

I Thessalonians 3:1-13

REVIEW...

- As we conclude this first section of the book – INFORMATION about the church...
 - We have looked at the ORIGIN of the church – and the GOSPEL given to the church – chapter 1
 - The PREACHING of Paul – and the HOPE of Paul for the church – chapter 2
- Although Paul had been separated from the church – persecution from the Jews...
 - He eagerly desired to return and see them face to face...
 - From the moment he moved onto Berea – Paul began to look for ways to go back...
 - He endeavored (*diligently*) more eagerly (*persistently*) to return to Thessalonica...
 - Because like a Father to a child – he did NOT want to leave them orphaned!
- The HOPE / JOY of Paul was not just to see them face to face for a moment...
 - He wanted to see them at the RETURN of Jesus Christ – at the RAPTURE of the church!
 - What REALLY would make Paul happy – was to see them in the presence of the Lord!

IT IS ALL ABOUT FAITH... (5 THINGS)

- 1ST – THE CONCERN REGARDING THEIR FAITH... vs. 1-2 (3 POINTS)
 - A word about FAITH...
 - The word FAITH is used 8x in the whole book – 5x just in JUST this chapter!
 - It goes with saying that Paul is going to address the issue of FAITH...
 - FAITH – *pistis* – 244x in NT – belief with the idea of TRUST or CONFIDENCE...
 - We know the JUST shall live by faith - **Habakkuk 2:4** / **Romans 1:17** / **Galatians 3:11**
 - Living by FAITH – means TRUSTING the Lord for today...
 - So often it feels like we are walking through life blind - no idea where we are going...
 - The reason is because we are trusting in what we can see - but we cannot see far...
 - If only we could see tomorrow - we might make very different decisions...
 - Making decisions by what we can see – is in truth walking around blind...
 - But Jesus sees it all – and if are willing to trust Him – we will always know where to go...
 - Trusting in the Lord who sees all – that is walking by true sight – waking by FAITH!
 - **II Corinthians 5:7** – “For we walk by FAITH, not by sight.”
 - Living by FAITH – means trusting the Lord for our eternity...
 - We cannot see God – have never been to heaven – have not seen Jesus...
 - It is only through FAITH we believe the Gospel is true – has the power to save us...
 - By FAITH we believe that life is not only about living here on earth...
 - By FAITH we believe one day God will take us to be with Him forever in heaven!
 - **Hebrews 11:1** - “FAITH is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
 - 1ST – When Paul could endure it no longer... vs. 1
 - Paul was concerned about the FAITH of the believers in Thessalonica...
 - He had been taken away – *aporphanizō* – literally orphaned them – **1 Thessalonians 2:17**
 - He had been taken away because of the PERSECUTION of the Jews - **Acts 17:8-10**
 - From the moment they moved onto Berea – Paul began to look for ways to go back!
 - And as he prepared to depart for Athens – he could not ENDURE it any longer...
 - He had to know how the FAITH of this young church (*only there for three weeks*) was doing!
 - 2ND – The solution of Paul... vs. 2
 - Paul sent Timothy to check on the FAITH of the church – **Acts 17:14**
 - TIMOTHY – *time Theos* – one who honors God...

- Timothy is mentioned in 11 of the letters of Paul – more than any other person...
- Timothy joined Paul at the beginning of his 2nd missionary journey – **Acts 16**
- He was a young man – at least in the beginning of his ministry - **I Timothy 4:12**
- And he stayed with Paul all the way through the 3rd missionary journey!
- Paul calls him his Brother...
 - Not that he was literally a brother – brother in the Lord – Paul would later call him a son!
 - **I Corinthians 4:17** – “I sent Timothy... my beloved and faithful son in the Lord.”
 - Timothy had become like family to Paul – serving with him in the Gospel!
- Minister of the God...
 - Timothy had been with Paul / watched Paul – and learned the ministry from Paul...
 - And like Paul he also had become a MINISTER of the Gospel...
 - **I Corinthians 16:10** – “Timothy... does the work of the Lord, as I also do.”
 - MINISTER – *diakonos* – we often use MINISTER as a title of superiority...
 - But the word actually means a servant / a waiter / who runs errands for the KING!
 - A MINISTER is a SERVANT of God who does the work of sharing the Gospel for God!
- Fellow Laborer in the Gospel...
 - *Synergos* – 13x in NT – used 3x of Timothy (*more than any other person*) ...
 - Timothy had the same heart as Paul – and cared for the Thessalonians...
 - His care for others was GENUINE – it flowed out from his love for Jesus!
 - **Philippians 2:20-22** – “I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare... you know how Timothy has proved himself.”
- o 3rd – The reason for sending Timothy... vs. 2
 - Establish you in your FAITH ...
 - ESTABLISH – *sterizo* – used 13x NT – where we get the word steroids...
 - Timothy was stent to make sure their FAITH was strong...
 - But the contrast might seem to suggest that it is possible to have weak FAITH ...
 - **Matthew 8:10** Jesus talked about great FAITH – **Matthew 8:26** little FAITH...
 - That would lead us to believe FAITH is measurable – strong / great or little / weak...
 - But Jesus would clarify in **Luke 17:5-6** when the disciples asked to INCREASE our FAITH...
 - **Luke 17:6** – “If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree...”
 - FAITH is not about quantity or quality – it is about WHO we put our trust in...
 - We have strong / great FAITH when Jesus is the one we are looking to!
 - Encourage you in your FAITH...
 - ENCOURAGE – *parakaleō* – to call alongside / to support and comfort...
 - One of the names for the Holy Spirit is the HELPER – *paraklētos* (*same root word*) ...
 - **John 15:26** – “When the Helper comes... He will testify of Me...”
 - Like the Holy Spirit – he was to establish their FAITH – by encouraging them in Jesus!
 - The best thing we can EVER do for anyone – is reminder them to look to Jesus!
- 2ND – CHALLENGES TO THEIR FAITH... vs. 3-5 (3 POINTS)
 - o 1st – Shaken by afflictions... vs. 3
 - The first challenge to faith comes from NOT knowing WHY we have AFFLICTIONS...
 - Shaken – only here NT – the wagging of a dogs tail – to be unstable...
 - Afflictions – *thilipsis* - the crushing of a grape till the juice flows out...
 - Paul told them you KNOW (*to see*) that we are appointed (*destined*) to this!
 - Timothy was coming to make sure their AFFLICTION had not shaken their FAITH...
 - The Gospel is not a message of an easy life - it is about eternal life!
 - And God uses our AFFLICTIONS to keep our focus on the Him in this life!
 - **II Corinthians 1:8-10** – God give us the sentence of death so we do NOT trust in ourselves!

- **II Corinthians 12:9-10** – His GRACE is sufficient – when I am weak He is strong!
- **Romans 5:3-5** – GLORY in Tribulation which produces perseverance / character / hope!
- BUT - if we do not KNOW why we have AFFLICTION...
 - **Matthew 13** parable of the seed and sower – Jesus described the STONY ground...
 - **Matthew 13:21** – “When tribulation [same word] or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles...”
 - We may fall away - stop coming to church / stop reading the Bible / give up on Jesus...
 - Because our focus is not on the eternal - we are SHAKEN and away from the FAITH!
- o 2nd – Promise to Suffer tribulation... vs. 4
 - The second challenge to FAITH – FORGETTING what was said about TRIBULATION...
 - In fact - Paul had told them before (*predicted*) when he was still with them...
 - They would (*indicative*) SUFFER TRIBULATION – *thlibo* – root word of AFFLICTION...
 - They had been warned – and it had happened – as they KNOW (*to see*) ...
 - As mentioned previously the Jews caused a riot against the Christians – **Acts 17:5**
 - Jesus gave the same promise - In this life we will have TRIBULATION – **John 16:33**
 - It is actually the WILL of God that we SUFFER – **I Peter 3:17 / I Peter 4:19**
 - We have to go through TRIBULATION - it is not an option – because it has a purpose!
 - **II Corinthians 4:7-10** – “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed [same word] on every side... always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”
 - If you take a clay pot and fill it up with rocks - it is still a cheap pot...
 - But if you take that same pot and fill it up with diamonds - its priceless!
 - We often get the impression there are SPECIAL people whom God chooses to use...
 - There are only ordinary people - who believe in God - making them SPECIAL!
 - We are all just clay pots - the question to be asked is what is inside of us...
 - Are we full of ourselves - trusting in our abilities – not worth much...
 - Or are we full of Jesus - believing in God - having FAITH (*trust*) in His Word!
- o 3rd - The tempter had tempted... vs. 5
 - THE tempter – this is unquestionably a reference to our ENEMY...
 - He has a number of names in the Bible – he is the *devil* – false accuser...
 - He is called the *satan* – our adversary / but here is called the TEMPTER...
 - **Luke 4:1-13** – satan even tried three different times to TEMP Jesus!
 - Because he would like nothing more than to TEMP us to questions the Word of God!
 - **Genesis 3** we have the first appearance of a question mark in the Bible...
 - Up until that point in the Bible every sentence has ended with a period...
 - Everything that has happened has been a statement of fact
 - Everything that has taken place has been good - VERY good
 - Until satan tempted Eve and asked – did God say – question mark!
 - His tactics have not changed – he still tries to get us to doubt the Word...
 - The Lord tells us that we ARE going to go through TRIBULATION – but it has a purpose...
 - Satan subtly tries to get us to doubt the Word – maybe God just does not love us...
 - He tries to keep us from listening to the Bible – from believing the Word!
 - Paul HAD to KNOW their FAITH – lest our labor might be in vain...
 - Paul wanted to KNOW if satan had tempted the believers in Thessalonica...
 - Was their FAITH still strong – or had their labor in the Gospel been in VAIN!
- 3RD – THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT THEIR FAITH... vs. 6 (2 POINTS)
 - o About their FAITH and LOVE... vs. 6

- Timothy had already returned from his trip to Thessalonica...
- He came after Paul arrived in Corinth – **Acts 18:5** – where he wrote this letter...
- And he brought GOOD NEWS – *euangelizō* – of their FAITH and LOVE!
- The church had NOT stumbled / had NOT forgotten / and NOT been tempted...
- There were two evidences of the GOOD NEWS about their FAITH and LOVE
- o 1st – Always have good remembrance... vs. 6g
 - The church ALWAYS had good remembrance of Paul and his companions...
 - REMEMBRANCE – 7x in NT – more often translated as mention...
 - In other words - they were always talking about Paul – and in a GOOD way...
 - Since they were talking GOOD about Paul – it meant they were OK with Jesus who was in Paul!
 - **The number one result of sin is separation – first from God – Isaiah 59:2**
 - **But it also separates us from believers – because we do not want to be reminded of our sin!**
 - **We start to avoid our Bible / avoid the church / warry of anyone who might convict us...**
 - **Because our FAITH has faltered – and we have gotten our eyes off of Jesus!**
 - **I John 1:7 – “If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.”**
- o 2nd – Greatly desiring to see us... vs. 6
 - The church also had a GREAT DESIRE – *epipotheō* – to see Paul...
 - They were not *HUYA* about Paul coming – they were ecstatic to see him again!
 - They joy at the return of the APOSTLE spoke volumes about their FAITH!
 - **Often we try to reason with God – how far away from the world do we need to be...**
 - **Can we at least look at the world – how about touch – just a light touch...**
 - **We do not want to be in the world – just really close – is that OK God...**
 - **The truth is - if we are not drawing closer to the Lord - then we are drifting away...**
 - **We can reassure ourselves that we attend Bible studies /attend church on Sunday...**
 - **But where is our heart - are we excited / or just going through the motions...**
 - **It is not worth the danger to play around with the love of this world...**
 - **It is far too easy to fall in love with this world – and become *HUYA* towards Jesus!**
 - **II Corinthians 13:5 – “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith...”**
- 4TH – COMFORTED BY THEIR FAITH.... vs. 7-9 (4 POINTS)
 - o 1st – He could call them brethren...
 - BRETHREN – used 16x in the book – 5x in chapters 1 and 2 / 10x in chapters 4 and 5
 - But this is the FIRST and ONLY time in THIS chapter...
 - The subtle hint is that Paul was NOT sure if they were brethren – in the FAITH...
 - And to say the least he was VERY encouraged when he was able to call them BRETHREN!
 - o 2nd – In affliction and distress... vs. 7
 - Paul was comforted – *parakaleō* – in his tribulation – *thilipsis*!
 - The same things that Paul had sent Timothy to do for the church in Thessalonica...
 - The believers did to Paul – comfort him in his tribulation and distress – by their FAITH!
 - **The Christian walk is NEVER a one-way street – ministry goes both ways!**
 - **When we reach out to minster to others – we often end up the ones who are blessed!**
 - **Proverbs 11:25 – “He who waters will also be watered himself.”**
 - o 3rd – But challenged them to continue in FAITH... vs. 8
 - For now we live – IF (*third class*) – you standfast (*subjunctive*) in the Lord...
 - Paul was encouraged by the GOOD NEWS he received from Timothy...
 - But that did not mean the battle was over – the race was not won yet...
 - And Paul could only rest (*live*) IF they stand fast (*persevered*) in the Lord to the end!
 - **Following Jesus is not a sprint – it is more like a marathon...**

- As a result we often start off well in our race - but we do not finish well...
- **Hebrews 12:1** – “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us...”
- o 4th - Thankful for the joy that comes from their FAITH... 9
 - The apostle could hardly contain his joy over hearing about their continued FAITH...
 - Every time he went to pray – he overflowed with joy and thank because of them!
 - “How we thank God for you! Because of you we have great joy as we enter God’s presence.” (NLT)
 - One of the hardest things as a pastor - is when people make choices that take them from God...
 - With brokenness a pastor comes before the Lord - heart breaking for a wayward sheep...
 - But one of the greatest blessing for a pastor - is when people choose to walk in FAITH...
 - The joy BEFORE the Lord is inexpressible as we give thanks for what God is doing!
- 5th – THE PRAYER FOR THEIR FAITH... vs. 10-13 (4 POINTS)
 - o 1st – Praying to perfect what was lacking in their FAITH... vs. 10
 - Night and day Paul prayed – can also be translated as implored / to want or desire...
 - Paul wanted exceedingly to see the FACE of the believers in Thessalonica again...
 - To PERFECT – that which was LACKING in their FAITH...
 - PERFECT – *katartizō* – to equip / complete / to finish...
 - What was lacking in their FAITH that Paul wanted to COMPLETE / FINISH – the WORD!
 - **II Timothy 3:17** – “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete [same root word], thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
 - That is why it is so important for us to be constantly in the WORD – **II Timothy 2:15**
 - Because it is THROUGH the WORD that we are PERFECTED in our FAITH – **Romans 10:17**
 - o 2nd – Praying for God to DIRECT ... vs. 11
 - Paul PRAYED for our God and Father and our Lord Christ – DIRECT our way to you...
 - DIRECT – 3x in NT – a word that means to make straight – remove any distractions...
 - Life has a lot of distractions – things that keep us from following after Jesus...
 - And if we are not careful – we can slip and fall into any number of sins...
 - But as we look to the Lord – He keeps our feet safe on the right road!
 - **Matthew 7:14** – “Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life...”
 - o 3rd – Praying for abounding LOVE... vs. 12
 - Paul PRAYED for the Lord to make (*optative*) them increase and abound in LOVE...
 - Increase – used 9x NT – to SUPERABOUND – not just a little more / a LOT more...
 - Abound – 39x NT – to OVERFLOW – they would increase so much their LOVE would overflow!
 - One to another (*believers*) but also to ALL men (*unbelievers*) - just like Paul towards them!
 - If I told you I wanted you to fill a pitcher with water from the ocean - not problem...
 - What if I told you to put all the water in the ocean - in that one pitcher - WOW!
 - When we experience all the LOVE that God has for – it is IMPOSSIBLE for us to contain it...
 - It will overflow us onto others – **Galatians 5:22** – it will mark us as Christians – **John 13:35**
 - o 4th – Praying to establish their hearts blameless in holiness... vs. 13
 - Timothy had been sent to ESTABLISH – *sterizo* – by pointing them to Jesus...
 - But ONLY Jesus could ESTABLISH – *sterizo* – their hearts BLAMELESS in HOLINESS ...
 - BLAMELESS – without accusation – meaning all our sin has been FORGIVEN – **Hebrews 10:17**
 - HOLINESS – the noun form of the adjective HOLY – HOLINESS as a quality...
 - Who makes us HOLY – **Hebrews 2:11** – we are sanctified (*made HOLY*) by Jesus Christ!
 - The PRAYER of Paul was they be FORGIVEN and made HOLY when Jesus returns!
 - Which should be the prayer of EVERY believer – to KNOW we have been forgiven by Jesus...
 - And to be set part – HOLY – for Jesus till they day He comes to bring us HOME!