

# (1 Thessalonians) Paul's Concern for the Converts

by Willie Mullan

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*Paul's concern for his converts is a reminder that every true man of God is concerned about the folk he leads to Christ.*

**Duration:** 1:10:02

**Topics:** "Concern"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being unshakable, unmovable, and unquenchable in one's faith. He compares believers to soldiers in a great war fight, reminding them that they are constantly on a battlefield. The preacher encourages the young believers to remain steadfast in their faith, even in the face of temptation and affliction. He praises their faith and love, highlighting how their unwavering commitment to following the law brings comfort and consolation to others.

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## Transcript

First letter to the Thessalonians, after the third chapter, and there are some wonderful truths for us tonight in these thirteen verses. First of all, there are three very precious pictures again of the Apostle Paul. I want to underline, first of all, the concern in Paul's mind for his converts.

The concern, this chapter begins with Paul saying, Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, my Paul had great concern for these young believers of Thessalonica. The first picture was that Paul's concern for his converts. And then you'll find that you have Paul's comfort through his converts.

The concern in Paul's mind for his converts, and then the comfort in Paul's soul through his converts. You see, young believers can bring comfort and strength and blessing to old believers. And then the third picture, you have not only Paul's concern and Paul's comfort, but you have Paul's pride for his converts at the end of the chapter.

You see, verse eleven, Now God himself and our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct your way unto you, and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love. Paul is crying to his heavenly Father for these young believers of Thessalonica. We're dealing, first of all, with these three pictures of Paul.

The concern in Paul's mind for his converts, the comfort in Paul's soul through his converts, and the cry from Paul's heart for his converts. Those will be the pictures of Paul that we'll deal with in the chapter. Then you have not only that, but you have the testimonial and task of Timothy in this chapter.

Something that's well worth looking at. The second verse says, And sent to Mosiah, our brother and minister of God, our fellow laborer. Why, that's a great testimony.

Brother, minister, laborer. But you haven't only his testimonial, you have his task. He had a great task.

He was sent to the Thessalonians to establish them and to comfort them concerning their faith. That was a big task, and it's a wonderful one for those who can do it. So that you have these pictures of Paul, then you have the testimonial and the task of Timothy, and then you have something else in the chapter that we must underline.

You have the triumph of the Thessalonians in their tribulation. By the storm was howling round these unbelievers, but they got above the storm, and they triumphed even in the storm. But I would say that the most important part of the chapter, and the deep part, and the part that I want to underline for you most, is the tempter's tricks in times of trouble.

The old tempter, the devil himself, Satan, was really making the storm rage around these young believers at Thessalonica. And I think that that would embrace everything that we need to touch in the chapter. Pictures of Paul, the task and testimonial of Timothy, the triumph of the Thessalonians, and the tricks of the tempter.

That will do for outlining the chapter. Now let's get down to see it in detail. I want you to see this concern in the heart of Paul.

Do you remember when I opened this first letter of Paul to the Thessalonians? I took you way back into the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 16. In the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 16, you have Paul, our Philippi, preaching the gospel in the prison. You remember that the Philippian jailer got wonderfully saved, and then of course again the storm howled round Paul, and he had to leave Philippi because of persecution.

And he went down the foot and came to Thessalonica. And when he came to Thessalonica, you remember that it said, A rich multitude of rich beliefs. He had a revival at Thessalonica.

A multitude, mark you, of rich, yet pagan, idolatrous worshippers. Why, the first chapter talks of that they turned to God for idols. A rich multitude.

But when God worked in that wonderful way at Thessalonica, again the storm came and Paul had to flee to Berea. And again God was working at Berea, and God had to flee, or Paul had to flee on to Athens. Now as the great apostle left the Thessalonians, and had to flee down the coast, and had to go on to Athens, all the time he was concerned about these young believers that he had led to saving faith in Christ at Thessalonica.

He was concerned about them. I believe that every true man of God, and every true fisher of men, and every true evangelist, I believe he's concerned all the time about the folk that he leads to Christ. You see, I have the great joy of meeting with quite a number of this one.

I've had to leave them. Some of them I never meet again. But all the time I'm concerned about them.

Yet there's a concern in my heart for every soul I lead to the Lord. Sometimes the circumstances of life make it so that you never get back to help them. Sometimes the devil makes it so.

That's what happened to Paul in the last chapter we read. But Satan hindered that. Yet he could see the devil working in circumstances for life.

And the old devil was working this warfare so wonderfully that he was taking the greater part, so that there would be nobody there to come for them. And yet here's Paul, although he's working for God and fleeing before the storm, his mind is deeply concerned about these converse. And so he opens this chapter with these words.

Therefore, when we could no longer forbear, yet this concern, first of all, it became unbearable. Why, that's the mark of a great man of God. You know, he just cannot take it any longer.

And so he makes a plan here. This concern became so unbearable that it led Paul to do something that's admirable, admirable. He said to Timothy, Look, I'll wait at Athens alone.

I'll face this pagan cloud in the old. You go back and find out what these young converts are about in the storm. Why, I think that was wonderful.

That this man was so concerned for the blessing and building up of these young believers that he would send Timothy back, and he would weather the storm alone that these young believers might be blessed. You see, the devil had made it so that Paul couldn't go back. If he would go back, he would be in danger.

And Paul was determined to go forward into Athens with the gospel. Of course, the devil tried to stop him there. Sometimes the devil tries to stop us from going back.

Sometimes the devil tries to stop us from going forward. But I'll tell you a trick. He can never stop you from going up.

When you're concerned about young believers, if you can't get back to them and you can't go forward, well, bless God, you can go up to the throne. And I spend a lot of time praying for those that I lead to the Lord, because I know that the very same spiritual satanic warfare that we are going to give out in this chapter this evening, that's why I'd like you to pay attention to this spiritual warfare that's in the chapter. This concern, it was, first of all, unbearable, and it led to something that was admirable, and all the time it was overshadowed by something that we will call a fear that's understandable.

Paul was afraid of something. Watch this. Do you see verse 5? For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain.

You see, Paul had this at the back of his mind all the time. He was concerned deeply and really and honestly for these young believers, because he knew how the tempter would work. Lest the tempter have tempted you.

Do you know, for you younger believers, there's a study that you could do in that book, if you would take your time, and it's to find out the fears of the apostle Paul. And I'll tell you how to find them all out. I think I went over it and found them out, and I found about twelve of them.

You'll find it by the word left. You see, it's in verse 5 there. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter, he was afraid that the devil had got in among these young believers and had forced them into surrender, so that they would go forward, move further.

Which I show you one or two of the fears of the apostle, if I remember them now. 1 Corinthians, chapter 8. 1 Corinthians, chapter 8. There are not too many of them. I'll just start you off on the study.

Then you can find the rest of them for yourself. 1 Corinthians, chapter 8. And Paul's writing to the Corinthians here about something that was being debated at Choms. It was the eating of meat, meat that was offered to idols in the market.

Then after it was offered to idols, it was put up for sale. And of course some of the believers thought they should never eat this meat that had once been offered to idols. Paul said, you know, I know that an idol is nothing.

It doesn't matter to me, it's only a piece of stone. I can eat the meat. I have no conscience about eating the meat.

But here's what he said in the last verse. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world's thunder. Lest, you see the lest, lest I make my brother to offend.

You know, Paul went through life a priest, a prophetic, a believer, even by an action that he felt that he was at liberty to do. I think that that's a great principle. I think it's a principle that we should get the hold of.

There may be some things that you could lawfully do, no harm in it as far as you're concerned. But by you doing it, you may lead some other believers who begin the thing, and they'll not finish where you finish. You'll lead them into the depths of trouble.

And lest you should be guilty of any such thing, you should be like Paul. You should stop doing the thing that's lawful for you to do. Somebody said to me the other day, Do you think there's any harm in the television? I said, I'm perfectly sure that there are some wonderful things on it.

And I'm perfectly sure there are some things that's very valuable. Have you got one? No, I haven't got one. Why have you not got one? Well, I said, you know, I'm sure that if I had one, I could look at certain things, and when things come on that I don't want to look at, I could probably go away and turn it off.

Yes, said the friend, that's what we do. I said, supposing by me having it and doing what you're doing, I encouraged somebody else to do it, who couldn't do it. Yes, I would be where Paul was, wouldn't I? I might give offense to some young believer who would go on into the depths of things he should never touch, so that there's a danger.

There is a lawful, righteous way of going about things, but Paul was afraid, afraid of giving offense to the least believer. It's a great fear. Would be God we would inoculate it more with us, that we would walk carefully, lest we should give offense to some believer.

Look at chapter nine, and again it's the last verse, in verse twenty-seven he said, but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be cast away. You know, this was something that Paul feared every day he lived. He was afraid of this old body getting out of control, and when he had preached to others, that just because fleshly appetite should

take in the term of his life, the Lord would have to leave him.

It would be a dreadful thing to be cast away. You know, I was talking to a fellow just the other day, and we talked about a certain thing that happened some years ago, and I could see the big tears coming into his eyes. And I said, I'm very sorry if we have to mention this.

He said, ah yes, those were the days, weren't they? And we were thinking about days away back there, nearly eighteen years ago, when he was one of those, and just because of a fleshly thing that happened, he was put on the shelf, driving a taxi to make a castaway. Why, every man that's serving God should be afraid, afraid of lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. Terrible thing.

Here's another fear. Do you see Hebrews chapter twelve? I must stop looking for these. Hebrews chapter twelve, and in the middle of the first verse he says, And let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking on to Jesus, the offerer and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and was set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your mind. You know, this was something that Paul always feared. He feared lest he would get weary and faint in the work of the law.

Many a time we are weary in the work, but we are never weary of it. Never. And he said, you know, you just keep your eye on the cross.

You just see the battered form. You just see what shame and pain and agony he endured. Lest ye be weary.

Why he was afraid of this. He was afraid of offending a believer. He was afraid of being a cast away.

He was afraid of being weary of the work. He was afraid of the tempter getting his hands on young believers. And you can put ten or twelve more to these fears of the apostles.

If you take a concordance and just trace the word lest, you'll have the whole cloud of them before you, and you'll have a wonderful subject to think out for yourself. Now let's go back to 1 Thessalonians chapter 3. You can see the concern in the mind of Paul for these converts. A concern that was unbearable, he could go on no longer.

A concern that led to something that was admirable, he said, I'll stay at Athens alone. I'll face this cloud of my own. You go back and see how these converts are carrying him at home.

A concern that was overshadowed with a fear that's understandable. My Paul was a spiritual man. He said to children a way back yonder, the old devil will go britching them just now.

There'll be an air raid upon them, a spiritual air raid. And he said, I want you to go back and strengthen them and establish them and support them in the thought, what am I? You can see the concern in Paul's mind. But let's go on till you see the comforts in Paul's soul.

If you've read this chapter over several times, you'll find that the two words, your state, is five times in the chapter. Did you find that out as you read the chapter? You see that second verse, at the end of the verse it says, to establish you, Timothy was sent back to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith. Now I don't think for a moment that Paul was worried at all about the profession that these young converts

had made.

I don't think he's sending Timothy back to examine whether they have trusted Christ or not. Why, he has already told us in the other two chapters that they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. Ye became followers, ye became sufferers.

You know what's in the other chapter. No, he wasn't thinking like that. He was thinking, I wonder are they still walking in faith in the middle of the king's highway even when the storm from Satan has come.

That's what he was worried about. And so he's sending Timothy back to examine their faith. Watch this fifth verse.

For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith. And that was the examination of the faith. He said, Timothy, you go back and see if they're walking by faith.

I wonder how we would fare if our faith was being examined. You walking day by day by faith? This was the examination. Now watch what happens.

Verse six. But now when Timotheus came from you unto us and brought us good tidings of your faith. Why, that was the proclamation of their faith.

Are you getting it? The examination of their faith. And now comes the proclamation of their faith. Now watch again.

Verse seven. Therefore brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith. You see, that's the consolation of their faith.

You see, when Timothy went back to examine these young converts, although the devil had afflicted them, although the tempter had tempted them, although the poor had howled, although the beauty of the earth, yet Timothy found them standing in the middle of the king's highway and he came back with good tidings. He came back and proclaimed to Paul, those young converts are standing up for God, steadfast and unmovable as we'll see in a moment or two. And at that moment Paul was being blitzed by the devil himself who said, in all our affliction and distress, he uses that word, and distress, we were comforted by your faith.

Oh, what a wonderful thing. You know, you young believers, you don't realize this. I know you don't.

You know, sometimes I go into that little room and I meet with somebody and I put my arm around them and I lead them to the Savior, and then, and then they go away. And then day after day I keep my eye on them and I see them walking in the middle of the king's highway, I see them at the prayer meeting, I hear them beginning to pray, I hear them giving their testimony, I hear them preaching on the street, I begin to see them growing in grace. My eye was away preaching at a big conference last Saturday, and I had no one with me who was singing for the Lord.

And my, as he stood up there singing these wonderful messages that he can so ably sing, as he got that word over, man, I could remember the night when I just got clattered and torn down a mountain. I can remember the very moment I put my arm around them. I can remember seeing the tears fall.

What comfort! Oh, if you young believers only knew. My, if you only knew that when you left your voice in the prayer meeting and you know you can hardly get through a few phrases, and you're so timid and

you're so afraid, you don't know how much good it does some of us older folks. Ah yes, we're comforted in all our affliction and distress by the consolation of you young believers.

You can be a great blessing to those who are away in years before you in the spiritual warfare. Ah, but he goes further here, watch this. He says in verse 9, For what thanks can we render to God again for you? For all the joy, well-wished joy, for your sake before our God.

Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your faith and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith. Ah, I want you to get the hold of that, you know. When he sent Timothy to know about the faith, that was the examination of the faith.

When Timothy came back with the good tidings, that was the proclamation of the faith. When these good tidings comforted Paul, that was the consolation of the faith. But this is the bit he's at now.

He says, you know, you need things added to your faith. Oh, I know your faith in God, I know your arms around the finished work, I know your walking by faith, but Peter brings the whole story out when he says, God, through your faith. Let's go into that to be fixed.

Let's turn to 2 Peter, so you just see this. 2 Peter, and it's the first chapter. And how wonderfully put this is.

Verse 5, 2 Peter, chapter 1, verse 5. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue. I wonder how you added this virtue. Then he goes on, add to virtue knowledge.

I wonder, are we growing in the knowledge of the Lord? And then he says, and through knowledge, temperance, or self-control, and through self-control, patience, and through patience, godliness, and through godliness, brotherly kindness, and through brotherly kindness, love. Why you need to add to your faith? You see, a young believer just realizes that they're unsaved at a certain moment, and that they're perishing sinners, and that Christ died for them on the cross, and that the finished work will set them vital in the scroll, and to put the arms of their faith around the finished work, and they're saved. Notice, Paul, add to the thing that's lacking in your faith.

I'd like to establish, that's the idea. I'd like to see you growing that virtue, and knowledge, and brotherly kindness, and love, and patience, and all the rest of it, add to your faith. Why, the man that talks about a second blessing, and forgets second Peter, he's forgotten something.

Ah, you don't close your eyes and waken up, you know, real out and out, do you? You need to add to your faith, virtue, and you need to add to virtue, knowledge, and you need to go on adding and adding, all the time. Paul says, you know, I long to come back to you. I long to sit down among you.

I long to open up the truths of God's words, that I might perfect that which is lacking in your faith. Mind you, that was the faith that comforted Paul, just to see them in the middle of the king's highway. And so you can see the comfort that's in the soul of Paul through these converts.

Let's get the last picture in quickly. Paul's cry for the converts. Paul's concern, Paul's comfort, Paul's cry.

I'd like you to watch this, how Paul prayed for them. Do you see verse 11? Now God himself, and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. You know, Paul's very particular to bring this equality in right through this epistle, to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that our Lord Jesus Christ is co-equal with the Father.

And he always puts them together, as you'll notice as you read the epistle. And he prays for himself first. Now God himself and our Father direct our way unto you.

Somebody asked me once, does that prayer ever answer? That's a very tight one, isn't it? For as I know, Paul never got back for several nights. But you know, God answers prayer in some wonderful and remarkable way. You see, what Paul longed to do was to go back and sit down among them, and make them the sheep of the fold.

And day after day, and month after month, and year after year, teach them the great things of God. That's what he longed to do. But sometimes our ways are not God's ways, and our thoughts are not God's thoughts.

But God inspires him to write the very letters that we are handling now. And instead of Paul going back, the inspired word through Paul went back, and he established the belief. You know that sometimes we pray for things, and we say the thing to God in our way.

You know, one fellow told me this once. He said, I'll go out in the ruins one day. And as I got away out into the nature, into the sea, it was released.

He said, you know, I sat back dreaming. And as I sat back dreaming, the two oars fell overboard, and said I was drifting on the sea. He said, the moment that they began to float away, I got scared.

As I got down in the boat on my knees, and I said, Oh God, oh God, won't thou this day, for Christ's sake, won't thou bring these oars back to the boat? But he said, you know, the Lord never brought the oars back to the boat. But he said he brought another ship round the corner of the island, and they picked me up. But after all, you know, what he was really praying for was to be saved.

But he wanted God to do it his way. But God answered his prayer his own way. And here's Paul saying, direct your ways.

Well, Paul was used to God to bring through epistles. But here's verse 12 of chapter 3, He is, and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love. I like the way he prays for them here, the Lord make you.

You know, he's looking upward now. He's praying for these young converts back in the squatter. The Lord make you.

That's looking upward. The Lord make you to increase. That's inward.

And abound. That's outward. In love, one toward another.

That's in love. I want you to get the hold of this, that all that he prayed for these young believers back in the storm of death, that they might be filled with love. Well, that was a strange prayer.

He might have said, well, Paul, you should pray that the devil will be muddled, that the storm will cease, that the darkness will be taken away, that the sky will be clear. No, he prayed that they'd love one another. My dear young believers, the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another.

My, if you really love one another, it'll not matter what the devil does. That's what he prayed for. And he went further, mind you.

He didn't only look upward and pray for this inward filling of love, that it might abound outward and stintward, but he prayed and toward all men. Now, that's heaven award. My, that's what we need these days.

We need, first of all, love for one another and love for sinners. What a prayer. You love all the saints? You love sinners? This is how we pray.

And he prayed this great prayer for this purpose. Do you see the last verse? To this end. In my Bible, those three words are like this.

So that, and I think it's far clearer, he's praying that they may be filled with love toward one another and toward all sinners, so that God may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. You know, you'll never be unblameable in holiness down here. Some people don't see this text, that it applies to the coming of the, here's what they say.

He's saying, you know, if you fellows can be filled with love toward one another and toward sinners, when you stand at the judgment seat of Christ and your life examined, you'll be unblameable in holiness then before God. Look. Paul's saying, when the Lord comes, you'll be unblameable in holiness at his coming.

And the nearest thing to unblameable holiness in this life here and now is to love one another and love sinners. I heard people talking about holiness and they don't love something. I hear people talking about sinless protection and they ridicule me every day.

But they're afraid to come to ridicule me to myself. They run around this town talking about they never sin and they cut lumps out of me every day the less. But I pray for them at the end of the day.

The nearest thing to unblameable holiness in this life is to love one another and to love sinners. Love sinners. That's what Paul's praying.

What a cry he cried for these converts. You can see his concern, can't you? You can see his comfort. You can hear his cry.

Now let's go from Paul to Timothy now. Watch Timothy in the second verse. Here's Timothy's testimonial from Paul.

He said, Therefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left alone at Athens, and sent Timotheus our brother. I think that's lovely. Mike Paul could really talk about these fellow workers.

First of all he says Timothy's the brother. That's what Timothy was, Paul was, shall we say. Mike Paul could look at this young fellow.

Mike, he's a brother. He would stand so close to you. Yes, he's someone who would support you.

Someone who would suffer with you. He was a real brother. All that we could say of one another.

Mike, my brother. My brother. That's the first thing that Paul could say about Timothy.

He says, our brother. Then he said something more, didn't he? He said, Timotheus our brother and minister of God. That's a great testimony.

You know, that's not Paul word, that's God word. You know, he could look at this young fellow. Who would stand beside him in the storm.

Who would suffer with him. Who would sing for him. Who would be there at the end of the biggest tolling that ever came.

He could say, ah, but he's a man of God. He's a servant of God. Great when you can look at one another and say, he's my brother and he's a servant of God.

He's a servant of God. He said something more, didn't he? He said, our brother, minister of God, fellow liberal in the gospel. You see, he wasn't only a brother to Paul and a servant of God.

But he was a picture of man in the world. He was a fellow liberal in the gospel. You get this wonderful testimonial as it came Paul word.

As it went God word. As it went world war. He was a fellow liberal in the gospel.

What a testimonial. With regard it could be said of all. That we were brothers to one another.

That we were servants of God. That we were fellow liberals in the gospel. A great testimony.

And here's the task this young man had. Paul sent him down to the Thessalonians to establish you and to comfort you. I think that's lovely.

Two great things. Paul knew that the devil would be busy. That this poem was howling.

And he sent Timothy down to establish these things and to comfort them. Do you see the four things that Timothy was? He was a brother. He was a servant.

He was a liberal. He was a blesser. He was a brother to Paul.

He was a servant to God. He was a liberal to the world. He was a blesser of young believers.

My, what a testimony and what a task. Now we are slipping on from that. I want you to notice the triumph of the Thessalonians.

Verse 5 says, For this cause when I could no longer forbear I came to know your faith. Let by some means the tempter have tempted you and our labor be in vain. But now when Timotheus came from you unto us and brought us good tidings of your faith.

I want you to notice first of all that they were unshakable in their faith. Unshakable. Do you see the third verse? He said, I sent Timothy to establish you and to comfort you concerning your faith that no man should be moved by these afflictions.

And bless God they weren't moved. They were unmovable in their following. They were unshakable in their faith.

They were unmovable in their following. And in that sixth verse again it says, Good tidings of your faith and charity. That word should be love.

Your faith and love. They were unquenchable in their love. I want you to see these young converts.

Unshakable in faith. My, the devil couldn't shake them. Christ.

They were unmovable in following the law. Unmovable. They were unquenchable in their love.

What a picture of a young believer. No wonder it thrilled Paul's heart. He looked back.

They were unshakable and unmovable and unquenchable. But let's come to the deep bit of the chapter. The trick of the temple.

Now I'd like to take a moment or two at this to work this out for these young believers around me that your eyes might be opened and that you might understand from this night forward that every moment you live from now until you see the Saviour you're on a battlefield. You're a soldier of the law. Mind you, you belong to a great army.

You belong to a great army. You're a soldier of Christ. And mind you, you're in a great war, sir.

You lead the fight, this war fight, this great fight of faith. And remember that we wrestle not with flesh and blood. Our argument is not with man.

Remember every day you live on this battlefield, this spiritual battlefield. You're wrestling with principalities and powers and the rules of the darkness of this world, of spiritual wickedness and high places. Against this meeting and all around me tonight are wicked spirits.

And they'd love to crush me in. And they'd love to try to muddle me in my thoughts. But the Lord is more powerful than them and I come onto this platform with faith in Him.

I want you to get the hold of this. You know, the moment that they trusted the Lord Jesus and turned to God from idols, that moment a battle opened. And the first thing that happened was the devil removed power.

You see, the devil could get some of his agents down at Thessalonica on godly men and they came in and they so stirred up the people that they removed Paul, the devil was behind them. And you know, as Paul slipped down to Berea and Jehovah slipped down to Athens, my, he longed to go back, he longed to go back. Did you see what he wrote in the last chapter? I didn't touch it very much because I meant to come back on it tonight.

But check in verse 18. My, he could see something, couldn't he? Mind you, he didn't see the devil with the naked eye. But he knew in all the stirrings in these unsaved men who were persecuting him, he knew the devil was behind it, the spiritual warfare was on.

So that the devil first of all removed Paul and then hindered him from coming back when his heart was towards them. And how often I've seen that, how the devil hinders you. You lead somebody to the Saviour and you make up your mind I'll see them tomorrow and the devil hinders you.

And you make up your mind you'll see them the next day and the devil hinders you. Only I've learnt from a long experience he can never hinder me from going to heaven in prayer for these young converts. You see, he may keep me from getting there to see them but he can never keep me from getting on the knees and holding up my hands and saying, Lord, you look after them, Lord, you establish them, Lord, you strengthen them, Lord, you talk to them.

And I can always go that way when I can go the other way. But the spiritual warfare was on. But really I show you the depths of it.

You know, he didn't only remove Paul and hinder Paul, but in that second chapter it says, in verse 14, For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which are in Judea, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus. For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen. You see, he didn't only stir up the ungodly Thessalonians against Paul, but when he got him removed, he stirred up the ungodly Thessalonians against the young converts so that they suffered from their own countrymen.

They suffered from their own countrymen. This is just the spiritual warfare. You see, if there's a great general leading an army, that the general on the other side can just remove him and hold him in a certain place and keep him there, while he can deal with the rest of the regiments over here.

And so the devil was working a real spiritual warfare. He not only removed Paul and hindered Paul, but he afflicted these young believers. You see, in this third chapter, in the third verse, Paul said, I sent Timothy to establish you that no man should be moved by these afflictions.

By the devil had got these young converts, this is what he wanted them to see. And there was a spiritual area, you know. They were being afflicted.

They were suffering from the hands of ungodly men, but remember the devil was behind them. My, when ungodly folk wag their tongues sometimes, they don't know at the end of their tongues the devil. He wags it for them.

They were doing the devil's work, which is spiritual warfare. But wait a minute. He removed Paul, he hindered Paul, he stirred up the ungodly Thessalonians, he afflicted these young believers, and when he got them in the valley of suffering, Paul knew what he would do.

He said the tempter would tempt you. He would tempt them to surrender. He said, I'll put him off, and I'll stir them up, and I'll keep him off, and I'll lift them, and I'll really lift them.

Young believers, you'll come through this, you know. This is the pathway that's ahead of you. The devil hadn't changed, not one bit.

And you know, if you have really put your trust in Christ, and you've nailed yourselves to the mark, and you've turned to God from idols, and you're a follower of the Lord tonight, believe me, you're on the battlefield, and the warfare is on, and as far as the devil's concerned, there's a new mercy, and he'll use every conceivable thing he can use. When he came against Job, he used the serpent, he used the thorn, he used the fire, he used the bridge, everything that he can lay his hands upon, he'll bring upon you, and he'll force you into the valley of suffering that he might make you surrender. And not once or twice has he put me there.

I know what I'm talking about, you know. I've been in the valley of suffering many, many times, and I've learned when I'm there, and I'm enticed. But old soldiers don't run, you know.

My, they don't. Do you ever read war stories? I love to read them. My, when you see what some of those fellows really did, how it would make you put your shoulders back and be a man for God.

I was talking to Major Heinz the other day, I'm sure he'll hardly forgive me for saying this, but he was telling me that when he landed in the cold country of Denver, going back, I mean, to Normandy, on D-Day, he said, you know, there were times when the thorn was being lifted with bullets, just like wind drops. He said, you know, I crawled up through a lot of wounded soldiers, and I dropped into a shell. There's a fellow with a kilt on, and he's got a machine gun, and he's just wiping all the Germans that come, and he was just keeping this thing flying.

Looked back and saw him, and he said, come on, Major, get a hold of this. He said, you know, I was a Major, but he's just an ordinary soldier. He said, come on, Major, get a hold of this.

He said, all right, I'll help you. Help me? He said, you'll have to take over. I can't go on any longer.

Well, for what? Then he said he just lifted the end of the kilt. He had a leg blown completely off. He had a piece of rope around it, and he had it tied.

And there was the wound sticking out and the blood running into the sun. But he was still fighting. He was a real man, he said.

Wouldn't you love to be a real man for God? When you're on the battlefield, and the storm will howl, and the devil will come, and the blitz is absolutely sure, but it's tight and undoing, always abounding in the work of the Lord. For as much as you know, your labor is not in vain in the Lord. God bless you.

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