

Sermon Title: The Picture Of A Consistent Desire

Sermon Text: 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to realize the intense passion a leader has for his spiritual family.

Sermon Proposition: There are 3 reflections of a strong desire of a spiritual parent.

Introduction: 2 John 4; 3 John 3-4; 1 Corinthians 4:15; Colossians 1:28-29; Galatians 4:9-11; Galatians 4:19-20

- I. The strong desire to see church family on earth. V.17**
- II. The strong desire to see fellowship with the church family. V.18**
- III. The strong desire to see fruit at the coming of Christ. V.19-20**

I. The strong desire to see church family on earth. V.17

A. The attitude of a strong desire. V.17a

The intensity of Paul's desire to see his spiritual children, because as their spiritual parent, is evident by these emphatic descriptions: greatly desired, made every effort, and time and again.

Paul in (**Acts 17:5-9**) had been forcefully separated, (torn away) from his spiritual children. His motherly (**v.7**), fatherly (**v.11**), and pastoral instincts had been dealt a severe blow. Lit. the Thessalonians had been orphaned by Paul's forced departure. The verb (apophanisthentes) means exactly that "to be orphaned" and used only here in the New Testament. For Paul it was as if his children and family were being torn apart by the separation. It broke his heart to be separated and to remain separated from these infant babes in Christ. **Acts 17:5-9** But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. **6** But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. **7** "Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king-- Jesus." **8** And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. **9** So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

Although he had been ripped apart from them physically, they were still very present in his heart and mind. (**1 Thessalonians 2:17b; 3:10**)

Philippians 1:7 just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

2 Corinthians 8:16 But thanks *be* to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.

Galatians 4:20 I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.

B. The action of a strong desire. V.17b

The great desire, mandated action to be taken, to make repeated attempts to return to his children and family, in order to gather together. Paul and his companions take great pains, in an effort to return to the church. Therefore, they made plans on an attempted return.

The term "great desire" translates (polle epitumia) a general expression for any kind of dominant passion or compelling, controlling desire, to see the face of the Thessalonians again, and soon.

Genesis 33:10 And Jacob said, "No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me.

Genesis 48:11 And Israel said to Joseph, "I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!"

Exodus 10:29 And Moses said, "You have spoken well. I will never see your face again."

2 John 12 Having many things to write to you, I did not wish *to do so* with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

II. The strong desire to see **fellowship** with the church family. V.18

A. The **raging** passion. V.18a

Paul and his companions had made several attempts to return to the Thessalonians, because of the intense longing they had for the brethren. The care, feeding, and welfare of these infant Christian was not just an obligation of duty or for the leaders personal benefit. It was a desire they longed for with all of their heart, because of their family love as parents, in spite of the personal risk to themselves.

Paul's reason for such a strong desire to return was to fellowship and provide additional spiritual strength and stability for these infant believers. This is clearly within the will of God, to oppose this desire is clearly to oppose the will of God.

B. The **resistant** person. V.18b

Regardless of who was involved from a human level, the ultimate adversary and leader of this kind of opposition is Satan. The name Satan means "adversary" as one who is opposed to God, His plan and His church.

2 Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

Acts 17:8-10 And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. **9** So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. **10** Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

Satan the adversary opposed Paul and his companions, in order to tear it down, and destroy them. Satan opposed Paul in the sense that a military foe or force would hinder the advance of their enemy.

The goal of the adversary in this campaign is to infiltrate, to poison, to make weak, apathetic and complacent. To deflate hope, to distract our focus, to dilute truth.

Satan is said to be present at the church at Jerusalem (**Acts 5:1-10**), Smyrna (**Revelation 2:9-10**), Pergamum (**Revelation 2:13**), Thyatira (**Revelation 2:24**), Philadelphia (**Revelation 3:9**), Ephesus (**1 Timothy 3:6-7**) and Corinth (**2 Corinthians 2:1-11**).

Smyrna- Revelation 2:9-10 "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and *I know* the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan. **10** "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Pergamum- Revelation 2:13 "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne *is*. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas *was* My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

Thyatira- Revelation 2:24 "Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden.

Philadelphia- Revelation 3:9 "Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie-- indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

Ephesus- 1 Timothy 3:6-7 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the *same* condemnation as the devil. **7** Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

“As John Calvin wrote, ‘Whenever the ungodly cause us trouble, they are fighting under the banner of Satan, and are his instruments for harassing us.’” [John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, 1983, p. 697]

III. The strong desire to see **fruit** at the coming of Christ. V.19-20

A. The **rationale** includes 4 points.

1. They are the leader’s hope. V.19a

The church is the source of hope for the leaders both now and in the future.

(**1 Thessalonians 2:20; 3:9; 2:19**)

2 Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ.

Colossians 1:28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

14 If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. **15** If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Philippians 2:16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

2. They are the leader’s joy. V.19b

This focus is eschatological. “We labor in birth pains to see Christ formed in you,” the joy of delivery happens at the coming of Christ.

1 Peter 4:13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

Jude 24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present *you* faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

Revelation 19:7 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

3. The leader’s crown of rejoicing. V.19c

The reference to a “crown” carries the image of a laurel wreath worn on the head in reward for victory at a Greek athletic contest. Paul viewed the Thessalonians and other believers as (his crown of boasting), which would be evident at Jesus coming.

1 Corinthians 9:25 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*.

2 Timothy 4:8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

4. The leader’s validation at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. V.19d

“Coming” or Parousia, literally means “to be present.” The context indicates Paul most likely refers here to Christ’s coming for the rapture of the church. (**2 Corinthians 5:10**)

Hebrews 13:7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of *their* conduct.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Luke 16:9 "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.

Revelation 22:12 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

Romans 14:10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

B. The **rapture** of the end. V.20

Paul's crown and Christian leaders crowns are the believers they have faithfully ministered to.

Dr. Evans Study Bible p.1422 notes states, "Paul had an eternal perspective, ('living earthly temporary life'). When I get to heaven, I want to see a welcoming committee there because of what I've done on earth." There is a deep unshakeable joy in saying, "Lord Jesus, let me deliver to you these other Saints."

In summary, the greatest glory one can ascribe to Jesus Christ, the greatest joy they can ever experience at the judgment seat of Christ, is the "Believers themselves." They were worth everything that was worth anything to Paul, and for every true leader. The development of his children and church family was what he lived for as a spiritual parent.

"This profession of affection should have removed any thoughts from the Thessalonian Christians' minds that Paul had not returned because he was unconcerned or selfish. [John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, 1983, p. 697]