

Faith and Love

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[0:00] If you will, turn in your Bible to 1 Thessalonians chapter 3. 1 Thessalonians chapter 3.

I'll begin reading at verse 6. This is the Word of God. But 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.

For this reason, brothers, in our distress and affliction, we have been comforted about you through your faith. For now we live if you are standing fast in the Lord.

For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, as we pray most earnestly night and day, that we may see you face to face, and supply what is lacking in your faith.

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

[1:24] Amen. Once again, I thank God for the pastors of this church giving me the opportunity to stand before you with God's word again.

I hope you would be profited. I'm so delighted to be with you this evening. We've just read of an encouraging report from Timothy regarding the church in Thessalonica, and I feel like Timothy, to that extent, bringing you a report of God's kindness and blessings upon the saints in Nairobi and in Isiolo, people that you love dearly, and to tell you that the Lord is keeping us and helping us and continuing to increase and strengthen the new work in Isiolo of which you are a part.

So even in bringing the word of God, I feel like I am part of the Bible regarding the report that you are receiving. Now, earlier today, we met with the sovereignty of God in his majesty upon his throne.

We were reminded of his holiness, but also of our sinfulness. The sinfulness of the prophet was highlighted, and we can identify with that.

The commission for service was issued, and now in this sermon, I hope to show you the conduct of the redeemed. And the question is, what kind of people ought we to be in light of God's sovereignty and holiness?

[3:17] Now, Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica is filled with pastoral warmth and affection. And in this text, he responds to the encouraging report of Timothy's visit of the church.

Timothy had reported of their steadfast faith and love despite persecution. Remember how they had been beaten up in Thessalonica and sent away?

And then later on, they said, Timothy, go back and find out whether that young church is still standing. And Timothy comes back, and he says, yes, by the grace of God, they are standing firm in faith and in love.

And his word reveals the heart of a shepherd with his flock, that even though the shepherd might be persecuted and be removed from his flock for a period, yet he is still thinking about them and praying for them and yearning that the Lord may continue to work even without him.

And so Paul and Silas and Timothy rejoice in the perseverance of these brethren in the faith, longing for their maturity and praying for their sanctification in Christ.

[4:36] Therefore, the church's purpose is to be strengthened in faith, to abide in love, and to be established blameless in holiness at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, a subject that he brings over and over again.

The pillars of a Christian life are faith in Christ and love for him and for his people. And we see them here clearly set before us in the lives of these Christians in Thessalonica.

You know, Paul usually speaks of faith, love, and hope like he did in chapter 1 verse 3. And in 2 Thessalonians 1 verse 3, again he does the same where faith and love are combined.

Faith and love taken together would represent the totality of the Christian life, both internally and externally because belief and behavior have to go together.

We leave what we believe. And so this brings joy. The spiritual vitality of any local church is mentioned not by the number of people or programs but by the faith of the saints in Christ and their affectionate love for one another and how much they rejoice in Christ.

[6:09] These virtues that we must seek to cultivate as a church so that even in affliction we can be comforted.

And that's something that he talks about. And the passage before us is very practical in producing thanksgiving and seeks to strengthen the spiritual fabric of our lives in holiness as a local church. So we'll consider these two pillars of faith and love in this Christian community as I seek to show you their joy their comfort their thanksgiving and their holiness.

first of all faith and love brings joy. He says verse 6 but now that Timothy has come to us from you and has brought us the good news of your faith and you can say he has brought to us the gospel of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us as we long to see you and he goes on to add in verse 9 for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God. we must never cut out emotion from our faith. If our Christian experience does not produce any joy then it would be miserable and then Paul says if there is no resurrection then we would be of all people the most pitiable but we are not the most pitiable people because we have joy for this life and joy for the one to come so that even when we are persecuted we are still able to endure and receive all those afflictions in John by God's grace Paul had planted this church and it is fitting for him to feel this way when he heard of their continued faith and the grace of God upon them even with their afflictions and persecutions that they faced if there is one apostle and missionary who knew the pain of persecution by the

[8:44] Jews who wanted to destroy the gospel that he preached it is Paul they skimmed against him and fought his message but they did not prevail those who came under his influence like the Thessalonians the Thessalonian believers they often took of his beating like Jason for example he had been beaten up and then he had to put money as the bond to get these men out of a city and eventually they fled and he was left there and eventually a church formed in his own house but then Paul was wondering what became of those saints so it was very refreshing when Timothy returned from Thessalonica to Paul who at this point was in Corinth and brought the good news of how the people in Thessalonica had continued in faith they had borne it well and you can imagine

Paul in his anxiety wondering what could Timothy be bringing from Thessalonica and then Timothy comes and he says they are studying and you can imagine then what joy that produced when he said they are studying in the faith they remain steadfast even at persecution it is interesting that this is the only time the New Testament others uses the word gospel to refer to general good news it's the only time and it shows how much they were excited by the fact that this church remains strong and firm in the faith despite all the persecution you know the the Gen Z's may never appreciate the fact that the millennials grew up not having a cell phone where you can just you know chat and send messages just like that and this is particularly the case and I would say that part of the reason why the current generation may sometimes be very miserable is because they have all this information on demand sometimes when information is delayed and you get it having been waiting yearning it is sweeter isn't it and that's what we see here one commentator that I already say is that there was no question that Paul wanted to see the Thessalonians again but in did they want to see Paul again like

Paul Paul's remembrances of them which he writes about in verse 1 chapter 1 verse 3 they always had a good remembrance of Paul and Silas and Timothy the us now what had started well and I'll continue even better just as Paul could not get the Thessalonians out of his mind so they also always had good thoughts about their first pastors but the point here is that the relationship had grown so strong on both sides that they greatly desired to be reunited to see each other and Paul speaks of this strong yearning in the same terms as a babe desiring the mother's milk or his own longing later to see Timothy as he says in 2 Timothy 1.4 and other churches in

Romans 1.11 and Philippians 1.8 when we see the people who are dear to us after separation by affliction surely joy is kindled and renewed and expanded as we spend time with them when I was ladding at Fort Wayne I don't know what happened the pilot touched the ground and then he went

up again and for 15 minutes we didn't know what was happening and I'm sure Pastor John was getting very anxious when I didn't turn up so he came to the lobby and he was oh I found him looking around like this wondering will Marungi turn up or what happened or became of him when he saw me he just embraced me and you can imagine the joy now the joy was mutual but because of his anxiety in waiting for me it was even more so Paul was delighted that the Thessalonians always and kindly remembered them and they longed to see them face to face and this longing was mutual and eventually when they met they were happy they were joyful and this is the kind of joy that should be there when we meet on Sunday all week long we've been busy perhaps in our firms or in our jobs some in school some in the on your desk and then you come and meet with God's people what a joyful occasion it should be when we gather like this because you know this is the fortest of glory which will be a happy place we need to have that desire and longing to be in fellowship with other brethren so that every time there is an occasion for camp man I heard that there is a man's camp we go and we are identified by that presence of one another as we answer each other's questions and pray together and plan together that presence should bring us joy and delight as we see the

[15:06] Lord's work in the lives of other people seeing that they are indwelt by Christ and part of the body of Christ we long to see them and be with them so that our joy may be full and then secondly verse 7 through 8 we see here that faith and love brings comfort in affliction and so he says for these reason!

brothers in all our distress and affliction we've been comforted about you through your faith for now we leave if you are standing fast in the Lord again you can see he is writing very warmly for now we leave it as if he was dead before getting the news genuine faith can never be destroyed by affliction genuine faith cannot be touched really even when we go through pain through persecutions instead believers count it all joy when such diverse trials come as we read in James 1 3 count it all joy brothers when you face trials of various kinds Christian faith does not deny distress or affliction it does not refuse to mention trouble as those of positive confession teach rather believers are realistic when challenges come and so

Paul acknowledges this fact when he speaks of our distress and affliction Paul accepts them Paul even owns them when he says our afflictions and distress trials because we should acknowledge when trials come in order that we would know how to pray and to seek the prayer of other saints and to wait upon the Lord yet distress and afflictions are not the end of everything Paul mentions that even with the distress and affliction we have been comforted we should be comforted even though we have gone through many trials when we hear that the Lord is bearing up his people and the people are holding together well in their own afflictions and especially when a report comes that they are persevering and enduring well in their faith the comfort of Paul and company was not about the many numbers that they had but about you through your faith he says for they were delighted to know that they still believed in the

Lord Jesus Christ these people trusted in Christ redeeming love they depended on Christ's righteousness they had full faith and confidence in his sacrifice and on the cross for the atonement of their sins and for the forgiveness thereof the Thessalonian church remained!

that the resurrection of Jesus Christ brought their own justification salvation and eternal life so that they could not die since Christ had died and redeemed them by his blood!

[19:01] ! does that mean? what that mean? what does what does sometimes when you hear that persecution has broken out in Nigeria northern Nigeria and you hear that there were churches there and people are being killed every day and you send someone there to go and see what's happening and for two weeks you hear nothing about him it's as if you're dead at that point isn't it?

You're also wondering whether he's alive at the ring of the phone you jump not knowing whether it's good news or bad news that is coming but then when you get the phone call and you hear that the messenger has gone and come back he is safe and he is also reporting that they are alive and they are well and they are in Christ and trusting in Christ what do you say?

A loud hallelujah isn't it? We must be revitalized and strengthened when we hear a good report of how brothers are faring in their walk with Christ in the Lord especially those who have gone through trials and challenges so the truth of the matter then is that we live in a broken world persecutions come but our faith in Christ must be such that we will refuse to be intimidated by threats and persecution and this is because of our confidence in Christ and in the sovereignty of God and in the power of the gospel and we are confident that all the elect of God whether they be in

Indiana or in Somalia when they hear the gospel the power of Christ unto salvation will work in their lives and they will be brought to faith and even though they might be short yet they will remain stand first in the trial again look at the thanksgiving that faith and love produces in the lives of believers for what thanksgiving can we return to God for you for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see your face we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith this is a question but it's not just a question it's a question of delight it's a question of excitement by Paul and company they are delighted with joy and so what do they do two things one they give thanks to

God this is Paul's reaction to the good report by Timothy from Thessalonica that he thanked God we know that every good gift and every perfect gift is from the father and so we should render lots of thanksgiving and praise to God when we pray and the Lord answers our prayer positively in favor there should be more joy and delight and thanksgiving to God when we see our prayers answered we must thank God and praise him for his deeds and surely you have a reason to thank God and in the same way of thanksgiving Paul and company burst into earnest prayers we are to offer earnest prayers for God's people whenever we remember them we pray most earnestly night and day for God's people and Christ's flock to remain steadfast and so this longing for face to face meeting in order that our fellowship may be real and warmed should be something that we desire as brothers and sisters in the

[23:28] Lord and more when the Lord gives us a chance to see one another face to face we should seek to supply the faith of one another with what is lacking and be sure that if there is any deficiency in their knowledge if there be a hole in their work of faith if there is any rough injuries in their ministry that we would supply what is lacking this way they were in their faith and life and we are encouraged by their growth in faith and their increase in service and maturity whenever we are encouraged our hearts should automatically turn to God in thanksgiving and praise we must be like Paul who was flooded with gratitude gratitude because how easy it is to grumble when things go wrong to the point of turning an accusing finger at others when our plans do not succeed the response is to trust in God to thank him for what he has done and to pray that the

Lord may give us the grace to endure what he has put on our table a complaining Christian is really a contradiction a complaining Christian is a contradiction of terms because we just saw the Lord God Almighty upon his throne in his sovereignty in his power in his majesty and all for us so when things seem to be going the wrong side it is only the wrong side in so far as our understanding is concerned it's not the wrong side in God's scheme of things and that's why then we can delight in Romans 8 verse 28 that we know that in all things

God is working them all together he is bringing that end of the string together to this end of the string even that which seems wayward he brings it all together and he is weaving blessings out of trials and he is working out all things for the good of his people and so there is no affliction that is useless there is no pain that the Lord isn't using for the good of our faith and for our eternal good and so a complaining Christian is a contradiction salvation and then lastly verse 11 through 13 we see that faith and love establishes holiness we saw the holiness of God earlier today and now we are reminded of our own holiness holiness and holiness is the totality of being set apart by God for God we are set apart by God in salvation and life that honor him but also for God's service so in the text here three verses

Paul speaks of how the faith and love of these believers in the Thessalonica helped them to be established in holiness he writes now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you and may the Lord make you increase and abode in love for one another and for all as we do for you so that he may establish your heart blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his sins so when God the Father and God the Son are involved in the life of any individual then the spirit is also present for God is one it is God who directs all our ways and guides our steps and lights up the path for us and Paul is simply saying he is praying for these believers that these things may be so when he says now may our God you realize that he is praying what does he pray for one that God may make it possible for them to go back to the

Thessalonica why so that they can see these brethren face to face not because they were disbelieving Timothy but because the report by Timothy was very good and they wanted to share in it face to face and then he prays secondly he is pleading with the Lord to make them to increase and abode in love for one another and for all thirdly that God may establish their hearts blameless

in holiness before himself they are not just going to be holy before one another but holy for God and finally may the Lord Jesus come with and so for all the saints his prayer needs shows what really mattered for Paul and how he prayed for people he did not necessarily emphasize their material prosperity or their physical well-being but rather sought their spiritual prosperity and their maturity he knew that the needs of the moment come and go and Christians can better handle those needs of the moment when they are in a good spiritual state the way we deal with our afflictions in our physical successes and prosperity is all informed by the spiritual state in which we are you can tell if [30:34] I am in a good spiritual state by the way I conduct myself before those pains and afflictions you can tell if you're in a good spiritual state by your levels of anxiety over material needs yes we need to succeed materially but the question is are we prospering spiritually and it is in order for you to build yourself a good house and buy a new car and line your pockets and panel your houses but the question is is my heart established blameless and in holiness before our God the evidence of being perfected or being matured in life is that there is a clear establishment of faith in Christ and that my heart is all turned and tuned to God which is the same as saying seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness and then all these other things will be added to you the increase and the abounding in love for one another is a fruit of salvation and the opposite is also an indicator that we are not moving in the right direction and the result is being established in the heart being blameless and growing in holiness because the aim and the effect of being perfected in love is holiness which really is an effect of sanctification because sanctification comprehends the wall of life in the spirit who is holy and since the Lord is holy he has given us his holy spirit to produce in us holiness how can we be indwelt by the holy spirit and not be holy holy not just as being set apart by God for God but also pursuing moral purity the two are not mutually exclusive so dear brethren and saints in applying this message

I call upon you to consider that this is a call for self examination we are to evaluate our feelings and our thoughts and our plans in light of faith and love is what I'm desiring going to contribute to the increase and the strengthening of my faith is what I am planning or thinking about going to increase and strengthen my faith and my love for God because our vertical relationship with God in faith must resort into love for him and his church love for God and love for one another and for all will be measured by our desire to want others to be conformed to the likeness of Christ and so we share the gospel with him when we would not properly examine ourselves before the Lord you know what the Lord does he slows us down and how does he slow us down sometimes through sicknesses or other afflictions and while you're in your bed of affliction you're forced to think about your life what if I die what if I don't get healed therefore dear saints evaluate the state of your soul in light of your providential circumstances and it's better to evaluate the state of your soul while you are healthy consider your heart with regard to money with regard to other people with regard to God's work the great commission and see whether your affections are in the right place is your heart well established blameless and then secondly draw increase in faith and love consider what you know from

God's word and what has been entrusted to you through the teaching and the preaching of God's word both privately when you read your own Bible when you pray and also publicly when the word of God is brought to you and ask yourself what should I do with the word of God that I have just heard the week that is ahead of me what am I going to do because Peter says you have to make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue with knowledge with self control with steadfastness with godliness with brotherly affection and with love and if you don't do that he says if these qualities are yours and are increasing they will keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ for whoever lacks in these qualities is so short sighted that he is blind having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins so you have pastors here who prepare to teach you you have your bible that you own a copy of

God's word which you read but then do you actually ask yourself I have read this I have heard this so what regarding my plans so what regarding my studies so what regarding my place of work so what regarding my friends my relatives my acquaintances people that I know what should I do in light of the word of God that I have just read or heard because you see there has to be an increase a strengthening of the faith and then your love for the saints includes being with them face to face and also praying for them when you are face to face with God if you don't like being with other brethren while here on earth I wonder what you are going to do in glory

[37:49] Paul says here again and again I want to see you not on FaceTime but face to face Paul longed to see the Thessalonians face to face he knew that this is how it was meant to be because are we going to be in heaven virtually or physically that is face to face because you see the last point of application is that the Lord is returning and why is he returning why doesn't the Lord just make a call you guys come over where I am he's going to come for us and he's going to be with us we not only long to be with one another but desire and long for the Lord coming and it's very interesting that

Paul could not wait for chapter 4 to bring this subject to the second coming of Christ and he says at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his sin he will return the Lord will return and Paul is going to go back into that subject in chapter 4 from verse 18 but even then this occupied his mind so much that he brings it up he lets out the cut too quickly but the point is made that yes we should be so excited about the coming of our Lord that comes out even when we are holding to be the last point we still let it out we want to encourage brethren to long for the great appearing the glorious appearing of our great God even our Savior Jesus Christ we must be waiting for our blessed hope the appearing of our great

God even our Savior Jesus Christ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works in closing since all these things are thus to be dissolved what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn but according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells may the Lord bless his word Lord we pray that you may help us to have this desire of growth and increase of our faith and love as we seek to be with you and to be with one another as we desire to be conformed to your likeness

Lord help us so that everything that we do everything that we think about everything that we say will contribute towards that glorious day we pray that you may renew in us a desire for the coming of our great God and our Savior Jesus Christ from heaven oh Lord we pray come Lord Jesus come Amen