

Strength We Draw From Our Brethren

“For this cause I also, when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor should be in vain. But when Timothy came even now unto us from you, and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also long to see you; for this cause brethren, we were comforted over you in all our distress and afflictions through your faith, for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord” (1 Thess. 3:5-8).

Paul’s concern for the Thessalonians is evident in this letter, dispatching a letter back to them almost immediately after Timothy’s arrival from them. Timothy’s arrival in Corinth where Paul was is recorded in Acts 18:5 and (as the salutation of this epistle shows) Silas also arrived with Timothy. Paul’s concern for the brethren was that the “tempter had tempted” them. Paul knew well that Satan never ceases his attacks on us and that he had tempted the Thessalonians — that is what he does. Paul’s concern was that the Thessalonians had yielded to Satan’s attacks. But, thanks be to God, they had resisted; they still stood and had not lessened in their faith and love and always remembered Paul with good thoughts.

When one experiences trials and temptation and is alone, his fears and concerns seem to magnify. Elijah had gained a mighty victory over the idol worshipers in his contest with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:19-40). But, threats from Jezebel caused him to flee and when God asked him what he was doing where he was, he poured out all his fears: he was alone and the idol worshipers sought his life. Well, he wasn’t alone — there were 7,000 men who had not “bowed the knee to Baal,” although he felt he was (1 Kings 19:18), and he still had work to do!

Christians can be a real source of comfort to their brethren and the good news Timothy brought him caused Paul to say, “Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.” We should never forget what strength and comfort we can offer discouraged Christians, and even though Paul was strong, courageous, and resolute to the point of ultimately suffering martyrdom, he was strengthened by the comforting presence of beloved brethren. Timothy brought comfort to him in Thessalonica. Titus was the source of comfort later while Paul waited anxiously for him for news from Corinth (Acts 20; 2 Cor. 2:12-14), and when he had spent two years in prison in Caesarea, had experienced the near fatal shipwreck on his voyage to Rome (Acts 27), and then wearily made his way to Rome to an uncertain verdict of what fate lay before him, his spirits must have been low indeed! How they were lifted when Roman brethren heard of his approaching their city and sent two different companies of brethren to welcome the apostle to their city — how welcome those welcoming groups were to him. Here is the way Luke expressed his reaction to the sight of them: “whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage” (Acts 28:9).

Let us never forget that the knowledge that God has not forsaken us is often expressed through caring brethren who come to comfort and render assistance to us in our need.

Surely as we have been comforted by faithful brethren, let us never fail to in turn comfort our brethren when they are sad and lonely. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (Jn. 13:15). But, our concern and care for our fellow-brethren are worthless unless those thoughts are expressed! The wise man said it well: "Better is open rebuke than love that is hidden" (Pro. 27:5).

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