

More Good News

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Do you remember July 20, 1969? Some of us weren't born yet, but some of you may remember that day. It was the first moon landing and it was done by the United States. It was a space race against the Russians and U.S.A. won the race. If I had been around during that time, I think I would have been excited. Maybe we could call this good news. If you remember 1969, there was a need for good news. The Vietnam War was still going on and many protests still were active in many places. Woodstock festival would happen during this year as well. There was a serial killer called Zodiac that was terrorizing California. At the same time, Charles Manson and his followers in California had murdered some people including actress Sharon Tate. Then there was the economic downturn which signaled the end of post – WWII prosperity. So, for many, the moon landing was some good news in the middle of a not-so-great year. We like to hear good news because it lifts up our own spirits and at times gives us some hope for the future. Apostle Paul was no different from us about enjoy hearing good news. However, Paul enjoyed hearing a certain kind of good news and this is what we'll be looking at today.

Let's turn to 1 Thessalonians 3: 6 – 8 where we read this, “⁶But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also *long to see you*,⁷ for this reason, brothers *and sisters*, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith;⁸ for now we *really* live, if you stand firm in the Lord. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)”

A few weeks ago, we had talked about how Paul had to leave Thessalonica after about three weeks of ministry because the persecution became so great against Paul. Paul was greatly concerned about this newly formed church, so he sent Timothy to do a check on them. Timothy was a young pastor and he gave Paul an update on the status of this new church. Paul tells us that Timothy gave him good news about what was going on in that church. For Paul, the news was

so good that it encouraged him even though he was going through distress and persecution himself. This wasn't good news about a moon landing, but it was good news about the building of God's Kingdom. When you become a true follower of Jesus, good news changes for you. Yes, a moon landing or making a trip around the whole moon like NASA just did may bring us some encouragement. However, good news about the building of God's Kingdom brings the best news of all for a believer. Paul was lucky that he didn't have a smart phone on him, but if he did, I think he would spend his time seeking information about what Jesus was doing around the world because that is what would bring him encouragement. So, what good news brought Paul encouragement? It was the good news about the faith and love the Thessalonians had. Let's remember that they are going through suffering and adversity as well because of being persecuted because of their faith in Jesus. What kept this church going was their faith and love. Now, I read one commentary that made this statement about faith that Paul is talking about. "Paul was first of all encouraged by their faith. This faith is an attitude of continued trust in God despite the trials of life and the temptation to give up. He was also encouraged by their attitude of love that not only extended heavenward, but extended to him as well. (Wesley Bible Curriculum)" What does "attitude" mean? AI states that attitude is a settled way of thinking, feeling, or behaving toward people, objects, or situations, acting as an internal mental state that influences reactions. So, when Paul was going through trials and suffering, he was encouraged not just by their faith and love, but also by their attitude with this faith and love. Their Christ like thinking influenced their actions and reactions. By reaction, we mean reaction to suffering and trials. Paul was greatly encouraged by the Thessalonians' attitude during their own trials and sufferings. When a church does nothing but complain and gripe about everything, it helps to destroy the positive attitude a church in Christ should have. A church can have a positive attitude even during trials and suffering. This is important because when a church has a Christ attitude, they need to feed off each other. Who wants to feed off a person who complains and gripes all the time? Even Paul needed the Thessalonians because their attitude helped him to keep his Christ attitude. Their faith and love shaped their attitude as did their suffering and trials. We read this Scripture last week and it is the example of an attitude toward suffering and trials and it's found in James 1: 2-4, "² Consider it all joy, my brothers *and sisters*, when you encounter various ^{1a}trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith

produces ^[b]endurance. ⁴ And let ^[c]endurance have *its* perfect ^[d]result, so that you may be ^[e]perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and ^[f]without reproach, and it will be given to him. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)” The Thessalonians were living this out. When you think like this, it will cause your reactions to go in the same path as your attitude. This is why I added verse 5 because I believe James wrote verse 5 to go with the verses before it. We must ask God for wisdom to help us to see our various trials in joy because these trials test our faith which can produce endurance which in turn helps our faith to be strong and lacking in nothing and still help us to be a loving people. James and Paul had the same view point on this because Paul would say about the same thing later in 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18, “¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)” James says consider it all joy when you encounter trials and Paul says rejoice always, even in suffering. Some may say that these two men have some mental issues. They have mental issues, but they are good mental issues. Their Christlike thinking had helped them to develop an attitude about suffering and trials that is unhuman. This type of thinking can only come through Jesus and He supplies the Counselor and the Trail Guide of life which is the Holy Spirit who can transform our thinking and then our attitude. Here is a good example. I’ve used the ten Boom sisters before about fleas and other things. This example I’ve used before. Corrie and Betsie ten Boom are sisters who are put into a German concentration camp during WWII. They just arrived at the camp and right away they notice their barracks they will be living in is overcrowded and filled with fleas or we should say swarming with fleas. The first thought in Corrie’s mind was how in the world would they be able to survive in such conditions. The smell was horrible. Corrie was upset and Bestie asked her to read the Scripture they had read that morning which was 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18. After Corrie read the Scripture, Bestie blurted out, “That’s it, Corrie! That’s His answer! ‘Give thanks in all circumstances!’ We can start right now to thank God for every single thing about this new barracks!” So, Corrie asks what in the world can they be thankful for in such horrible conditions. So, Bestie starts to list to thank God for. The list starts with the sisters being in the same barracks – which was a blessing. The next item was the Bible they were able to keep. Then, Bestie said to give thanks for the fleas. Corrie was not happy about this and told Bestie that not even God can make her be grateful for a flea. Bestie stated, “Gives thanks in all circumstances. It doesn’t say in pleasant circumstances. Fleas are

part of this place where God has put us. (historyredeemed.com)” They gave thanks for the fleas, but Corrie did not agree with her sister. Over time, the sisters had to endure hard work and cruel guards. However, every evening the sisters had the freedom to read Scripture from the Bible that was missed by the German guards to the other women that were in the barracks. The question was why did the guards stay away from the barracks in the evening because in other barracks, this did not happen. To find out, the guards did not check this one barrack in the evenings was because of the fleas. The guards didn’t want fleas on them. Those fleas helped all the women in the barracks to hear the Word of God that was read to them from Corrie and Bestie. Bestie would give thanks again for those fleas. Bestie was like a female Apostle Paul in that barracks. If you read the book about these two sisters, it’s amazing how Bestie’s attitude helped to shape Corrie’s attitude and the attitude of some of the other women in the barracks before Bestie died in the camp. When I read this story the first time, I said to myself I would be in the same boat as Corrie. How could you give thanks for fleas that you had to live with? Think about them things crawling all over you. I do not like bugs on me. Yet, Betsie had this attitude of thanks and it affected her reactions to the conditions of the barracks. Betsie had the mind of Christ and her faith and love for Jesus helped her attitude which in turn affected her reaction to the suffering and trials she had to go through. If we don’t allow the Holy Spirit to form this Christ attitude about suffering and trials, something else happens.

James states this in James 5: 8 – 11, “⁸ You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹ Do not ^[a]complain, brothers *and sisters*, against one another, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing ^[b]right at the ^[c]door. ¹⁰ As an example, brothers *and sisters*, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the ^[d]endurance of Job and have seen the ^[e]outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and *is* merciful. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)” When suffering and trials come, we can get into a negative frame of mind which will affect our attitude on life and affect our reaction to life events in a negative way. This translation uses the term “complain”. The NLT uses the term “grumble” about each other. If we’re grumbling about each other, then the chances are good we are grumbling about everything else. Yes, there is a lot to grumble about, but yet we are to give thanks in all things. I’m having a hard time dealing with my other job because the work atmosphere has greatly deteriorated. Everybody is grumbling and I have been grumbling as well. The job really stinks right now. The problem is when you start

to grumble, it spreads to everything else in your life. This is when we need to pray to our Lord for wisdom and understanding. Plus, can this bad time be an opportunity for faith strengthening which in turn would be a good thing coming out of a bad event. My faith strengthening is more important than the job. My part time job is only temporary. Heaven is permanent. You see, grumbling doesn't help our faith to grow; it only stops it from growing. This is why so many churches have died is because they spend their time grumbling instead of allowing their faith and love to grow.

That's the other thing we have to understand about grumbling. Love and grumbling don't go together. Paul was excited about the Thessalonians' love. It appears they spent their time working out their love within their community and to each other instead of grumbling and complaining about everything. When a church stops spreading the Good News of Jesus, it starts to spend its time grumbling. That's not what Jesus wants from His Church. When the people work together to bring Jesus to the unsaved, it helps to build faith and love toward each other. It creates a healthy church. Paul states this in 1 Thessalonians 3: 9 – 13, "9 For what thanks can we give to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice because of you before our God, 10 as we keep praying most earnestly night and day that we may see your faces, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?

11 Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you; 12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and overflow in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you; 13 so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the ^[e]coming of our Lord Jesus with all His ^[f]saints. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)

We need this right frame of mind when we suffer and go through trials, we become complete in our love for the Lord, which then helps us to love people. Which in turn, will help us not to grumble so much, but show true love and compassion toward people. Paul was excited about what he heard from Timothy about the Thessalonians' faith and love and Paul wanted it to grow until their hearts would be blameless in holiness. Plus, Paul fed off this. It brought him encouragement as well. Don't let suffering and trials bring you down. Ask Jesus to help you to get into the right frame of mind to be able to handle them and to

think about them in a Christ like manner. I leave you with this thought from C.S. Lewis:

We ought to give thanks for all fortune: if it is “good,” because it is good, if “bad” because it works in us patience, humility, and the contempt of this world and the hope of our eternal country. (historyredeemed.com)

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