

Paul and Company's Love and Concern for the Thessalonians

(1 Thessalonians 3)

INTRODUCTION:

1. As we continue our study in 1 Thessalonians, we come to chapter 3 where Paul expresses their love and concern for the Thessalonians and desire to come to them again and help them.
 - A. This is the natural progression of the letter seeing that in chapter 1 Paul expressed their thankfulness for the Thessalonians conversion to Christ.
 - B. In chapter 2 Paul poured out his heart to them, speaking of their sincerity, devotion, and concern for the souls of the Thessalonians, *which they had seen in their work among them*.
 - C. In chapter 3 Paul addresses how their love and concern for these brethren **continues despite their long absence from them**.
2. It is my hope by considering this chapter that we might learn to grow in our love for one another and our efforts to do good for one another in Christ.

BODY:

I. Paul's deep concern was proven in the action it produced (3:1-5).

- A. Although Paul and Silas were unable to come themselves, their concern for the Thessalonians caused them to send Timothy to "establish and encourage" them in the faith (3:1-4).
 1. They were willing to be *alone* to fortify these brethren's faith (3:1-2).
 - a. They couldn't call or use Facetime, but had to *send Timothy*, their brother, minister of God, and co-laborer (with God) to *establish*, or strengthen (*Thayer's*, p. 588), and *encourage* the Thessalonians in their faith.
 - b. They did this because no matter how strong people may have seemed at their conversion, Christians must be *established* and *strengthened* in the faith to survive!
 - c. As was true then, so is it now. This strengthening comes because loving, dedicated, and sacrificial brethren are willing to give up their time to teach and encourage their brethren.
 2. Establishment and encouragement were needed because the Thessalonians were facing certain afflictions or tribulations because of their faith (3:3-4).
 - a. Paul did not want anyone to be *shaken/disturbed* in their faith.
 - i. Jesus spoke of this danger in the soils parable (Matt. 13:20-21 – "But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.").
 - ii. So, Timothy was sent there to *fortify* and encourage them to stand strong!
 - b. Paul reminds them that tribulation should not come on them by surprise, seeing Christians are appointed for it and we are warned about it (3:3b-4).
 - i. We need to grasp that affliction is *our lot as appointed by God* (2 Tim. 3:12) and not be caught off guard and become unsettled in our faith by it.
 - ii. Afflictions for our faith should strengthen our faith because it shows that God's word of prophecy is true!
 - iii. Even Jesus said no Christian can live in the world and not be hated by it (Jn. 15:19 – "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore **the world hates you**.").
 - 1) These statements should give us cause us to pause.
 - 2) If everyone loves us and no one ever has a problem with us, we may not be standing for righteousness as we should!
- B. When Paul could wait no longer, they sent Timothy to learn how the Thessalonians' faith was fairing amidst this persecution (3:5).
 1. Paul knew, though many today do not, that Satan can tempt saints to abandon faith in Jesus, which if successful, would make their work of preaching the gospel to them vain or useless.
 2. Perseverance in faithful service to God is **vital** and is, therefore, a common concern of Paul's epistles as it should of ours as well (Phil. 2:14-16 – "**Do all things without complaining and**

disputing,¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,¹⁶ **holding fast the word of life**, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ **that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.**”).

- a. If the Thessalonians were successfully tempted, Paul’s hope, joy, and crown of rejoicing in them would be lost and God’s grace in their life would be in vain (1 Thess. 2:19).
- b. This should motivate us to be more aware of our brethren’s spiritual condition and be more attuned to helping establish and encourage them however we can.
- c. We can’t do that if we are not determined to be at all the times of worship, bible class, and other opportunities to be together. We need to connect to fulfill this responsibility.

II. Timothy returns with good news from Thessalonica (3:6-8).

- A. Timothy’s news of the Thessalonians’ enduring faith and love, their fond memory of Paul and his companions, and their desire to see them, brought much encouragement (3:6-7).
 1. The “good news” here is the same word translated “gospel” in other places, showing it brought the same joy to Paul and his companions—the joy of *salvation* (3:6).
 - a. This joy came from **relief**, seeing the Thessalonians could have **resented** the persecution they faced alone and been **disappointed** in Paul for not returning to help!
 - b. Such news always brought joy Paul, as it should to the faithful (Eph. 1:15-16 – “Therefore I also, after I heard of your **faith** in the Lord Jesus and your **love** for all the saints,¹⁶ do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers”).
 2. This news brought *comfort* to Paul’s group amid their own affliction and distress (3:7).
 - a. Expressing this comfort *during their own distress* showed the *importance* of these brethren’s spiritual welfare to Paul and his companions.
 - b. And, the mention of their own afflictions and distress showed they *shared with them in suffering for Christ*—that the Thessalonians were not alone.
 - c. *Concern* and *fellowship* are often all someone needs to be strengthened!
- B. This report of their stand in Christ gave Paul and his companions “life” (3:8).
 1. *Faithful brethren* are concerned about the *faithfulness of their brethren*—it affects their life!
 2. Because these brethren were standing strong despite Satan’s assault, Paul and company were “alive,” energized, renewed in their purpose, even as they also faced persecution.
 3. This is the level of concern and connection God wants us to develop with one another—that we live for and rejoice in one another’s success in Christ!
 - a. I wish we could all see that and that it would change our view and actions concerning the times we have offered, and we create, to be together and grow in love for one another!
 - b. This is a new year and a time to change things for the better for yourself and your brethren by both offering and taking advantage of these opportunities!

III. Paul’s thanksgiving and prayer for the Thessalonians (3:9-13).

- A. The Thessalonians’ faithfulness had brought overwhelming joy (3:9-11).
 1. Their faithfulness made Paul and his companions so happy that it was difficult for them to express it to God (3:9).
 - a. Can you imagine the change this would make if we all strove to develop this kind of love and connection with one another?
 - b. If people saw this in us, they would know we are God’s people, and it would make a difference (Jn. 13:34-35 – “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”).
 2. Paul wanted them to know that they were asking God to allow them to return to Thessalonica to help perfect, or complete, what was lacking in their faith (3:10-11).
 - a. Paul and his companions’ lack of time and opportunity in Thessalonica meant certain aspects of their spiritual lives and character had not been addressed.

- b. They were good where they were, but God wanted them, and us, to grow, to “abound more and more” in the work and knowledge of God (4:1, 10).
 - c. This should be the understanding and approach of faithful preachers, shepherds, teachers, and brethren—thankfulness for their brethren’s faithfulness and desire for their growth!
 - d. Paul hopes God will make their return happen (3:11).
- B. Paul ask for God to grant these brethren growth in the love and holiness needed to stand before the Lord at His coming (3:12-13).
1. Paul wants the Lord to bring an abounding, or overflowing increase, in these brethren’s love for one another and all, just as Paul’s company love abounded toward them (3:12).
 - a. It must be remembered that Paul knew these brethren loved each other (3:6); yet, he also knew that life in Christ means growing and perfecting love with each new day.
 - b. This love was “agape” love, love that seeks the best for others, even those who are unworthy, as God has shown us through Christ (Rom. 5:8 – “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”).
 - c. This love is to be shown *to all*, whether it be to “all the brethren” or to “all men,” just as God has shown us in Christ (Matt. 5:44-45 – “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”).
 2. The purpose of God helping them *grow in love* was so that they would be established in heart as *blameless* in *holiness* when Christ comes to receive His saints to salvation (3:13).
 - a. We must grow and abound in love to be blameless in holiness of heart before God!
 - b. This love expressed in action is far more important than I, and maybe you, have really grasped—we can’t be holy and acceptable to God without.
 - i. 1 John 3:14 – “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.”
 - ii. 1 John 4:20-21 – “If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.”
 - c. We can all work much harder on perfecting our love for one another, especially since we know how much our salvation depends upon it!

CONCLUSION:

1. I want to exhort you to grow to...
 - A. Have a deep concern for your brethren which will motivate you to act for their spiritual good, working to establish and encourage them in the face of the trials and tribulations of this life.
 - B. Rejoice in the faithfulness of your brethren, being truly connected as a family in Christ.
 - C. Express your love and thankfulness for your brethren to each other and to God, seeking God’s favor on their behalf in daily prayer.
2. When such love and concern for one another is achieved, true happiness will be ours and others will see it and desire it, bringing opportunities to us for greater joy in saving souls.
3. Will you respond to Christ’s call of the gospel today?