1 Thess. 3:1-13 (Sermon Notes) God's Promised Blessings for His Fellow Workers

"God's fellow worker in the Gospel of Christ" (1 Thess. 3:2)
"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9)
"And working together with Him, we urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. 6:1)

Timothy was God's servant in spreading the message, preaching Christ, and encouraging and equipping churches. We have a God-given responsibility to be fishers of men; makers of disciples; we shall be His witnesses... This is the Father's business; so how is business? What are you doing in His business?

- We are called to join God in His work, rather than taking our own path and agendas
    - Joining God in some capacity; God has gifted us with talent and resources for this purpose. *Don't waste your life*

1. **God blesses His fellow workers with personal benefits and rewards.**
    a. Related to God's work, we have the opportunity to go and to send
    b. Give people like Timothy opportunities to learn by inviting and mentoring.
        i. When Paul met Timothy, his mother and grandmother had poured into him, and immediately Paul recognized Tim and his great potential.
        ii. Acts 15:36-41: Paul is travelling and strengthening the churches.
        iii. Acts 16:1: A disciple was there named Timothy... his mother was Jewish, his father was a Greek; well spoken of by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium
        iv. So, Paul took him along with Silas and modeled how to strengthen the churches. A father-son relationship developed; a brother-to-brother relationship developed.
    c. Timothy gains experience, strength, and freedom to become what God had created him to be. God did this through others, and Timothy benefited greatly
        i. Invite
        ii. Invest (time, patience, grace)
        iii. Instruct (model and verbal, giving them opportunities)
        iv. Encourage
    d. This is how Jesus related to His disciples:
        i. John 13: He washes the disciples' feet, then tells them, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them".
        ii. "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house, or wife, or brothers, or parents, or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life." (Luke 18:28-30)
    e. What are some of the personal benefits and rewards when we join God's work?
        i. Practice . . teaching them to observe; you are blessed if you DO these
        ii. Experience... no substitute! Humility is a side benefit, in which all the traits of godliness will grow...

iii. Fulfillment: Matt. 5:6
iv. Freedom - to become what God created us to be
v. Preparation: for future opportunities to serve; more work to do
vi. Credibility: consider Paul's references about Timothy's character

f. What have been the personal "soul" benefits of serving God by serving others?
g. This was not a one-off, but rather a pattern; Timothy became a valued Gospel worker, very often "on call".
    i. But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition, for I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father. Therefore I hope to send him immediately as soon as I see how things go with me." (**Phil. 2:19-23)**
    ii. See also **1 Cor. 4:16-17** - "I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church."
    iii. "Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he come soon, I will see you." (**Hebrews 13:23)**
    iv. Paul later outlines the personal and pastoral benefits in 1 Tim. 4:6-16
        1. Notice the personal rewards:
            a. You will be constantly nourished on the words of the faith
            b. Salvation for yourself and others
h. "We exist to help incoming college students find their people, find their place, and find their purpose" (The Oaks Collaborative)

2. God blesses His fellow workers with pastoral benefits and rewards.

a. Notice how everyone is strengthened and edified (the Thessalonians, Paul and Silas; the church of today as we read these letters)
    i. "Take this, and share it among yourselves"
b. A quality of life: if you stand firm, we really live; go on living! John 10:10 (a life-giving power)
    i. Living with meaning: our labor would be in vain; 1 Cor. 15:55-58
    ii. Living with reassurance; comfort: in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith
    iii. Living with gratitude: what thanks can we render to God for you?
    iv. Living with joy: in return for all the joy with which we rejoice (they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy!)
    v. Living with hope: we long to see you; something to look forward to now or later . . inevitably, it would come to pass because of the faithfulness of God

vi. In the midst of their own troubling situations, there is life! Meaning, comfort, gratitude, joy and hope in God and from God!

c. A life of worshipping, knowing, and enjoying God: God is the only source of meaning, comfort, gratitude, joy and hope . . these are the attitudes our souls long for so deeply... God-given hungers and desires

d. Joyful Gratitude

i. The whole point is that when we join God in His work, He is already there

1. He is working . . and we are joining Him - we are with Him, in His presence and company
2. As we make disciples, He has promised, "I will be with you" - I will never leave you nor forsake you

3. God blesses His fellow workers with permanent benefits and rewards.

a. Paul writes of the love that will continue to increase and abound in their lives, empowered by God Himself. (The everlasting love of God in and through us)

b. Paul writes of the future coming of Christ, and the joy of all the saints being with the Lord together and forever.

c. The Promises of God in His Word detailing our future blessings are immense and incredible. We must embrace them by faith, and allow these to empower our current faithful service as fellow workers of God.

i. Matthew 10:42: Even a cup of cold water is promised a future reward

ii. Luke 14:12-15: You will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous

iii. Hebrews 6:10: God is not unjust to forget your love and service to the saints in His name

iv. 2 Timothy 4:6-8: In the future there is laid up for me the crown

v. Matthew 25: "I will put you in charge of many things, enter the joy of your Master"; "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the earth."

vi. "Will result in praise, glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

1. 1 Peter 1:3-7
2. James 1:12: "the crown of life which the Lord has promised"
3. "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (2 Cor. 4:17)
4. The unhindered and unbroken pleasure of God . . His smile and favor . .His glorious presence

vii. We will eat of the tree of life, drink of the river of the water of life. We shall see Him as He is, for we shall be like Him . . .on and on and on . .

d. One life to live will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last.

e. IF you hold onto your life, you will lose it; if you lose your life for His sake, you will keep it to life eternal. For this to happen, you must be willing to delay the fleshly desire for instant gratification (more, now!)

But still, what IS the Gospel of Christ?

The source of our salvation and strength and hope. God Himself has come alongside us as Helper - to do the *hard work* of saving us, forgiving us, transforming us, and sealing us for future glory through the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

- God loved us and sent His Son - 1 John 4:9-10
- God sends His Son, His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased
- God sends His Spirit
- God sends His fellow workers...
- The cross and resurrection of Jesus guarantees all this: our bodies will be changed to be like His!
- Keep preaching the Gospel, fulfilling and obeying the daily responsibilities;
    - He will get you there, all the way home and complete, without fault and with great joy

He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. (Jim Eliot, Oct. 28, 1949, in his journal)

Run, John, run; the law demands; but gives me neither feet nor hands;
Better news the Gospel brings, it bids me fly and gives me wings. (John Bunyan)

Ye rigid plowmen, bear in mind: your labor is for future hours;
Advance, spare not; nor look behind
Plow deep and straight with all your powers. (R. Henry Howe)

“For my part, I am quite willing to be eaten of dogs for the next fifty years, but the more distant future will vindicate me” (C. Spurgeon)

The one who lives for the next life gets this one in the deal; the one that lives for this life only loses them both. (CS Lewis)