

1 Thessalonians

Chapter 3

Introduction:

1. Chapter 2 largely dealt with Paul's ministry among the Thessalonians when he first visited Thessalonica and started that local assembly.
2. But according to Acts 17, Paul had to leave Thessalonica very suddenly because of persecution and danger that arose. During the night, Paul fled to Berea, and then from there to Athens.
3. Chapter 3 deals with the events that transpired after Paul arrived in Athens.
4. This chapter reveals the deep love and affection Paul had for the Thessalonians. He truly cared about them and their spiritual welfare.
5. What a blessing to have fellow believers in our lives that truly love us and care about us. This is what a local assembly should be all about - believers who have been brought together as a spiritual family. **1 Timothy 5:1-2**

Verse 1

1. While Paul was at Athens, he couldn't get the Thessalonians off of his mind. He kept waiting, hoping to receive some word as to how they were doing.
2. Paul received no word and the silence was too much. Paul decided it was time to take action. He could no longer "*forbear*." This word carries the idea of waiting patiently. Paul decided that he had waited long enough.
3. Let this be a lesson to us. There is a time to wait, but there is also a time to take action. Paul said, "I think it's a good idea to get proactive and do something."

Verse 2

1. What did Paul decide to do? This verse reveals that Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica to check on these new believers, encourage them, and continue to root them in sound doctrine.
2. Who was Timothy? He traveled with Paul, and Paul describes him as:
 - "*Our brother*" (spiritual brother in Christ).
 - "*A minister of God*." This is the word that we get our English word "deacon." It means "one who runs on errands, an attendant."
 - "*Our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ*." Timothy's life was committed to the spread of the gospel, just like Paul.
3. Paul also refers to Timothy in other places as his "*son in the faith*." Timothy was Paul's right hand man and Paul had the utmost confidence in him.

Philippians 2:19-24

4. Timothy was a huge help to Paul in the daily duties and grind of ministry, yet Paul was willing to sacrifice the service of Timothy so that he could go and minister in Thessalonica.
 - Paul did what he thought was for the good of the ministry, not his own personal benefit.
5. Timothy's mission when he arrived was to establish these new believers (root them in sound doctrine), and comfort them concerning their new faith. Why would they need comfort? The next verse reveals the reason.

Verse 3

1. The Thessalonians had encountered some afflictions since believing the gospel of Christ. They were a persecuted church. 1:6, 2:14; **2 Thessalonians 1:4, 6-7**
2. It seems very possible that some of them had even lost their lives due to their faith in Christ (4:13), so they desperately needed comfort and encouragement (4:18).
3. Paul did not want to see these believers "*moved*" by these afflictions, but rather he wanted to see them standing firm against these pressures. vs. 8
4. Timothy was to remind them that afflictions, persecution, and suffering are a part of life, and the Christian is not exempt. In fact, when a person trusts Jesus Christ and lives a life that is sold out to Him, some degree of persecution is to be expected.

2 Timothy 3:12; Philippians 1:29

Verse 4

1. In the initial discipleship of these believers, Paul warned them that suffering and tribulation would come.
2. Sure enough, it came to pass, and Paul says, "Now you know firsthand what we were talking about."
3. Isn't it interesting that Paul did not paint a picture of worldly prosperity for these new believers? He never assured them that if they would just exercise enough faith, they would be healthy, wealthy, and prosperous.
4. Paul told them just the **opposite** of what you hear so often today from "name it and claim it" television preachers.
5. It goes back to 2:5-6. Paul wasn't trying to get in these people's pocketbooks or win a popularity contest, or sell books, or increase TV ratings.
6. He loved these people dearly and desired for them to know the **truth** so they could be prepared for the problems and afflictions of life.
7. The teaching today that is so popular that God wants to bless you with material blessings, and you can expect special favor from everybody, is a result of **wrongly** dividing God's Word and is diametrically opposite of Paul's teaching to the church.

Verse 5

1. This verse teaches us a valuable truth that we need to understand. Satan hates new believers and will attempt to undermine their faith in Christ.
2. Paul basically says, "When I couldn't stand it any longer, I had to send Timothy to you to find out how you were doing in your faith."
3. Paul's greatest fear was that Satan had discouraged these people to the point that they had given up and were no longer walking by faith in God's Word.
4. Paul had invested so much spiritual energy into discipling these people that he knew that if they had quit, all of his labor would have been in vain.
 - This was a constant concern of Paul regarding those he discipled.
5. Isn't it interesting that Paul didn't care about their finances, their physical health, their happiness, or their numerical growth? Paul said, "...*I sent to know your faith...*" Paul had one concern, "How is your faith doing?"

6. The greatest reward a preacher can have is when his people go on to serve the Lord and their faith continues to grow. It is then that you realize that your labor is not in vain.

Verse 6

1. Timothy came back from Thessalonica with good tidings (good news).
2. Timothy saw firsthand that the Thessalonians' faith and charity was not waning, but rather, growing. **2 Thessalonians 1:3**
3. Not only this, but Timothy informed Paul that they had "*good remembrance*" of Paul and his co-laborers, and they longed to see them.
4. Paul must have breathed a sigh of relief and rested much easier that night. His spiritual children doing well and his heart was ecstatic.
5. What a blessing to read about the relationship Paul had with these people. What mutual love and respect they had for one another.

Verse 7-8

1. As most of us do, Paul had his own set of problems he was dealing with.
 - The word "*affliction*" means "pressure."
 - Sometimes in life, you can feel like you are in a pressure cooker.
2. Christians are not exempt from the daily pressures of life, but the Christian is different in the way he deals with them. There is a powerful resource **within** (Christ in us) to deal with the pressures **without**.
3. When Paul heard of **their** faith, it comforted him in all of **his** problems.
4. The Thessalonians were Paul's spiritual offspring, and a part of him, and a part of his heart, was now in them. This is why Paul says in verse 8, "*For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.*"
 - The good news of their faith had breathed life and energy into Paul.
5. Christian, you never know the effect your life is having on another person. God can use your faith (even in difficulties) to serve as a great inspiration to other believers. You never know who is watching you.
6. When you see another believer "rock solid" during trials, it makes such an impact.

Verse 9

1. Paul exclaims, "*For what thanks can we render to God again for you.*"
2. Paul was basking in the good news that Timothy brought as he prayed before the Lord.
3. I love the way Paul uses the word "joy" as a noun and a verb in this verse.
 - He mentions all the joy he had in his heart, but then he took that joy and he said, "*...we joy before our God.*"
4. How it must thrill the Lord when we come before Him with thanksgiving and actively joy before Him. Are you ever so overwhelmed with God and His goodness that the joy just spills forth as you pray?

Verse 10

1. What a prayer life Paul possessed! Paul obviously believed that prayer made an impact on how things go down here on earth.

- There are some who believe that prayer has no impact today here on planet earth.
 - They are similar to a deist in believing that God is rather distant and removed from the happenings of planet earth. He has wound up the top for the dispensation of grace and is letting it spin.
 - You will never see this kind of thinking when you read Paul's writings.
2. Paul longed to see the Thessalonians, but Satan had hindered him repeatedly (2:18). What did Paul do about it? He prayed diligently to the God who hears and is moved by our prayers. His prayer request was two-fold.
 - He prayed that they would be able to physically get back to Thessalonica and see their faces.
 - He prayed that once they were there, they would be able to have a spiritual impact on their lives and see their faith further perfected.
 3. What did Paul mean when he talked about perfecting that which was lacking in their faith?
 - The word "*perfect*" is a verb and it means "to complete, or adjust."
 - The word "*lacking*" means "a deficit."
 4. This is interesting. Several times, Paul commends the Thessalonians for their faith (1:3, 2:13, 3:6-7). They had a great and active faith, yet there were still aspects that needed perfecting. There were still areas where they were lacking.
 5. Let this be lesson. The best of Christians still have room to grow in their faith. Nobody has arrived to the point in which they no longer need to grow.
- Philippians 3:13**
6. We all have areas where we lack and God can use other believers to help us to grow. This is God's plan and this is why the local church is so important.

Verse 11

1. What was Paul's prayerful desire according to the previous verse? He wanted to be able to see the Thessalonians face to face.
2. But notice Paul's yieldedness to God in this verse. Paul wanted God's direction. His attitude was, "We want to come and see you, and that is what we're praying towards, but God will have to direct us there in His own time."
3. When we pray, it is never wrong to share with God our desires and requests (unless they contradict God's Word), but then we must yield to a loving Father who knows what is best for our lives.
 - The word "direct" means "to guide."
 - The word "way" carries the idea of a route or road.
4. As we trust God and His Word, do you think God is able to guide and lead us through this life? According to the Bible, He definitely is capable (**Romans 15:30-32**). Our responsibility is to obey His Word, yield to Him completely, and trust Him in all that we do.
5. While it is very dangerous to try and read circumstances to determine God's will for our lives, as we obey God's Word, pray, and yield to Him, we can fully expect God to lead our paths.
6. Paul knew (while in prison) he needed people praying if certain doors of opportunity were to open and present themselves. **Colossians 4:3**

Verse 12

1. In **1 Thessalonians 1:3** we learned that the three key elements to the Christian life are faith, love, and hope. These three are the essence of spiritual maturity.
1 Corinthians 13:13
2. Here they reoccur again - faith (vs. 10), love (vs. 12), and hope (vs. 13).
3. In verse 12, Paul uses the words "*increase*" and "*abound*" to emphasize the point that he desired for their love to grow. 4:9-10
4. Paul says, "Increase and abound in love one toward another (the church), and toward all men (the lost), even as we (Paul, Silas, and Timothy) do toward you (the Thessalonians)."
5. The church is not to become cliquish, but show love toward **all** men. Do you know people outside the church that need Christ? Do you know the best way to reach them? Love them! Let Christ's love flow through **you** toward **them**.
6. Believers should constantly be alert and aware of opportunities that we have to show love to others. **John 13:34-35**

Verse 13

1. Once again this chapter ends with a reference to the coming of Jesus Christ.
 - Chapter 1 - the Thessalonians were waiting for Jesus to return from heaven.
 - Chapter 2 - Paul said that the believers in Thessalonica would be his joy at Christ's coming.
2. The Thessalonians were to continue growing in faith (vs. 10) and love (vs. 12) while on the earth. But there would ultimately be an end to this growth process. The end would be at the coming of Christ.
3. At His coming, Paul teaches that believers' hearts will be confirmed (stablished) in unblameable holiness before God. cf. **1 Corinthians 1:7-9; Philippians 3:21**
4. At His coming, Christ will change our vile bodies and fashion them like unto His glorified body. We will possess an incorruptible, immortal, sinless body. We will be set apart in holiness to serve Him in the ages to come.
5. The return of Christ and the Rapture of the body of Christ is the crowning day that completes the growth process that we are all going through.
6. As we grow our inner man through God's Word and prayer, we are somewhat limited by these natural, physical bodies. We can continue to grow our inner man, but our outer body continues to decay. But at the Rapture we will get new glorified bodies to house our spirit and soul.