



Finer Grounds Bible Study

1 & 2 Thessalonians

Lesson 5: 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

1 Thessalonians is divided into two major sections. The first highlights Paul's thankfulness and encouragement of the Thessalonians. The second walks through his practical commands. 1 Thessalonians 3 marks the last chapter of the first section. I hope you have been reading through the letter in its entirety each week and feel like you have a good grasp of the first section of this wonderful epistle.

This chapter shows a major contrast between faith and affliction. If you took the time to mark the suggested keywords in our first lesson, you should see several occurrences of suffering and affliction. Now, look back through the chapter and you will see the phrase "your faith" repeated over and over. Generally, repetition of words or phrases indicate importance of a particular idea.

Bible Marking: Before we begin, take a minute to read through 1 Thessalonians 3 and mark each occurrence of "your faith."

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-10

According to this passage, why did Paul send Timothy to Thessalonica?

Once again Paul rejoices in the fact that Timothy found the Christians in Thessalonica faithful. He doesn't simply send a letter to encourage them, he sends them one of his most dear companions. Timothy and Paul had a very

special relationship, and it seems that of Paul's travel companions, Timothy was the one who could inspire and reignite people's faith. Paul generally sent him to places like Thessalonica and later Ephesus that desperately needed this encouragement.

Paul had many travel companions, and in his wisdom, he understood where their talents could be put to the best use, just as he did with Timothy here. Sometimes it is difficult to see our own talents, but the talents of others are obvious to us. Part of our job as Christians is to "stimulate one another on to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24)." We can do this by directing others toward tasks that we think they will be perfectly suited for. Not only does this encourage them, but it also may cause them to realize a talent that they did not know they had!

Think of one person that you would love to see more involved within the congregation. What is one task that they are suited for that you could encourage them to participate in?

According to 1 Thessalonians 3:2, Timothy was sent to "strengthen" and "encourage" them in their faith. Strengthen (STERIZO) means to establish support so that something is upright and immovable (Kittle, Bromliey and Friedrich). Encourage (PARAKALEO) means to instill courage in someone (Ardnt, Danker and Bauer).



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Timothy's job was to set them firmly in their place and to make sure they had courage to engage in the battle that surrounded them.

Look at the phrases you marked in a previous lesson "you know" and "you yourselves know." What does Paul emphasize that they knew?

These afflictions that they were facing were no surprise, Paul had warned them that becoming a Christian would be the cause of trials. This is a common theme throughout the scriptures; faithfulness often brings about persecution. In our society it seems as if we seek happiness and comfort above all else, sometimes making them idols. We don't want to do anything that will cause uneasiness or force us to stretch. Just like the gym, without resistance, there is no growth (1 Peter 1:6-7). These trials will come, we must be ready to stand firm in our faith.

What are some trials and afflictions that have come in your life that did or could have shaken your faith?

What did you do to overcome these afflictions?

What are some steps we can take to be better prepared to face outward afflictions with faithfulness when they come our way?

According to 1 Thessalonians 3:5, what news did Timothy bring?

According to 1 Thessalonians 3:7-8, what had Timothy's news done for Paul and his companions?

This is such a beautiful little twist! The word for "comforted" here in verse 7 is the same word used for "encourage" in verse 2. In other words, Paul's mission in sending Timothy was to encourage the Thessalonians and in so doing Paul and his companions found encouragement in them. This is such a wonderful truth we find here. Whenever we make it a point to invest in the lives of others, our lives are blessed. One of the most encouraging things in life is hearing the stories of our friends and Christian family who have remained faithful and even thrived in the midst of difficult situations.



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:11-12

What does Paul pray for the Thessalonians in these verses?

Any time a writer, especially Paul, includes a prayer in his letter, it often gives us clues to the main purpose of his writing. Often the things Paul prays for his recipients to receive or be strengthened in are the very things they are struggling with. This is true of us as well, if you are praying for a friend, you pray for what they need. As we enter chapters 4 and 5, Paul will begin to address many of these issues that he prayed about in a practical way.

Paul prays first that their love would increase and abound. The idea behind “increase” (PLEONAZO) isn’t simple growth, this word in the original language implies not just more of something, but an overabundance. Abound (PERISSEUO) means to overflow (Ardnt, Danker and Bauer). What he is describing here is the idea that their love for all people would become so overabundant that it would naturally overflow to all those around them.

According to 1 Thessalonians 3:13, what did Paul hope that this abounding love would accomplish?

Paul’s ultimate goal for the Thessalonians was that he would see their face in heaven. Above all else, he desired that they would be found faithful

on judgement day. He hoped for them to be found blameless, without guilt or fault, and holy, set apart for God. We will see, throughout the rest of the letter, these two issues addressed in detail. The Thessalonians excelled at being a loving people, where they struggled was the practical side of that love, especially toward outsiders.

Why would the Thessalonian’s situation have made it difficult to abound in love toward all people?

How could this overflowing love that Paul prays for be the catalyst for the Thessalonians living blameless and holy lives?

What are some areas in which you struggle to be loving?

What is one thing you can do this week to work on building and increasing your love for all people?

Love should be the foundation for all that we do. If we abound in love, then obedience, evangelizing, and benevolence will all come to us naturally. We might read commands on paper and try to follow them, but love is the catalyst for true



Finer Grounds Bible Study

change and transformation. This week be sure that you are praying for your love to increase and look for opportunities for that love to overflow to others.