take place or a prayer to get answered

B) Running in a Race – but your running against the Wind!

1) I have had plenty of seasons in my Christian walk that have felt that way!

C) I am sure many of you have gone through that – some are in that place right now today!

Yrs ago I had these two friends – I would ask – how are you doing – Fantastic!

A) Really – thinking I never feel that way: Lord I so often feel like I'm running up hill or into the wind

B) Finally they started going through stuff- How you doing? - **So rough or in a battle** –

1) I would say – so sorry – pray for you – inside – Yes!!!! Finally

C) The great apostle Paul ALSO knew what it was like to encounter traffic jams and road blocks in his Christian walk and ministry -

D) He writes about one of those experiences here in 1 Thessalonians 2-3

1) His desire to get back to see the saints there- He was hindered

Finish Chapter 2 – all of Chapter 3 – see 4 things we can learn from the apostle Paul in dealing with **Spiritual traffic Jams** – running ...wind!

#1 Paul's Burden 2:17-20

#2 Paul's Alternative 3:1-8

#3 Paul's Prayer 3:9-12

#4 Paul's Motivation 3:13; 2:19,20

#1 Paul's Burden

¹⁷ But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, **not in heart**, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. ¹⁸ Therefore we wanted to come to you— **even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us.** ¹⁹ For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

In 1989 trip to Yugoslavia and Hungary – beginning of years of missions for this Church.

A) Yugoslavia one night Music – talking with these young guys –6 guys the next day they came back – ALL SAVED!

B) But then we had to leave – BABIES – Pentecostal Church – knew nothing about it

C) Heart was burdened – baby on a door step – had to get back

1) Jim Westby and I - In one week the group grew – 6 to 30 people.

D) I told them – I will be back – bring someone who would stay

Paul's heart – he longed to get back there – He was only there 3 weeks and then he was forced to leave!

A) Wondering – how they were doing? – No phone, couldn't text – no email – SNAIL MAIL.

B) Berea was only 45 miles a way – 2 day walk - **But our text tells us that Satan hindered Paul.**

1) Amazing to think -Paul, the great apostle could still be blocked by Satan.

C) Satan is not Omni-present like God – so he doesn't waste his time with people like **you/ me** – has bigger fish to fry

1) But he has minions – try to get in our way – hinder us from moving forward in our walks – in ministry.

D) Teaching Sunday School – opposition comes

1) Hang in there – realize – Because you are wanting to make an impact the Devil and his minions are wanting to hinder you.

In Paul's case the Lord allowed this – the question is why?

Suggest to you it was to get Paul writing the epistles

A) 1 Thessalonians was Paul's earliest letter

B) I believe that God used Satan's roadblock to get him to start writing these letters –

C) Think about it – **if Paul had gone** – the believers in Thessalonica would have been blessed -

1) Because Paul was hindered from going believers - have been blessed for 1,000's of years by these letters

D) I think it is safe to say – When Satan saw the great work God did through these letters, he regretted that he ever **hindered** Paul at all.

Application for us: When Satan throws a road block in your path – when God says NO –

A) Don't sulk – don't complain – about what you can't do – **INSTEAD DO WHAT YOU CAN!**

B) David was told that he couldn't build the temple. –

1) Guess what he did? He gathered all the materials and workers and raised the capital to get it done.

C) Do what you can – Can't Lead worship in the Sanctuary? – Lead worship for Kids – a home group

Acts 20 tells us that Paul eventually did end up back in Thessalonica – about 5 yrs later –

A) God's timing is so different from ours – Learn to be Patient

B) Burden's from the Lord don't go away!

C) Learn to wait on the Lord – in my earlier days – I tried to force doors open that God closed

1) I tried to run through road blocks – got beat up

D) Even if I made it through – because it wasn't God's timing – didn't end well – usually a disaster and a struggle.

#2 Paul's Alternative

A) Paul didn't just write – **He sent** – He couldn't go so he sent Timothy in his place and with these letters Ch. 3

Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, ² and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, **to establish you and encourage** you concerning your faith, ³ that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. ⁴ For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. ⁵ For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.

When we left Yugoslavia on that first missionary trip – 30 brand new believers – meeting with twice a day.

A) I told them – I would be back and bring someone else – who would stay there.

B) I brought back a surfer/musician from Huntington Beach – Mike Harris

1) Long hair – Good looking – Lady at Airport looked at him – we got First Class

C) Babies need established/ encouraged Call to take care of New believers

1) Went from 30 people to over a 100 in a matter of weeks

When Paul couldn't handle it anymore – he sent Timothy to go and see how the believers were **fairing** – and to **encourage and establish them in the faith**

A) Paul had warned them that suffering and persecution would come and it did –

Aa) He was dying to know – if Satan had ripped them off.

B) Paul was waiting with baited breath **like a parent** waiting to hear that his kids made it to their destination safely!

1) Get home you breathe a big sigh of relief

C) Paul Waited and then rejoiced when Timothy returned with a favorable report

⁶ But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also *to see* you—

⁷ therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith.

⁸ **For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.**

D) No greater Joy – hearing that people you poured into are still going for it with Jesus –

1) People moved to other states – Kids in Youth group – **A couple my wife and I helped**

John said: **I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. 3 John 4**

E) I think that applies to Children in the faith

Paul didn't just rejoice – ok great they are doing fine – move on – He prayed!

#3 Paul's Prayer!

⁹ For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, ¹⁰ night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?

¹¹ Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. ¹² And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we *do* to you, ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

Note a few things about Paul's prayer

A) His Prayer was persistent: **V.10- night and day praying**

B) Ask and it shall be given – present continual sense – keep on asking!

1) God honors persistent prayer – sometimes it is His way of seeing how serious we really are.

C) Pray once – God doesn't answer – oh well!

1) God is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him

R.U. Darby and his uncle – mining gold in Colorado – came across gold ORE – financed big operation – months drilling

A) Every week they were going further in debt

B) Decided to quit – sold their equipment to a Junkman –

C) The Junkman hired an engineer to continue the work – here is what happened – the engineer discovered they stopped three feet from the gold

D) **Be persistent in Prayer!**

1) Often God's way of getting us to pursue intimacy - keeps us coming

E) He knows if He answered prayer – **1st time every time – He would only see some of us** – when we needed something –

1) He is all about relationship!

Paul's Prayer was persistent:

Paul's Prayer was purposeful: 3 things

A) He prayed for their Spiritual growth! night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and **perfect what is lacking in your faith?**

B) The word translated **“perfect”** has the meaning of **“adjust, equip, furnish or to complete”**

In Chapter 1 Paul was rejoicing because of their faith – but here he says it was lacking – Why?

A) Our faith never reaches perfection; never arrives – always meant to be growing – not growing – STAGNANT

B) We go **“from faith to faith”** (Rom. 1:17).

C) **Step out – exercise Faith**

Faith is like a muscle: it gets stronger with use.

1) Feet to faith – more than just head knowledge – Action – walk in it

D) **TRIALS HELP OUR FAITH GROW!**

1) Faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted !

E) God tries our faith, not to destroy it, but to develop it.

Warren Wiersbe – **What life does to us depends on what life finds in us; and nothing reveals the true inner man like the furnace of affliction. Some people build walls in times of trial, and shut themselves off. Others build bridges and draw closer to the Lord and His people.**

2ND He prayed for their love to abound

A) JESUS said – this is how the world will know that you are my disciples By.....

- ❖ **Your knowledge of Scripture? - No**
- ❖ **Church attendance? - No**
- ❖ **Giving? - No**

B) **Your Love – Love for Jesus – Love for each other – Love for the lost**

C) Grieve when I see the body fighting over petty issues –

1) Hurt feelings -

D) **Your Love – Love for Jesus – Love for each other – Love for the lost**

E) This was **Paul's prayer for these believers**, and God answered it:

2 Thess 1:3-4 We thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, **and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,**

3rd Paul prays that they would be Established!

A) Blameless in Holiness

B) This is interesting – these two go together. Prayer for increased Love and Prayer to be established in Holiness

C) **Love without holiness = tolerance** – Love you but I am never going to tell you when you are wrong.

1) Don't want to offend – don't want you not to like me – don't want confrontation

D) Not really love

**So love without holiness is not good
Holiness without love is legalism**

A) Theologian can be like a porcupine -- **Many fine puts but hard to get close to.**

B) Need the combination of the two – Speak the truth – but speak it in Love

C) Want to know how to pray for your kids – spouse – friend

1) Prayers of the Bible can be helpful

D) Pray for their spiritual growth – faith would mature

1) Pray for their love to abound

2) Pray they would walk in Holiness

So When Paul couldn't do what he wanted to do which was go to them - He did what he could do

A) He wrote letters – church is still being blessed

B) He sent Timothy -

1) He prayed persistently

C) Spiritual traffic jam? – What are you doing – complaining – Sulking – what can you be doing? Do it - -

1) Key to being Fruitful

#4 Paul's Motivation: - Paul had his eyes on something that helped him make the most of his life even in the face of growing opposition

3:13 ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

2:19-20

¹⁹ For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

Paul wanted to get back to them because – he believed that Jesus could come back at any moment – Motivated him

A) When you believe that Jesus could come back at any moment – **He motivates you to MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TIME & LIFE!**

B) That is how Paul lived – he lived his life believing in the soon return of Christ

C) We could look at that and say – wow he missed that one by over 2,000 yrs and counting right.

D) I don't think that Paul regretted that one moment – **I don't think Paul when he Got to heaven was like, man – I missed out on so much**
1) Fishing trips – site seeing in some of those cities

E) See – whether Jesus comes back today – or you die tomorrow or next week or next year – 10 years – 20 years

1) We are all going to stand before Jesus to give an account!

1 Cor. 9:24-27

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? **Run in such a way that you may obtain it. Run to run? Run to win?**

25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Paul is comparing here the Christian life to the Olympic runner and Boxer

A) Those guys train and discipline their bodies – they deny their flesh – for a perishable Crown

B) How much more should we for an imperishable Crown.

C) They are running to win a crown of leaves that is going to wither and rot –

1) We are running for a Heavenly reward – that remains

For that Reason Paul was Running not just to Run – but to win ! Finish Well

A) He had his eye on the target – not a boxer hitting the air –

B) **Target – be closer to Jesus / Be more like Jesus**

1) Glorify Jesus

C) So many people **settling for Mediocrity in their Christian walks** – Just content w/ being there

1) Paul wanted to be great for the Lord

D) Accomplish all that He could for the Lord

So Paul disciplined his Body – brought into subjection – Put it under

Running not just to Run – Running to Win

So when the Bible talks about our Crowns – I believe that it is more referring to the recognition that we will receive in Heaven

Parable of the TALENTS –

A) In that Parable Jesus seemed to make it clear that there would be varying degrees of reward and responsibility in His Kingdom

B) Ruler over 10 cities vs 5 and so forth

C) Think of it this way: All going to enjoy heaven – but our capacity to enjoy it will vary

D) All of us will be rejoicing in Heaven – Some will only be rejoicing that they made it –

1) They escaped the wrath that is to come –

E) Others will be rejoicing not just that they made it

But that others made it – because of them

1) Their Joy will be a little fuller!

The Crown of Rejoicing:

A) This is the Crown of the Soul Winner – those use gift of Evangelism leading others to Christ

B) There will be great Joy and rejoicing in seeing them in Heaven !!

C) Paul knew that it was worth it – when he could picture in his mind – standing before the Lord one day and seeing the faces of the lives he impacted

D) That was the Hope that filled his heart with Joy –

James 1:12 Crown of life

A) Jesus also made mention of this Crown in **Revelation 2:10** of those who faithfully endure Persecution

Crown of Glory 1Pet. 5:4

A) This is the CROWN or RECOGNITION
GIVEN to those who are faithful in
ministering the Word of God !!!!

**B) Could refer to Pastors who faithfully feed
the Flock / Sunday school teachers who
Faithfully minister the word**

1) **Parents who consistently & Faithfully –
share the Word w/ their Kids – the
FLOCK that the Lord has made them
overseers of !!!!!**

**2 Tim. 4:8 He mentions 4th Crown - the Crown of
righteousness =**

**A) Crown of Righteousness is a reward for living
a righteous life**

**B) It is connected to those who love the Lord's
appearing**