

“The Love Of A Spiritual Father”

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

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September 29, 2019

Teaching Aim: To examine Paul’s concern for the young believers in Thessalonica as they were being persecuted for their faith in Christ. To realize how important follow-up ministry is to new believers; conversion is just the beginning of their spiritual journey and the enemy is sure to attack. To understand Satan will go after anyone who takes a step forward spiritually in order to hinder their spiritual growth

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)

Part I: Paul’s fatherly concern for the young church in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:1-5)

1. Paul was an evangelist with a shepherd (or pastor’s) heart. Not only did he reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ, but he constantly followed up on them to make sure they were doing okay in their spiritual walk. What can we learn about the depth of Paul’s concern for the church in Thessalonica from **verse 1**? Do you keep a close eye on how other Christians are doing spiritually? Why is it important for us to do so?

2. **Chapter 3** is a lesson on the importance of follow-up ministry to new believers. Who did Paul send to check on the church in Thessalonica (**vs. 2**)? Why didn’t the Apostle go himself? (See **Acts 17:1-9**) What can we learn about Timothy’s qualifications from **verse 2**? What was Timothy’s mission?

3. **Verse 3** indicates that Paul had received word that the young church in Thessalonica was undergoing persecution because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Paul sent Timothy to build up their faith and even wrote here in **1 Thessalonians 3** about his own suffering for Christ in order to encourage them. What did the Lord reveal about Saul (later called Paul) in **Acts 9:15-16**? Why do you think Paul had to suffer so much for Christ? (See **Acts 26:9-11**) Have you ever suffered for Christ? If so, when?

4. According to **James 1:2-4**, how should we as Christians react when trials of various kinds come into our lives? Why? Why do you think God allows these trials to come our way? Anytime we are growing spiritually, the enemy attacks. What warning did Peter give to every Christian in **1 Pet. 5:8**? What admonition did he share in **1 Pet. 5:9**?

5. In **verse 4**, Paul talks about tribulation he had faced. According to **1 Cor. 11:23-28**, how much did the Apostle Paul have to suffer for his faith? Was this the end of Paul's sufferings or did more come after the Book of 1st Corinthians was written? What caused additional stress on Paul? (See **1 Cor. 11:28**) Was this true of the young church in Thessalonica?

6. The fact is, those who live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted for their faith. (See **2 Tim. 3:12**) It is during times of trial that our faith develops the most. Mel Wiggers used to say, *"Sometimes it takes the storms of life to see that Jesus really does walk on the water!"* What trials has the Lord helped you through? How have these trials strengthened you?

7. You should not be surprised if the world hates you. What can we learn from **John 15:18-21** about the world's attitude toward Christians? It is important to remember that when we are being attacked for our faith, it is really God who is being attacked. Rather than getting upset when we suffer for Christ, we should rejoice in our trials. What promise did Jesus give to suffering believers in **Matthew 5:10-12a**?

8. What was Paul's concern in sending Timothy to the church in Thessalonica (**vs. 5**)? Satan is our adversary and the supreme tempter; he even tried to tempt the Lord Jesus. How did Jesus respond to these temptations from the devil? (See **Matt. 4:1-11**) How should we respond? How can we use the same method that Jesus did today?

9. It is critical for believers to remember that temptation in and of itself is not a sin; Jesus was tempted but did not sin. It is what we do with the temptation that counts. What can we learn from **1 Cor. 10:13** and **2 Tim. 2:22**?

Part II: Timothy brings back encouraging news to the Apostle Paul (1 Thess. 3:6-10)

1. In **verses 6-10**, Paul reported the findings of Timothy in this letter to the Thessalonians. Did Timothy bring good news or bad to the Apostle Paul (**vs. 6**)? Timothy spoke of the Thessalonian Christian's "*faith*" and "*love*", but noticeably absent was a reference to their "*hope*". False teachers had led some in Thessalonica to believe they had missed the rapture. Paul will address this misunderstanding in **chapter 4**. Why is it important for every Christian to look forward to our blessed hope in Jesus Christ?
2. Paul was afraid the Thessalonian believers may have fallen away from Christ in their despair. What encouraging news did Paul learn in **verse 6b**? How did this news affect him (**vs. 7**)? Have you ever received an encouraging report that brought comfort to you? When?
3. Warren Wiersbe wrote, "*Timothy reported that the new believers were standing firm in spite of persecution. They did not believe the lies that the enemy had told about Paul, but they still held him in the highest esteem in love.*" The suspense of not knowing was killing Paul, but now with this good news he could catch a breath. What did Paul mean in **verse 8**? Why is it important for us to stand fast in the Lord no matter what we are facing in life?
4. Thanksgiving should be a regular part of Christian worship and prayer (**vs. 9**). Why? How can we know that God is at work for our good? (See **Rom. 8:28**)
5. In **verse 10** we get a glimpse into Paul's personal life. What was Paul doing night and day? Was something lacking in the young Christian's faith or was Paul's desire to see the young believers grow to the fullness of maturity in their Christian faith?
6. Charles Hembree writes, "*In the full face of afflictions it is hard to see any sense to things that befall us, and we want to question the fairness of a faithful God. However, these moments can be the most meaningful of our lives.*" It's been said, "Faith is like a muscle; it gets stronger with use." What has helped you grow in your faith the most spiritually?

Part III: Paul's prayer for the young believers in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:11-13)

1. What was Paul's prayer request in **verse 11**? Why do you think he wanted to go back to Thessalonica so badly? God answers prayer in three different ways: 1) Yes; 2) No; and 3) Wait. How did God answer Paul's prayer in **verse 11**?
2. What was Paul's prayer for the Thessalonian believers in **verse 12**? There are over 30 "*one anothers*" in the Bible. What "*one another*" is used more frequently than any other? (See **1 Thess. 3:12; 4:9; Rom. 12:10; 13:8; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11**) Why is it so important that Christians love one another? (See **John 13:25; 17:20-21**)
3. What is the meaning of the word, "*holiness*"? (See Dictionary) Why is it so important for every Christian to be holy? (See **Heb. 12:14**) How can the Christian's "*heart be established blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*"? (See **Eph. 2:8-9; John 3:36; Acts 4:12; Rom. 5:8-9**)
4. What is the meaning of the word, "*saint*" (**vs. 13**)? (See Dictionary) Who can this word refer to in Scripture? Who do you think it refers to in **verse 13**? (See Commentaries)
5. What is the difference between "*The Judgment Seat of Christ*" and "*The Great White Throne Judgment*"? (See **2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15**) What great news can we learn about the born-again (or regenerate) Christ-follower in **Rom. 6:23** and **8:1**?
6. Have you received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord? If not, why not do so right now in prayer?

MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- We should not be surprised when we go through trials of many kinds; allowing trials to come into our lives is part of God's plan to strengthen us spiritually and to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ!
- Do not be surprised if the world has no love for you as a Christian; it hates Jesus and you are a reflection of Him!
- As Christians we should encourage one another and pray for each other during the trials of life!
- Prayer is the air war that prepares the way for the ground troops!
- Pray specifically, pray persistently, and pray expectantly!
- Follow-up ministry with new believers is essential; they have declared war on Satan by coming to Christ and he will do everything he can to make them stumble and fall!