

"We are Called to Be ENCOURAGERS" -- SCN

- (1) *So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens.*
- (2) *We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith,*
- (3) *so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For you know quite well that we are destined for them.*
- (4) *In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.*
- (5) *For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain.*

Timothy's Encouraging Report:

- (6) *But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you.*
- (7) *Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith.*
- (8) *For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.*
- (9) *How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?*
- (10) *Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.*

— EVERYONE NEEDS ENCOURAGEMENT —

Some people are so negative they only see problems.

Illus: A duck hunter bought a new hunting dog. He took the dog out for the first time, and when he shot a duck, the dog ran across the top of the water and retrieved the duck. *The hunter thought that was amazing.*

The next day he took his hunting buddy, who was always negative and complaining, on a duck hunting trip. He shot a duck and his dog ran on the top of the water and retrieved the duck. He turned to his friend and asked, *"Did you notice anything strange about my dog?"*

The negative guy said, *"I sure did. Your dog can't swim; can he?"*

It seems like everywhere we turn we hear discouraging words.

- *In the same way, it's easier to tear people down than to build them up.*

... ARE YOU AN ENCOURAGER ?

- Can people you are around say of you that you make their day better ? ... *That you lift THEM UP.*
- ... *It Takes Courage To Encourage.*

The word "encourage" means: "to impart courage to someone. To literally POUR COURAGE into them. What oxygen is to the body, encouragement is to the soul.

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What character in the NT was known more by his nickname than his real name? It was Barnabas. His real name was Joseph. ***"Barnabas" means "son of encouragement."*** When Paul first met the Lord, the disciples in Jerusalem were skeptical of his conversion. After all, Paul had been persecuting Christians and arresting them. But it was Barnabas who took Paul to them and encouraged them to accept him as a brother.

What would be your nickname if people called you by your attitude and actions? Would you be called "Encourager" or "Helper" or "Teacher" or "Servant". Or would you be called "Lazy?" "Grumpy?" "Stingy?" "Gossiper?" "Tardy?" or "Critical?"

PEOPLE GRAVITATE TOWARD ENCOURAGERS. William Arthur Ward wrote: *"Flatter me, and I may not believe you. Criticize me, and I may not like you. Ignore me, and I may not forgive you. Encourage me, and I will not forget you."*

It Takes Courage To Encourage. In this passage are three statements that Paul made to these struggling believers. These were encouraging words. And you can speak these same encouraging words to others.

I. **"YOU MAY BE STRUGGLING WITH TRIALS, ~ ~
BUT DON'T GIVE UP'**

A. Paul knew these believers were facing trials. He wrote in **vss 2-3**: *"...to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials."*

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B. The Grk. word for encourage is **parakaleo**, which means:
"to come alongside someone and speak to them".

- It's the same word Jesus used to describe the Holy Spirit. The HOLY SPIRIT comes alongside us.

C. Life is full of trials and tribulations. We know that Christians aren't exempt from trouble.

1. In fact, Paul had predicted these believers would be persecuted.

2. When people go through tough times, ***God wants us to come alongside them to encourage them.***

3. Ex: ... One of the most frustrating experiences is to get in your car and it won't start. You turn the key and nothing happens, or it makes that clicking noise. It's happened to most of us. Your battery is dead.

- Maybe you've called a friend or family member to come & re-start your battery (or "jump you off.")
 - They drive up and you take jumper cables and connect red-to-red and black-to-black.
 - If all goes well, you get in your car, turn the key and your car engine will start.
 - **That friend or family member has energy in their battery and they are sharing it with you so that you can get re-started.**
- ***That's what encouragement is. It's when you use words like emotional jumper cables to give energy & strength to***

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someone whose soul's battery is dead.

D. Paul wrote he was concerned the tempter would influence the believers in Thessalonica.

- The devil wants to try to stop you.
- He wants for you to give up and give in when things get tough.
- Perhaps you're listening to the sermon right now and you're going through a very difficult time.

- *I want to encourage you today ...*

Jesus said: *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33)

E. Will you have the *"courage to encourage"*?

F. Will you ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind someone who is struggling right now?

- They may need to be encouraged.
- Will you make a commitment to come alongside that person or persons and encourage them ?

■ God wants us to be committed to be encouragers.

II. *"YOU MAY FEEL ISOLATED, ~~ BUT I'M*
THANKFUL FOR YOU"

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A. One of the best ways to encourage someone is to tell him or her you are thankful for them.

a. Paul modeled this encouragement when he wrote in vs. 9: *"How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?"*

B. Sometimes people feel alone and unappreciated.

➤ *You can encourage them just by thanking them.*

C. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind someone you need to tell that you're thankful for him or her.

■ Just say to them, *"I'm thankful for you."*

■ There is someone out there who may feel isolated and unappreciated, and they *need to be encouraged*.

➤ A Simple ~~ THANK YOU ~~ is Powerful.

➤ *... Your gratitude could make all of the difference in their life. AMEN*

III. "YOU MAY FEEL WEAK, ~~ *BUT I'M PRAYING FOR YOU*"

A. Not only did Paul tell them not to give up during their trials, and that he was thankful for them.

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- B. He also encouraged them by telling them he was praying for them. He wrote in verse 10: "*Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.*"

When we pray for others, it's called intercessory prayer.

- He PRAYED SPECIFICALLY FOR THEM
- He loved them enough to PRAY FOR THEM

APPLICATION:

Have you ever seen a boomerang demonstration put on by Aborigines people of Australia?

- *They are experts with the boomerang.*

- They would fling the crooked stick and it would go spinning out fifty yards, and then come circling right back to them. They hunt with them.

ENCOURAGEMENT IS LIKE A BOOMERANG; IT ALWAYS COMES BACK.

- So, find someone who needs encouragement and let it fly.
- And then get ready to catch it, because it will come back to you.

If you want to BE encouraged, then you must BE an encourager

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The more encouragement you give, the more you'll receive.

Today's Scripture OUTLINE:

I. "YOU MAY BE STRUGGLING WITH TRIALS, *BUT DON'T GIVE UP*"

II. "YOU MAY FEEL ISOLATED, *BUT I'M THANKFUL FOR YOU*"

III. "YOU MAY FEEL WEAK, *BUT I'M PRAYING FOR YOU*"

... **Be A PRAYER WARRIOR. BE AN ENCOURAGER.**