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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

1 Thessalonians 3.

(2013)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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1 Thessalonians 3.

Topics.

- Timothy is sent to establish and exhort the Thessalonians.
- We were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass.
- The tempter.
- Paul desires to supply what is lacking in believers faith.
- May Christ establish your hearts blameless in holiness before God.

The Previous Chapter: in the previous chapter Paul spoke of suffering for the Gospel, God testing the Thessalonians hearts and preaching to please God in contrast to pleasing man. He and those ministering with him told the Thessalonian brothers and sisters that they cared about them as a nursing mother cares about her own children and that they were their crown, their glory and their joy. Paul and Silvanus were in Athens the capital city of Greece and had sent Timothy to them (1 Thess. 3:1-2).

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

Timothy is sent to establish and exhort the Thessalonians

1 Thess. 3:1-7 ----- ¹Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, ²and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's co-worker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, ³that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. ⁴For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. ⁵For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labour would be in vain. ⁶But now that Timothy has come to us from you and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you— ⁷ for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith.

Athens: the capital city of Greece (Acts 17:15-34) (1 Thess. 3:1) of which the goddess of wisdom, was reputed to have founded.

The words, "We could bear it no longer" (v1) link back to the previous chapter and refer to Paul and those ministering with him hearing of the severe persecution and afflictions the Thessalonian brothers and sisters were suffering at the hand of the Jews who held fast to Moses Law, Jewish customs and traditions and therefore opposed those who proclaimed the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTICE: how beautiful the following words of Paul are when referring to Timothy, Paul does not say that Timothy is a co-worker with him, but that Timothy is God's co-worker in the Gospel (v2). What a wonderful statement, every faithful brother and sister in the family of Christ should view themselves in this manner, (i.e., not co-workers of any man, but co-workers with God in the Gospel).

We were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass: Paul's words, "We kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction (v4), clearly show that Paul knew his ministry was going to be filled with persecution and the words, "Just as it has come to pass," (v4) refer to Paul's encounter with Christ on the Damascus Road at which time Jesus told Ananias to tell Paul that: -

- He is a chosen instrument of the Lord's to carry his name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel and that Jesus will show him how much *he must suffer* for the sake of Christ's name" (Acts 9:3-16).

This should be enormously encouraging to brothers and sisters in Christ who are having difficulty while serving the Lord because it clearly shows that hardship does not mean that a brother or sister in Christ who is totally devoted to the Lord and faithfully serving him (as Paul was), but happens to be facing trouble is out of the will of God.

Serving Christ is not a guarantee that a brother or sister's life or their ministry will be free of difficulty, in fact in most cases being a disciple of Jesus will attract hardships that a secular person will never have to face, but the rewards of surrendering one's life to the service of the Lord are spiritual and eternal. Paul brilliantly summed his attitude toward his ministry with the following words: -

- I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ (Philip. 3:8).

The tempter: in the following verse, "I feared that somehow the tempter had tempted you" (v4) can refer to any person who in some manner tempts a brother or sister to forsake their faith. In this context it would refer to the Jews since the Thessalonians could have easily been tempted to forsake their faith because of the extreme persecution certain Jews were afflicting on them, but in spite of their suffering they endured and remained faithful.

This is why Paul was so elated and comforted (v7) when Timothy brought him the good news of their faith and told him of the love they had for Paul and those ministering with him.

Paul desires to Supply what is lacking in the Thessalonians Faith.

1 Thess. 3:8-10 ----- ⁸For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord. ⁹For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, ¹⁰as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?

NOTICE: the great passion Paul has for the Thessalonian brothers and sisters, his joy in their enduring faith is so overwhelming that he cannot find words to express his gratitude to God. This is truly stunning and reveals the true heart of a shepherd. All Paul's joy came from knowing the Lord and from seeing others being faithful to Christ especially under persecution and suffering in contrast to the false religious leaders who got their joy from the power and wealth and the importance, fame and praise they received from being in the ministry.

Paul desires to supply what is lacking in your faith: (v10) these words of Paul shows that we don't have to know everything to be saved. When a sinner honestly humbles themselves before God in repentance and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour not only does, "God the Father deliver them from the domain of darkness and transfer them into the kingdom of his beloved Son (Col. 1:13), but at that same moment they are spiritually born into the family of Christ and become an infant child of God who begins a spiritual journey of growing in godly behaviour and in the knowledge and love of the Lord.

May Christ establish your Hearts Blameless in Holiness before God.

1 Thess. 3:11-13 ----- ¹¹Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, ¹²and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, ¹³so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

The words, "Blameless and holiness before God" (v13) in this context does not mean without sin, only one man throughout history has ever been able to achieve that perfection and he is the Son of God the Lord Jesus Christ. Having our hearts

blameless in holiness in this context is about loving our brothers and sisters in Christ which means showing each other compassion, kindness, mercy, grace and forgiveness etc., and about showing the same love to those outside the Kingdom of God. When we stand before the Lord at his return we will not be given a doctrinal exam to do, but we will be judged according to our devotion to Christ and how we have fulfilled Jesus commandment and the Royal law, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39) (Mark 12:28-31) (James 2:8). This means do not deliberately do harm to other humans. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself.

The thing God hates the most is when we do harm to another person, physically, financially, sexually, verbally, mentally, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do-good to others. It is interesting to notice that the major crime that God points out in Noah's time and one of the main reasons for the flood was because of all the violence in the land.

Leviticus chapter nineteen makes it clear that our neighbour is every other person, showing that the law requires justice to all people. The six commandments regarding mankind should be applied to everyone and we must abide by them ourselves. To love in the biblical sense is not an emotional attitude, but the keeping of these laws in relation to our neighbour. This is the general law of justice, beyond that; our conduct is to be regulated by relationship. We must render honour and justice to all people wherever due, but we have a particular responsibility to care for our families and those who belong to Christ.

- Micah wrote: "What the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God" (Micah 6:5-10).
- Isaiah says: "The LORD loves justice, hates robbery and wrong doing" (Isaiah 61:8).
- Jeremiah said: "Those who know God practise steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights" (Jer. 9:24).

The great prophets Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah clearly show us that the people the LORD loves are not only those who acknowledge God, but who also uphold justice, do not lie, deceive or make promises they do not intend to keep, but speak the truth, do what is right, show respect and give help to others when able and make choices that lead to peace. These are the things the LORD delights in and that bring His favour. The constant theme throughout Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount is doing what is right before God by seeking the way of peace in all situations. Jesus in this sermon calls Christians to treat people fairly and with respect, dignity, decency grace compassion, kindness, mercy and to be quick to forgive.

Biblically a wicked person is primarily one who deliberately and consciously denies the existence of God and does harm to other humans, in contrast to this a good person is one who worships God and the Lord Jesus Christ and do all they can, to do what is right, and what is just (i.e., fair for all). To love in the biblical sense is not an emotional attitude, but the keeping of these laws in relation to our neighbour. This is the general law of justice, beyond that; our conduct is to be regulated by relationship. We must render honour and justice to all people wherever due, but we have a particular responsibility to care for our families and those who belong to Christ.

For further information on Jesus Famous Sermon see: -

- Matthew 5 in. Commentary New Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

SUMMARY: 1 Thessalonians chapters 1, 2, 3.

Paul had visited Thessalonica (the capital of Roman Macedonia) on his second missionary journey and established a largely Gentile church there, but was forced to flee to Athens because of intense Jewish opposition. In Athens Paul and those with him were worried about the Thessalonians, because they heard they were

suffering extreme persecution and afflictions because of this Paul sent Timothy to encourage them. Timothy has returned and told Paul and those with him that the Thessalonians are standing firm in the Gospel.

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