

Ministry of The Holy Spirit
Stand Fast to Increase and Abound
1 Thessalonians 3

Last time...“our exhortation” in 1 Thes 2

- The Lord’s to the believers in Thessalonica thru Paul, Silas, and Timothy
- The Lord’s to us thru the Living Word
- The Lord’s to those in our spheres of influence thru us

This time...we stand fast in the Lord to increase and abound in His love

We will be in 1 Thes 3

v1-3 sent Timothy...moved by these afflictions:

So far on this Macedonian leg of the 2nd Missionary Journey,

- Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned in Philippi
- Paul, Silas, and Timothy were run out of Thessalonica by violent unbelieving Jews
- Paul was run out of Berea by the same violent unbelieving Jews from Thessalonica
- Paul was escorted to Athens while Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea
- Paul was grieved in his spirit by the rampant idolatry in Athens
- While in Athens, Paul sent Timothy from Berea to Thessalonica while he went on to Corinth
- Paul was rejoined by Silas and Timothy in Corinth
- Paul withstood the blasphemy of the unbelieving Jews in Corinth but settled in to minister to the Gentiles at the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ
- Paul writes this letter to the baby church in Thessalonica

Here we learn of Timothy’s mission to the fellowship at Thessalonica:

- to establish...to strengthen and confirm their young faith, to assist their spiritual growth
- to comfort...to exhort them in the faith, to continue and to not give up
- so that no one is moved...shaken in their faith, “shipwrecked”
- by these afflictions...tribulation and persecution they are suffering

Establish and comfort...Who does this work and how?

This a spiritual work so it is a work of God the Holy Spirit,
via a ministry of the Word of God (1 Cor 14:3) and Spirit-filled
children of God
aka “discipleship”, making disciples

In the context of the Parable of the Sower

- The seed of the Word of God has been sown
- Timothy is dispatched to “work the soil” to fight the wiles/devices of the devil, particularly
 - Soil #2 – stony soil, the Word received with joy but unfruitful because of persecution and tribulation
 - Soil #3 – thorny soil, the Word choked out by the care of this world

Jesus said

Luke 14:27 whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple

John 15:18-21 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

John 16:33

Paul has said

Acts 14:22 to confirm and exhort the disciples in Asia

1 Thes 2:14

Paul will say

Acts 20:18-24

And in those bonds and afflictions, Paul will be inspired to write

Phil 1:29

2 Tim 3:12

So during his 3 week stay in Thessalonica with this fellowship, Paul told them in no uncertain, honest, and real life terms to expect trouble from unbelievers, in the name of Jesus Christ

Such trouble is appointed...expected

- it's what Satan and the world do, as Jesus forewarned
- it's what God uses to refine and strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ, to separate the wheat from the chaff

Such trouble is Paul's

- testimony as the persecutor...[Acts 8:1](#), [Acts 9:1-2](#)
 - testimony as the persecuted...at every stop of his
Missionary Journeys (foretold by the Lord, [Acts 9:16](#))
- Both of which he would have shared with this fellowship

And to these babes in Christ Paul sent Timothy to strengthen and confirm and exhort the faith by which they are saved unto eternal life because...

v4-5 ye know...I could no longer forbear:

Because

- ye know (v4)
 - Saul's testimony is now personal to them
 - Paul's testimony is their personal testimony
 - The words of Jesus and Paul have a much deeper meaning and understanding
- I could no longer forbear (v5)
 - Paul could no longer bear not knowing how these babes in Christ are holding up (the aim of the mission, Acts 15:36)
 - Paul knows the wiles/devices/strategies of the devil, the tempter looking for someone to devour
 - Paul desires to know if his time and effort in that town was empty or fruitful

Are they shaken in their confidence in the Lord?

Have they quit their walk with the Lord or are they soldiering on?

Has their faith collapsed or is it growing?

Are they trying to complete in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit?

v6-7 good tidings of your faith and charity...we were comforted:

When Timothy (and Silas) caught up to Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5a),
he came with a good report regarding the faith and the love of the
infantile, persecuted fellowship in Thessalonica

They remember what Paul had taught them;

the afflictions are unable to drive the Truth out of their hearts
they are fighting the good fight of faith

They long to see Paul as much as Paul longs to see them,

they love as they are loved; love has not failed, it has blossomed
their fruit (Gal 5:22-23) was abounding
their hunger for fellowship remains strong

Their faith and walks are certainly intact, even stronger

The church at Thessalonica is staying the course, PTL!
They were Soil #4!

As a result, the comforters (Paul, Silas, and Timothy) are comforted in their afflictions and distress/necessities in Corinth;
their “keeping on” helped Paul etc to “keep on” in Corinth!

When in tribulation, we, the Body of Christ, are comforted by

1. the indwelling Comforter
2. the words of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Body
3. our Father in heaven, the God of all comfort (2 Cor 1:3)
4. each other (2 Cor 1:4), giving as freely as we have received

v8 now we live, if ye stand fast:

Comforted and encouraged by the good report from Thessalonica,
Paul and his team are able to put up with the afflictions and distress under which they are ministering in Corinth, as long as this beloved fellowship stands fast/firm in the Lord

- continues...in the Word of God (John 8:31-32)
- abides...in Christ, His words, His love (John 15:1-13)

“Steady as she goes, brethren.”

v9-11 joy...praying...perfect:

Paul’s heart for this fellowship is not only after God’s heart of love,
but after God’s heart of “unfinished business” (Phil 1:6)

He rejoices to the Lord God because of them, their faith and their walk/witness
But he prays without ceasing, the disciple maker for the disciples, that the Lord send him back to them that he might

- see them face-to-face, in-person
- perfect/complete the work of discipleship of their spiritual growth/maturity
 - start: Rom 10:17
 - end: Rom 10:17 by Acts 10:27 and 2 Peter 3:18

And what is the reason/purpose for what is in Paul’s heart?

v12-13 increase and abound in love...stablish your hearts...at the coming:
For their sanctification, their growing in Christ-likeness
The work of God in a believer's life accomplished with the believer's continual,
on-going surrender to His will and ways

1. increase and abound (super excess) in love toward one another and
toward all men
John 13:34-35
Matt 22:36-40
Rom 13:10
2. establish unblameable (faultless) hearts in holiness
separate from the world
separate unto God
2 Cor 6:17-18

Until the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints

Jesus is imminently coming in Love, to the clouds, for His Bride
(Rapture, next chapter)
Jesus is also coming at the appointed time in Judgment, to the earth

The blessed hope of these saints and all saints is Jesus coming

- to the clouds, for us and with the saints who have gone before
1 John 3:1-3
- to the earth, with us, to tear down this wicked and corrupt
world and to set up His kingdom on earth
Jude 14-15

So, why is this young fellowship in Thessalonica stead fast in faith and
increasing and abounding in love, unmoved during all the afflictions and
tribulations they are suffering/cheerfully enduring?

They and we are joyfully looking for our blessed hope, the imminent return of
their Lord for them/us to keep His promise of John 14:1-3

In the meantime,

Rom 8:18 I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not
worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be
revealed in us.

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers
temptations; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith
worketh patience. But let patience have *her* perfect work,
that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing

“Steady as she goes, brethren.”

- Until Jesus returns
- Because Jesus is returning for us to be with Him forever

THE promise that helps us endure whatever the world throws at us

Application/Lessons

1. Stand fast

- a. Why is this young fellowship in Thessalonica stand fast in faith, unmoved during all the afflictions and tribulations they are suffering/cheerfully enduring?

How can we?

[Dave Ramsey letter]

The world is in travail/birth pangs (Kathryn on Wed night, Bulletin Message)

Is 53:11

Jer 30:5-7

John 16:20-22

1 Thes 5:1-3

In a world in travail being prepared to receive/believe a Jesus Christ impersonator, the counterfeit christ, we

- know the Truth (what God has said) and stand on the Rock that cannot be moved
- know a lie when we hear one i.e what God has not said
- don't listen to Satan's taunts of "Curse God and die!"
- let our Light shine while inviting those in darkness to come into the Light of the world...being a part of what God is doing

Darkness will persecute the Light, but there is not enough darkness in the whole world to extinguish the light of even one candle!

How bright is my light?

Oh, Lord, let it shine!

- b. Discipleship is mission-critical work and it never ends...
long, hard, painful, "below the radar"

The most important and most time/effort consuming part of the Great Commission is that which must take place after witnessing and leading to Christ – discipleship

We MUST invest ourself and our faith in the baby Christian, to

- love
- teach/feed
- protect
- grow/strengthen
- encourage
- edify

Be an instrument of God's sanctifying work of Phil 1:6...in us and in others

Discipleship: we all need

- Someone to disciple us
- Someone to disciple

c. Afflictions

In the hands of God our Father, afflictions remind us of His promises

1. we shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer (John 16:33)
2. if God be for us who can be against us (Rom 8:31)
3. greater is He Who is in us than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4)
4. we overcome the world by faith (1 John 5:4-5)
5. suffering on earth, then glory in heaven (Rom 8:18)

Our Father tells us, His children, in advance so

- we are not surprised/shaken/moved
- we will know that He is God and in complete control

“Steady as she goes, brethren.”

2. Increase and abound in love or each other and for all

Love is the

- nature of God (1 John 4:8)
- very basis of the Law (Matt (22:36-40)
- fulfillment of the Law (Rom 13:10)

1 John 3:10-18

1 John 4:7-21

John 3:30