

Speaking to the soul



Encouragement

We have been greatly encouraged in the midst of our troubles and suffering, dear brothers and sisters, because you have remained strong in your faith. It gives us new life to know that you are standing firm in the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 3:7-8

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Paul knew that it was going to be really tough for the Thessalonian church. He had warned them that there would be great difficulties to come and had clearly been deeply concerned for them. He even stated that he wondered whether his time in Thessalonica might prove to have been a complete waste of time. So, he was absolutely delighted to hear the news from Timothy that the church was going well. They had not only stood firm in the face of persecution but were actually thriving.

Living for Christ in the 21st century presents us with very different challenges from 1st-century Greece. However, what we have in common is that we are living in societies that are fundamentally opposed to our Christian values and objectives. This means that we need to find ways of creatively supporting one another as we strive to keep faithful to the Lord. Paul gives us a wonderful illustration of how this should be done. Even after he left the Thessalonians, he continued to have an ongoing pastoral concern for them. He sent Timothy on a special mission to find out how things were going and to give them encouragement. He then went to the trouble of writing this letter to give them even more encouragement!

Churches, in my experience, are busy communities. The weekly notice sheets of the churches I have worked with over the years have often been exhausting to read! But all

too often churches, amid their busyness, turn in on themselves. They become so busy with their activities that they have little energy to look out for other churches. I believe that God wants us to find ways of creatively supporting one another. I love it when I see thriving churches deliberately seeking to support churches where the going is tough. The truth is that we desperately need one another and Paul's loving concern for the Thessalonians should be an inspiration to us all.

QUESTION

Can you name one church that is in particular need of encouragement at the moment? How might you be able to give them that encouragement?

PRAYER

Loving Father, thank you for the gift of your Church and for every opportunity that we have to encourage one another.
Amen

