

# ENCOURAGED

## 1 THESSALONIANS 3:1-13

1. What are some things parents often say to their children? (I love you; don't do anything I wouldn't do; be careful; be careful the choices you make; I'm so proud of you; etc.)
2. What lesson was most ingrained in you by your mom and/or dad? (For me it was: A strong work ethic. Whatever you do, do it to the best of your ability. My mother always taught me to put others before yourself.)
3. How does your life show their influence today?

The church at Thessalonica was like a child to Paul, and there was more he wanted to teach them about the Christian life than he had in the short time he was with them. He was able to spend 2-3 years at Ephesus, but only a few weeks at Thessalonica.

4. Can you describe a time when a person, action or observation lifted your spirit and encouraged you? (A kind word or gesture, as well as appreciation for God's creation can inspire and build confidence and courage.)

Christians encourage one another by remaining faithful to Christ and His church!

In today's study, we will see Paul experience the thoughts and feelings of parenting or pastoring with the Thessalonian church. Both were encouraged through the faithfulness of the other—as it should be!

### **DISTRESSED! Read 1 Thess. 3:1-5**

1. Why did Paul send Timothy back to check on these new believers? (To “strengthen and encourage (them) concerning (their) faith”, and to “find out about their faith”—had they remained strong.)

The emotional setting and language of this chapter suggests that Paul's emotions and anxiety are getting the better of him. In chapter two Paul said their visit was “not without fruit.” Here he suggested he was afraid their work was for nothing.

2. What had Paul told them was going to happen, that in fact proved to be true? (They would suffer persecution. Paul isn't a Fortune Teller here; he based his statement on past experience.)

Paul was just as passionate about sharing the gospel and discipling new believers as he was about persecuting Christians before his conversion! Whatever Paul did his passionate personality came through—it was the way God made him!

3. What message is conveyed to believers through Paul's repeated mention of suffering? (As believers we should anticipate persecution and suffering for the gospel—John 16:33. Becoming a Christian does not prevent or eliminate life's challenges; in fact it may intensify our trials.)

**The more passionate we are about the gospel the greater the persecution may be. The more persecution we endure the more refined our faith will be—like refined gold the dross must be eliminated.**

4. Teachers, are you as concerned about your class members' spiritual condition as Paul was about the Thessalonians?
5. Satan is always on the attack, so how do we win the spiritual war that is constantly about us? (Ephesians 6:10-17—Put on the full armor of God.)

Satan cannot steal anyone's salvation, but he can create chaos in the congregation. That is why unity in Christ and winning the spiritual battle is so important. A church fighting among themselves isn't going to reach anyone for Christ.

Paul might have been expecting the worst, but Timothy had returned with good news.

### **REJUVENATED! Read 1 Thess. 3:6-10**

Paul normally used the Greek word translated “good news” to refer to the gospel. Here is the only time he used the word in its cultural context.

1. What was the good news Paul received from Timothy? (They had weathered the attacks from Satan and were standing firm in their faith.)
2. What was Paul’s response to this good news? (Thanks to God.)
3. How is encouragement found in shared commitment to Jesus? (We can do more together than individually, and part of the reason is that it is so easy to get discouraged when we are alone. Lifting up each other and carrying one another’s burdens also encourages believers. We need each other.)

In Genesis when God was creating the universe, there is a particular phrase that is repeated over again: “And God said...and it was so...and God saw that it was good.”

Until the final act—when the song comes to a screeching halt. God creates a man in his own image. God looks at this man, who bears his likeness, and says, “Not good.” This is a radical comment about the fundamental importance of human relationships. I know man needed a female companion for procreation but the fact is man is a relational being and we need each other. No substitute will fill this need in you for human relationship.

Jesus sent the 70 disciples out 2 by 2 for a reason—we need each other. Part of that need is accountability but we need encouragement from each other!

4. What practical steps can you take to encourage another believer this week? (Perhaps a phone call or a note to a fellow class member would also encourage you. Your pastor and staff also need encouraging from time to time.)
5. What did Paul mean when he said “complete what is lacking in your faith?” (They needed a mature believer to disciple them to be more like Jesus.)
6. How does seeing God at work in the lives of others encourage you to remain faithful as well? (Seeing God is faithful in their life helps me realize He will be faithful in my life as well.)

Paul and the Thessalonian believers had fought a battle and were still in the battle together. Instead of pushing the two apart, as the enemy desired, the battle was pulling them together!

### **FOCUSED! Read 1 Thess. 3:11-13**

1. What specific elements of Paul’s prayer was for the Thessalonian believers? (“Increase and overflow with love for one another;” and “make your hearts blameless in holiness.”)

“Blameless in holiness” doesn’t mean perfection but free of known sin.

2. How do these verses emphasize the importance of believers earnestly praying for one another? (We are to pray for one another regularly. Paul’s prayer list must have been several pages. Fervent prayer for the spiritual growth and holiness of God’s people aligns with His will. As we pray for others we are drawn closer to God ourselves.)

We can be confident God responds when we pray for one another—1 John 5:14-15.

3. How does the love believers show to each other encourage others? (The only way the world can see the love of God is through the actions of believers! When others see it in you it will challenge them to act likewise.)

The love we are to show is unconditional. That will get the world’s attention. Loving others isn’t easy. It is only with the help of the Holy Spirit that we can show God’s love to a lost world.

4. As we prepare for our upcoming revival, who has God placed on your heart to pray for and show that unconditional love?

It will take us out of our comfort zone but God will bless.

### **SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE!**

Notice in this chapter Paul expressed he was distressed, then rejuvenated and finally thankful for the good news and the believers he prayed for.