

Another Day

Biblical reflections for busy teachers



Dreading the day

You could probably and quite quickly list the things you dread. High, if not at the top of the list, will be the next visit of Ofsted Inspectors! But suppose for a moment (let your imagination take over) the kindly but challenging Inspector was modelling himself on the Apostle Paul! It may be hard to imagine but have a go!

Chapter 3 of 1 Thessalonians reveals a compassionate and engaging pastor who longs to visit his people but is prevented from doing so. He is concerned about a number of things but especially that he has not heard from them for a long time. Not that he wanted some kind of completed self-evaluation form but just to know that they were keeping the faith in the midst of the persecution that these new Christians were probably facing.

So, Paul sends one of his team. Timothy was not going with an agenda to uncover all the weaknesses to be found in the Church at Thessalonica. Nor was his visit intended to put the church on its best behaviour, engage in their best worship or for their minister to preach the best sermons. Neither was he looking to see how their community cohesion agenda was winning people for Christ. Rather, Timothy was charged with words like 'strengthen', 'build up' and 'equip'. The heartbeat of why the Apostle sends his envoy is found in verse 10:

"Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith." 1 Thessalonians 3:10

Here Paul uses the word *katartizō*, which is used in various contexts, for example, of a fisherman repairing his nets, a surgeon setting bones, and a politician reconciling factions. His aim is both restorative and enabling. Imagine if that was the overt intention of the Ofsted Framework and your next inspection! Come to think of it, isn't that actually another (or more positive) way of interpreting the Report and any areas identified for improvement?

Christians have a unique expectation of redemption that goes way beyond our salvation in Christ. Not only will there come a day when everything under heaven will be renewed, restored and redeemed but we can expect to see signs of that in and through our lives today. Perhaps, just perhaps, applying our imagination to how things could be when the Inspector calls will not only help us be more positive but look to be strengthened, built up and equipped. It may just be possible to look for nuggets of constructive and developmental feedback that may be found in the Inspector's Report.

Why not take a few extra minutes to read 1 Thessalonians 3 again and pray that God will send Inspectors with a heart touched by the same Spirit who motivated Paul. Just maybe, that dreaded day may be redeemed in some way!