

PAUL'S GREAT DESIRE

--1ST THESSALONIANS 2:17-20--

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we will finish 1st Thessalonians chapter two. In the closing verses of this chapter Paul reassures the Thessalonian believers of his love and concern for them. Paul does not want these fairly new believers to believe that he deserted them when the persecution began and that he did so because he did not love them or have concern for them.

As I stated last week, we do not know how long Paul, Silas, and Timothy were in Thessalonica. They had only been away for a short time when Paul pens this letter to the church, but in this letter, we see the emotional struggle that Paul endured being separated from them. Paul deeply cared for the Thessalonian Christians and as he tells them of his great desire to see them again it is seen in his love for them, its' fulfillment was hindered by Satan, but Paul longed for it to be fulfilled at Christ's return for the church.

I. PAUL'S GREAT DESIRE (1st Thessalonians 2:17-20)

- a. It was not Paul's plan to leave Thessalonica when he did, he was _____ to leave.
- b. The church sent Paul, Silas, and Timothy away by night for their own _____ and for the safety of the new church. (1st Thessalonians 3:1-3, 5)

II. PAUL'S DESIRE SEEN IN LOVE (1st Thessalonians 2:17-18a)

- a. This letter is not the only letter that Paul wrote that speaks of his _____ for fellow believers. (2 Corinthians 2:4; Philippians 1:7-8; Romans 16:1-16; Acts 20:36-38)
- b. Paul _____ the Thessalonian believers with this same love that he expressed to the readers of his epistles.
- c. As I already mentioned, Paul did not want to leave Thessalonica when he did, he was _____ out.
- d. Paul goes on that he, Silas, and Timothy had only been away from them for a short while, and he has a deep longing, a great _____ in his heart to be with them again. (2 Cor. 11:28-29)

- e. This intense _____, this sense of responsibility that Paul felt for the churches is due to the fact that he planted those churches.
- f. Then as if to emphasize his own strong feelings, Paul unexpectedly switches from the plural "we" to the singular "I, _____."

III. PAUL'S DESIRE HINDERED BY SATAN

(1st Thessalonians 2:18b)

- a. Even though Paul's great _____ was to return to the church in Thessalonica, he also understood another reality.
- b. That reality was that he faced satanic _____ in his ministry and in his attempt to return to Thessalonica.
- c. Satan's goal is to _____, prevent or at best _____ the progress of God's kingdom in the same way an army seeks to frustrate and prevent the advance of an opposing army.

IV. PAUL'S DESIRE FULFILLED AT CHRIST'S RETURN

(1st Thessalonians 2:19-20)

- a. Paul's great hope which he taught to others and always lived out in his life was the hope of the _____ of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- b. Paul then answers his own _____ with another question that is somewhat surprising.
- c. Paul understood that if he never saw the Thessalonian believers again in his present life, he would see them in the future at Christ's _____. (Revelation 22:12)
- d. The word translated "coming" is an important New Testament word, the actual Greek word means "_____" and carries the idea of being with someone.

CONCLUSION:

In this closing paragraph of chapter two Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica with the truth that he did love them, as evidenced by his great desire to see them again, to keep him from returning to them required opposition from Satan which God in His

providence and purpose allowed. Paul further encouraged the Thessalonian believers by reminding them of the joy they would have in the presence of the Lord Jesus when He returned for the church, then they would be together forever with no one and nothing to separate them. Paul reminds them in verse 20 that the Thessalonian believers would be central to his eternal joy and that of Silas and Timothy also. Paul also says that they are their glory, which is a true honor bestowed on them by God, who used Paul, Silas, and Timothy to reach the Thessalonians by bringing them the gospel of God. Who will be your hope, who will be your joy, who will be your crown of exultation in the presence of the Lord Jesus at His coming? I can think of some who will be mine because the Lord has given me the honor of reaching them with the gospel of God. There is no greater joy than leading someone to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and I hope that each of you get to experience that joy in your life.