

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13; “Establishing Your Faith” May 28, 2023

I. Welcome

A. Good morning! Ohaiyou gozaimasu! Welcome to Calvary Chapel Iwakuni. As always, it is a blessing to be here with you all to spend some time hearing from the Lord and His Word, and simply enjoying the blessing of His presence with us and the fellowship of one another.

1. *Welcome any new faces and those streaming online.*

B. Before we continue any further, let's go ahead and dismiss our elementary aged children to their Sunday School class.

1. *As well as the Bible English class (Second Service)*

C. This morning we continue our march through the book of 1 Thessalonians as we look to wrap up the first major section of Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica.

1. If you recall a few weeks back when we did our overview of the book of 1 Thessalonians you may recall how the book of 1 Thessalonians is divided up into two major sections.

a. Chapters 1-3 deal with Paul looking back and remembering the personal experiences the church had gone through.

b. Then in chapters 4 & 5 Paul turns and starts looking to the future and gives them some practical exhortation on how to live their life in sight of Christ's coming.

2. So, chapters 1-3 deal with personal experiences of the church in Thessalonica from their past, while chapters 4 & 5 speak of practical exhortation Paul has for them regarding the future.

3. This morning we'll look to cover the entirety of chapter 3 and in so doing wrap up this first section of Paul's letter.

D. So, if you have your Bible with you this morning and you haven't done so already, go ahead and open it up to the book of 1 Thessalonians chapter 3.

1. Our text this morning is going to be the entire chapter. But don't worry, it isn't that long of a chapter. Chapter 3 only has 13 verses in it.
2. And so, we'll be reading chapter 3 verses 1-13 and the title of our study this morning is going to be **"Establishing Your Faith"**.
3. Will you all please rise to your feet in honor of God and His Holy Word? I'm going to read our text from my Bible, do your best to follow along in your own Bible. Paul continues his letter to the church in Thessalonica with the following in chapter 3 verse 1...*(R & P)*

II. Intro, Review, and Outline;

A. I entitled our study together this morning "Establishing Your Faith" because it is the main emphasis that Paul writes about here in chapter 3.

1. Take a peak at verse 2 and note with me Paul's desire for the church in Thessalonica. He was sending Timothy to them to establish them and encourage them concerning their faith.
 - a. The Greek word "establish" is the word "*sterizo*" and it means to strengthen or to make more firm.
 - b. You can almost hear the English word that we get from this Greek word, "steroid". People take steroids to strengthen their muscles or to make their muscles more firm. That is the idea behind this word.
 - c. Paul wanted to establish, to strengthen, the church in Thessalonica.
 - d. The word also carries with it the idea of making something to stand, or to stand firm. So when he mentions in verse 2 sending Timothy to establish

their faith, Paul is talking about strengthening their faith, or making their faith to stand firm.

2. Take a peak down at the end of the chapter in verse 13. There Paul writes about how he is praying that God may establish their hearts blameless in holiness.
 - a. It's the same Greek word, "sterizo". Paul wants to see this church strengthened, made more firm, able to stand on their own.
3. So at the beginning of the chapter and at the end of the chapter, Paul's emphasis is upon establishing this church.
4. But what is it exactly that Paul is wanting to see established, what does he want to see strengthened and made to stand firm? It is their faith.
 - a. Five times in these 13 verses, Paul makes reference to the Thessalonians faith.
 - i. In verse 2 he writes about how he wants Timothy "to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith"
 - ii. In verse 5 Paul mentions how he sent Timothy that he may "know your faith".
 - iii. In verse 6 he writes about the good news of "your faith"
 - iv. In verse 7 he mentions being "comforted concerning you by your faith."
 - v. And in verse 10, Paul again mentions the faith of the Thessalonians praying and asking God to "perfect what is lacking in your faith".
 - b. So, it's clear to see that the emphasis in this chapter is about establishing the faith of the Thessalonians, about strengthening their faith, making their faith to stand firm.

B. And we can understand Paul's heart for this work to happen. Remember the situation this church is facing.

1. They are a young and brand-new church. Paul was only there in Thessalonica for a few weeks. He taught for three Sabbaths in the local Jewish synagogue and some Jews were persuaded to believe. But on top of that, a great multitude of the devout Greeks joined with Paul and Silas as well as sizeable group of the leading women. (**Acts 17:4**)
 - a. But not everyone was persuaded. In fact, the Jews who were not persuaded set the city in an uproar and ran Paul, Silas, and Timothy out of town, forcing them to flee under the cover of night.
 2. Not only were they a young church, but they had no shepherd, they had no pastor, or spiritual leader, to help guide them in their newfound faith.
 3. And to top it all off, they were facing all sorts of persecution from their fellow Thessalonians; both Jews and Greeks who were upset with their joining with Paul, and them believing upon the message that he proclaimed about Jesus Christ and the good news of the gospel.
 4. In a sense, they were left orphaned, and Paul desperately longed to return to them, to impart to them a greater understanding of the gospel, and to see them grow and mature into a healthy and strong church, to see them be further established in their faith.
 5. But as we noted last week at the end of chapter 2, Paul was hindered from coming back to them. Paul tried to go to them time and time again, but Satan hindered Paul. There were roadblocks put up that forbid Paul from coming to them and assisting in establishing them and their faith.
- C. Which leads to what Paul writes here in chapter 3 and the actions he took once he realized he would not be able to make it to them.

1. Now, as we look over this chapter, we can see that it can easily be broken into three different sections dealing with the establishing of the faith of those in Thessalonica.
2. For those of you who like to take notes and outline our text, we see that in verses 1-5 Paul speaks about “The Sending of Timothy” in order to establish the faith of the Thessalonians.
3. In verses 6-8 Paul mentions the “The Report from Timothy” regarding the faith of the Thessalonians.
4. And then in verses 9-13 we read about “The Prayers for the Thessalonians” that Paul and his companions prayed regarding the faith of the Thessalonians.

D. So, let’s dive into this first section highlighting the **Sending of Timothy** in verses 1-5.

III. 1 Thessalonians 2:1-5; The Sending of Timothy

A. We have to understand that Paul is writing from the past here at the beginning of the chapter. He is speaking about what had happened and how things unfolded in the past and led to the current situation where Paul is writing this letter to them from the city of Corinth.

1. Remember that Paul went to Thessalonica, was run out town there. He then went to Berea and when the Jews who ran him out of town heard that he was in Berea they went and stirred up the people of Berea just as they had done in Thessalonica, forcing him to leave from there.
2. Now when Paul left Berea, he did so by himself. He left Timothy and Silas there in Berea to make sure the church was ok after he left. From Berea, Paul made his way to the city of Athens. (**Acts 17:14**)
3. But their time apart was short, for soon after Paul arrived in Athens he called for them to quickly come join him there. (**Acts 17:15**)

4. And from there in Athens, as mentioned here in verse 1, the three of them got together and decided that it was best to send Timothy back to the church in Thessalonica and for Paul and Silas to be left alone in Athens.
 5. Paul would later send Silas back to the region of Macedonia, presumably to the church in Philippi for a season of ministry.
 6. Then after Paul had made his way into the city of Corinth, both Timothy and Silas returned from their respective seasons in the region of Macedonia, Timothy came from Thessalonica, and Silas came from a different part of Macedonia, again, perhaps Philippi, though the bible doesn't say so specifically. (**Acts 18:5**)
 7. This return of Timothy to Paul is what we also read of in our text this morning when Paul gets Timothy's report from his time with the Thessalonians.
 8. And it was after receiving the report from Timothy and him not being able to get to them himself, that he sat down and wrote this letter that we are reading here this morning.
- B. Verse 1 opens up speaking about how they could no longer endure "it" but doesn't specifically mention what the "it" was.
1. You have to look back to the end of chapter 2 to understand the flow and context here. Paul and his companions desperately longed to see the Thessalonians, to return to them and see them face to face.
 2. But every time they tried to make plans to go to them, nothing ever seemed to work out. No matter what they tried, the way was blocked, and they could not get to them because Satan was hindering them.

3. The “it” that they could no longer bear was the uncertainty of not knowing how the church in Thessalonica was doing. They had no idea how things were going there. They left fleeing the city under the cover of night in the middle of a city-wide uproar all because of Paul and his ministry there within the city.
 4. The last they knew of was certain believers were being dragged out of their homes and brought before city rulers with all sorts of false allegations about them trying to start a revolt or rebellion of some kind.
- C. So when they could no longer endure the not knowing, they decided it was best to send Timothy to them.
1. Now Timothy is described here in a few different ways by Paul
 - a. He is described as a brother of Paul and Silas. Meaning that he was a believer in the Lord and part of the family of God.
 - b. He is also described as a minister of God. The word “minister” in the Greek simply means a servant. Timothy was a servant of God.
 - c. Paul also mentions how Timothy was a fellow-laborer in the gospel of Christ. The word “fellow-laborer” is a single compound word. It’s the word “synergos” [soon-er-gos] which comes from “sun” which means “together with” and “ergon” which means work; one who works together with.
 - i. Timothy was one that worked well with others, he was a good team-player. He wasn’t afraid of hard labor, or difficult things. He was willing to go and serve God and partner together with others in their service toward God as well.
 2. In sending Timothy, Paul had four things that he wanted Timothy to do.
 - a. Number one, we see that Paul wanted Timothy **to establish the church** concerning their faith.

- i. Now, we've already talked about what that word establish means. How it carries the idea of strengthening and firming up. Timothy was to go and firm up the foundation of their faith in Christ that they may build upon it.
 - ii. Now this work would primarily be done through the teaching of the Word, teaching them doctrine and principles of the faith.
- b. The second thing Paul sent Timothy to do was **to encourage the church** concerning their faith.
- i. The word "encourage" in the Greek is the word "parakaleo". "Para" means "to the side of" and "kaleo" means "to call". Putting them together we understand that Timothy was called to come along side of them in their faith.
 - ii. This would involve simply helping and comforting; providing aid and encouragement as they go through various trials and difficulties and growing pains. It could involve verbal and non-verbal ministry.
 - iii. I think of the ministry of presence, of just being there for someone; to be an ear to listen to, a shoulder to cry upon, a friend to rejoice with, to be a warm smile or hug that brightens someone's day. This is what Timothy was sent to Thessalonica to provide.
- c. The third thing Paul sent Timothy to do was **to keep them from being shaken** by their afflictions.
- i. The church was going through a great amount of afflictions. They were being persecuted for their new faith in Christ, and timothy was sent to them to ensure them that this was to be expected.
 - ii. In fact, Paul writes about how he had warned them when he was with them, that they would suffer tribulation; that they were appointed to

afflictions. And sure enough that is what they were experiencing.

- iii. The church in Thessalonica shouldn't have been surprised by this and they shouldn't think that these sufferings and tribulations were meant to be a sign that they were headed in the wrong direction.
- iv. We talked a little about this last week. How sometimes we error when we think that troubles and difficulties mean we're headed in the wrong direction. In many cases the opposite of that is true. When you experience pain, and suffering, and trials, and afflictions because of your faith in Christ, it usually indicates you are headed in the right direction, not the wrong direction.
- v. This is what is to be expected for those that desire to live a godly life. That is what Paul wrote to Timothy later on in his life and ministry. He wrote to Timothy saying, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." (**2 Tim. 3:12**)
- vi. Jesus said, "In this world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (**Jn. 16:33b**)
- vii. Peter writes, "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps." (**1 Pt. 2:21**)
- viii. A lot of people spend a lot of time thinking about and praying about and wondering about their calling in life. "*What has God called me to?*" ...well, according to 1 Peter, God has called you to suffering, to follow in the steps of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who was ultimately crucified upon a cross.

- ix. Isn't that a wonderful calling! "*Yay, God has called me to suffering!*". Now must of us don't think that way. We don't like suffering, we don't enjoy being persecuted, or going through trials and difficulties. But perhaps we should.
- x. James writes, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." (**James 1:2-3**)
- xi. You see, we may not like trials and difficulties, pain and suffering, but what we fail to understand is that God uses those situations to grow us, to mature us, to equip us, to prepare us for what's coming later on in life.
- xii. God doesn't waste our sufferings, He uses them to mold and shape us more and more into the image of His Son.
- xiii. Paul wrote to the church in Rome how they were to "glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (**Rom. 5:3-5**)
- xiv. In Jesus "Sermon on the Mount" He said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (**Mt. 5:10**)
- xv. Though we may not like the idea of being called to suffering and tribulations and trials and difficulties. We ought to rejoice in them, count them all joy, and thank God for them, for God uses them to bless us and to prepare us for His kingdom and to make us more like Him.

- d. The fourth thing that Timothy was to do, was **to simply find out about their faith**. Paul writes in verse 5 when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith.
- i. Paul wanted Timothy to find out if their faith was holding up to persecution and if they were persevering in the face of all these various difficulties.
 - ii. Paul knew that they had received the word, but that word didn't have much time to take root, to have a firm foundation. And Paul was concerned that Satan, the tempter, may have come along and tempted them from departing from the faith.
 - iii. This reminds me of the "Parable of the Soils" that Jesus taught in the book of Matthew. You guys are probably familiar with it. Jesus spoke of a sower who went out to sow his seed and how his seed fell on various soils. Some fell by the wayside, some on the stony ground, some fell among thorns, and some fell on good soil.
 - iv. In that parable, Jesus speaks of the intent of the evil one to come and take away the seed that was sown. And He mentions how the seed that was cast along the stony ground is "he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles." (**Mt. 13:20-21**). They never end up bearing any fruit.
 - v. And the seed that fell among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful." (**Mt. 13:22**)
 - vi. These are the things which Paul was fearful of. Had they received the word with great joy only to

be stumbled and tripped up because of the persecutions they were facing?

vii. Had the tempter come along and tempted them with the perception of an easier life, a richer life, a life free from persecution that would lead them to becoming unfruitful in their faith?

viii. Paul didn't want his work, his labor to be in vain. He didn't want to find out that all their efforts and all that they went through in bringing the gospel to the Thessalonians was all for not because of the enemy moving in and snatching away that seed, or that seed succumbing to persecution, or even it being choked out by the lure of an easier life.

3. And so that is why Timothy was sent. To establish their faith, to encourage their faith, to make sure they were not shaken by persecution, and to find out whether their faith remained.

4. As I consider this ministry Timothy was sent out upon, I see how valuable a person Timothy was to Paul and to the church in Thessalonica and how important it is to have people like Timothy in the church.

a. People who are servants of the Lord. People who are team players. People who can instruct others in the faith. People who can simply come alongside someone and be there for them. To comfort them through their trials and difficulties, to remind them of the great work God does through those difficult seasons and circumstances. To look out for the work of the enemy and to protect us from him and to be aware of his tactics of trying to tempt us away from the Lord.

b. **We need more Timothys in the church.** I want to encourage you all to be a Timothy to someone else in your life. To be someone that will serve God and point people to God, to come alongside others and

strengthen them in their faith, and encourage them to continue to grow and seek after the Lord.

c. We all need a Timothy and we all can be a Timothy to someone else.

D. Well, let's turn to the next section of our text in verses 6-8 where Paul hears the "**Report from Timothy**"

IV. 1 Thessalonians 2:6-8; The Report from Timothy

A. Here in verse 6 Paul catches up to the now, to the time where Timothy has returned to him in the city of Corinth and has reported to Paul all the things concerning the faith of the Thessalonians. And Paul now sits down to write to them in response to what Timothy shared.

B. Paul mentions four things about Timothy's report about the Thessalonians.

1. He started off by **mentioning their faith**. Paul was concerned and wanted to know if their faith remained. He wanted to know if the enemy had come along and snatched away that seed. He wanted to know if the persecution was too much and whether or not they were enticed to turn from the Lord.

a. But such was not the case. Timothy reported that their faith had remained. That they had continued in the faith despite all of the persecution and the attacks of the enemy.

b. What great news for Paul to hear. His labor was not in vain, despite the fact that he and his co-laborers in Christ were run out of town and forced to leave this church without any sort of spiritual leadership and mentorship, they continued in the faith.

c. How awesome that must have been for Paul to hear. What a relief that must have been.

2. But that wasn't all Timothy had to say. Not only did their faith remain, but **he also mentioned the love of the church**.

- a. Not only had they not turned from the faith, they also continued in love.
 - b. This is the Greek word “agape”. It describes the kind of love that God has for us. It is a selfless, sacrificial, and spiritual love.
 - c. When Paul opened up this letter to the Thessalonians he wrote about how they thanked God for their work of faith, their labor of love, and their patience of hope. (**1 Thes. 1:3a**)
 - d. When Paul and his companions thought about the Thessalonians and their limited time with them, their love was one of the things that stood out to them. They labored in love. They were willing to give of themselves, and serve one another, to edify and encourage and build up each other through love.
 - e. And Timothy came back to Paul and told him that they still had that same love for one another. They still labored in love like they had done previously and like Paul and his companions remembered.
 - f. Again, what a joy this must have been for Paul to hear.
3. Timothy also shared about how **the church in Thessalonica had good memories** of their time with Paul and his companions.
- a. When Paul and his companions thought about them, they remembered things like their faith, their love, and their hope. And likewise, the Thessalonians had great memories of Paul and his companions amongst them.
 - b. They didn’t think negatively about Paul. They didn’t think that it was his fault they were experiencing these trials and persecutions.
 - c. Whenever they thought of Paul and his co-laborers, they did so fondly, they did so with gladness and joy continually.

4. Lastly, Timothy made mention of how **the church in Thessalonica also desired to see them**, just as they desired to see them.
 - a. Paul longed to see them face to face. He longed to be reunited with them, to spend time with them, to enjoy the presence of their company, to continue to build upon their relationship and their faith.
 - b. And the church in Thessalonica wanted the same thing. They longed to see Paul just as much as Paul longed to see them.
 - c. Again, what a joy and relief this must have been to the ears and heart of Paul.
- C. In verses 7 & 8 Paul speaks about the impact Timothy's report had upon him, how it touched him deeply.
 1. Paul thought of all the affliction and distress they went through ever since going to Thessalonica. How they were run out of town in Thessalonica, and how that same group of people ran them out of Berea, and caused Paul to have to escape via the sea to Athens all by himself. When he considered the difficulties he experienced even in coming to Corinth, and he added them all up, Paul was able to be comforted by the faith of the Thessalonians.
 2. **He was comforted** knowing that his labor was not in vain. That it was worth it all; to know and hear that they continued in the faith and in their love for one another and that they thought lovingly of Paul and desired to see him, made all the pain and suffering they endured worth it.
 3. In verse 8 Paul said, "For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord." The idea behind this phrase is that Timothy's report inspired them with new life—renewed energy and vigor to continue on.

a. The NLT translates verse 8 as “It gives us new life to know that you are standing firm in the Lord.” (1 Thes. 3:8; NLT)

4. We have to understand that when Paul came to Corinth, he was kind of feeling down and struggling, he wasn't doing so great. He wrote to them describing how when he was with them he was in “weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.” (1 Co. 2:3)

5. Paul was struggling in Corinth. He was fearful, he was weak, he was burdened with a heavy heart as he felt the enemy fighting against him and hindering him from going to see those he so longed to be with. Not only was he mindful of the enemies attacks upon himself, but he was also thinking of the attacks of the enemy upon the churches that he had formed in Macedonia like the church in Thessalonica.

6. And yet, when he heard this report from Timothy, **it gave them new life**. It gave them a renewed sense of purpose and a drive to continue forward, it invigorated them knowing that the Thessalonians stood fast in the Lord, that they remained faithful to the Lord.

7. It gave to them a renewed drive to continue forward in their ministry in Corinth, trusting and believing that God could do a similar work there in Corinth as He had done in and through Thessalonica.

D. As I consider the report of Timothy and the impact it had upon Paul, it reminds me of the importance of sharing our faith with others. It reminds me of how important it is **to rejoice and to celebrate God's work in other people's lives**.

1. It should bring great joy to our hearts when we hear of God's great work in another believer's life. We should be excited and invigorated when we hear about God blessing and working in other's lives, to hear that our brothers and sisters in the faith are standing firm in the Lord.

2. It ought to encourage us to continue forward in the Lord's service, knowing that the same God who was working in and through that one sister or brother, wants to work in the lives of others as well.
3. We can be invigorated to share our faith, to be a Timothy, to come alongside others and see God work powerfully on their behalf.
4. I can attest from first-hand experience the joy that comes with seeing God work in a brother or sister's life. It brings me such great joy to see and hear of how God is working in your lives. It encourages me to continue forward, it encourages me when I am weary, it reminds me that it is all worth it.
5. You guys inspire me with your testimonies of how God is working even in the tough times and even when things don't make sense, how you continue to come and receive from the Lord, you continue to trust God and look to Him. It is such a blessing to serve this church body and to see God moving and working in and through you all.
6. I just want to thank you for sharing your life with me and reminding me of just how important it is to continue in the work of the ministry and what a blessing it is to see God move in the hearts and lives of His people.

E. Well, let's turn to our final section dealing with the **prayer for the Thessalonians** in verses 9-13.

- V. 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13; The Prayer for the Thessalonians
- A. Here in this final section Paul speaks about how he prays for the church in Thessalonica and then actually ends off this first half of his letter with an actual prayer in verses 11-13.
 - B. But let's look and note how Paul prayed and what his prayer involved as he prayed to the Lord on behalf of the Thessalonians.

1. The first thing that we note is that Paul's prayers for the Thessalonians involved **thanking God for the great joy they had** because of the faith of the Thessalonians.
 - a. When Paul asks the rhetorical question, "For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God" it was like Paul saying, "We cannot thank God enough for you because of all the joy you have brought to our hearts by your endurance in the faith."
 - b. Paul was simply overjoyed and elated and couldn't stop praising God for the work He had done and was continuing to do in and through this church.
 - c. It's important that we note Paul giving credit to the Lord for His work. Yes, God had used Paul to share the message, but it was God who did the work. It was God that deserved all the praise and all the glory for what He was doing there in Thessalonica.
2. Paul's prayer not only involved rejoicing in God, but it also involved him praying for God **to make a way for them to see one another**, for them to come together again.
 - a. Night and day, Paul prayed exceedingly that they may see their face. Satan had hindered Paul, but Paul knew that Satan was no match for God. And so he beseeched the Lord and requested that if it were possible God would make a way for them to see one another.
 - b. Down in verse 11, in his prayer, he mentions this idea again, praying that God would direct their way to them. Paul knew that the Lord had closed the door, but He also knew that God could open another door, perhaps at a different time.

- c. He didn't give up looking for opportunities to come to them and to see them, that he may see them face to face.
 - d. When the way seems blocked, or impossible, we can pray and ask God to make a way, to direct our paths. We trust that when God closes one door, that He will open another. And so we pray for God to lead us, to direct us, to show us the way in which He would have us to go.
3. Thirdly we see that Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians involved him praying that **God would perfect them in their faith.**
- a. This church had stood firm in the faith. They had endured and persevered through trials and persecutions. But they still needed more work to be done. They still needed to be further disciplined and trained up in the ministry.
 - b. Paul prayed for those things that they lacked in their faith. He prayed that God may perfect what was lacking. The word "perfect", carries with it the idea of putting together something, arranging something, or repairing something.
 - c. It pictures the idea of their faith being incomplete. They trusted in the gospel message completely, but they needed to build upon that faith. God needed to put things in proper order, to arrange certain things, and to repair some of their misconceptions.
 - d. Paul will address some of those things in chapters 4 & 5. It would seem that while they understood the foundational principles of their faith in Christ and the importance of love, there were some areas where they were a little confused, areas like the coming of the Lord, and the fate of those who have passed prior to the Lord's coming.

- e. Paul prayed that God would arrange those things and put them in proper order for them.
4. Paul's prayer also involved **a request pertaining to their love.**
- a. The church in Thessalonica was a loving church. They labored in love for one another and they continued in their love despite all the trials and difficulties.
 - b. But Paul prayed that their love would increase and abound. We can never have enough love. We can always use more of it.
 - c. Paul's prayer was that they would abound in love, your translation may read "overflow" with love. That is the sense of what Paul was praying. He wanted their lives not to just have love, but to overflow with love, that God's love in them would pour out through them, that they would have a wellspring of love just pouring out of them in excess towards all.
 - d. And that is important that we note that. Paul was praying not just that they would have love for one another, but that their love would overflow to all people.
 - e. That they wouldn't just love each other, but that they would love the unlovable, that they would love the lost, the sinner; that they would love their enemies and those who persecute them.
 - f. This reminds me once again of Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" where He said, "love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you," (**Mt. 5:44**)
 - g. The Thessalonians had people who were persecuting them, and abusing them. And Paul encouraged them to love them.

h. After all, that is how the world will know that we are Jesus' disciples, right. Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jn. 13:35)

5. The final thing we will not about Paul's prayer is that it involved the church in Thessalonica **being established in God's holiness** and them being blameless at the Lord's coming.

a. The word blameless does not mean perfect or sinless. We aren't perfect, and unfortunately, we will continue to struggle with sin while bound to this body of flesh.

b. Holiness means to be set apart for God's purposes, of being dedicated to the Lord and things of the Lord.

c. Putting these things together we see that Paul's prayer involved wanting to see the church in Thessalonica have a right standing before the Lord and for them to be set apart and dedicated to Him.

d. He wanted them to be fully prepared and ready for the coming of Christ. The reminder of Christ' coming is a great motivator to holy living. Knowing that Christ is coming back for us and that He wants us to be busy about His kingdom in the meantime ought to spur us on in all that God has called us to.

e. God's will for each of us is that we would have Christlike holiness now and continually until the day He calls us to join with Him.

C. As I consider the prayers of Paul for the Thessalonians I am reminded of the importance of prayer and **our need to intercede on behalf of others.**

1. Like Paul prayed for those in Thessalonica, we can do the same for those around us. We can pray that others faith would be established in the Lord, that it would be strengthened by God, that God's love in them would overflow through them to the world around them,

that they would be found holy and blameless in heart as they await the return of our Lord and Savior.

2. May we be like Paul as we intercede on behalf of one another. Amen? Amen. Let's pray.