

I Thess 3:5-13

Introduction:

Theme Paul moves from anguish to rejoicing as he hears how the Thessalonians are doing.

I. Paul is initially in a state of anguish as he considers the Thessalonians,

A. Paul's anguish had been intensifying,

1 Thessalonians 3:5 (ESV) For 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 labor would be in vain.

B. Paul had to know whether or not the Thessalonians had remained true to their profession of faith.

1 Thessalonians 3:5 (ESV) For 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 labor would be in vain.

C. Paul was afraid that the evil one had undermined their faith.

1 Thessalonians 3:5 (ESV) For 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 labor would be in vain.

D. Paul was afraid that all of his efforts in preaching the gospel were for naught.

1 Thessalonians 3:5 (ESV) For 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 labor would be in vain**.

E. Therefore, Paul sends Timothy to Thessalonica to see how the Christians are doing spiritually.

1 Thessalonians 3:5 (ESV) For 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 labor would be in vain.

F. Application:

1. It is hard to deal with uncertainty in life.
2. Genuine concern wants to know about the welfare of others.
3. It is commendable to be concerned about how Christians are coping with the difficulties of life.

II. Paul moves from anguish to rejoicing because he hears that the Thessalonians are continuing on in their faith

A. Timothy has returned and brought a positive report regarding the Thessalonians,

1 Thessalonians 3:6 (ESV) **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—

1. This demonstrates Paul's confidence in Timothy.
2. Timothy was up to the task.
3. Timothy's evaluation could be trusted.
4. It is important if we are going to receive God's comfort that we learn to trust in and rely upon others.

B. Their commitment to God has remained strong.

1 Thessalonians 3:6 (ESV) 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—

C. Their commitment to their fellow believers has remained strong.

1 Thessalonians 3:6 (ESV) 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—

1. They have not turned against each other in the time of difficulty.
2. Nor, had they become totally self-absorbed.

D. Their affection for Paul remained strong.

1. They had an appreciation for Paul.

1 Thessalonians 3:6 (ESV) 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—

- a. They spent time reflecting on how they appreciated Paul. This is seen in the word “remember.”
- b. They were not thinking ill of him for leaving while under persecution.
- c. They were not disappointed in Paul.
- d. They had no negative feelings toward Paul whatsoever.

2. They wanted to see Paul just as he wanted to see them.

1 Thessalonians 3:6 (ESV) 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—**

- a. They were affectionate towards Paul.
- b. They still thought he had something to offer them.
- c. They were looking forward to his return.

III. Paul moves from anguish to rejoicing because he is greatly encouraged as a result of the Thessalonians' faith.

A. As we have seen, Paul was in great need of encouragement.

1 Thessalonians 3:7 (ESV) for this reason, brothers, **in all our distress and affliction** we have been comforted about you through your faith.

1. It is difficult to distinguish between distress and affliction.
2. It is best to understand them together describing the totality of Paul's anguish.
3. It was affecting all aspects of his life and ministry. It was all consuming if you will.

2 Cor 7:5 (NASB) For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: **conflicts without, fears within.**

2 Cor 7:6 (NASB) But God, who **comforts the depressed,**

B. Paul is now comforted.

1 Thessalonians 3:7 (ESV) for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction **we have been comforted about you** through your faith.

1. That is Paul has experienced a relief from all that he was going through.
2. The weight has been lifted.

C. Paul is reassured concerning the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 3:7 (ESV) for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted **about you** through your faith.

D. What is comforting Paul is the Thessalonians' faith.

1 Thessalonians 3:7 (ESV) for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you **through your faith.**

1. He is comforted knowing that they are a people of faith.
2. Therefore, Paul knows that God will continue to uphold them.

E. Paul is reinvigorated for the work that he is to do.

1 Thessalonians 3:8 (ESV) **For now we live**, if you are standing fast in the Lord.

1. Paul could get on with his life. He could function again. He could give himself to other things at hand.
2. Paul could enjoy life.
3. Paul's emotional, spiritual and physical well being were all entwined with the well being of the Thessalonians.
4. This teaches us how demoralizing and all consuming the cares that we have concerning our loved ones can be.

F. Application:

1. We should not minimize the effect that the well being of our loved ones has upon our emotional, spiritual and physical health.
2. What a joy it is to know that our loved ones are doing well.
3. How difficult it is when we are consumed by grief and uncertainty over the spiritual well being of others.

IV. Paul moves from anguish to rejoicing because of what God has done and will do in the lives of the Thessalonians.

A. Paul cannot thank God enough for all that God has already done in the lives of the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 3:9 (ESV) **For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you**, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God,

1 Thessalonians 1:4 (ESV) For we know, brothers **loved by God, that he has chosen you**,

1 Thessalonians 1:5 (ESV) **because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.** You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

B. Paul cannot adequately express the joy that he has as a result of the Thessalonians faith.

1 Thessalonians 3:9 (ESV) For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, **for all the joy that we feel for your sake before** our God,

1. The joy that Paul was now experiencing caused him to forget all his former affliction and anxiety.
2. The cloud has lifted and he again sees more clearly.

C. Paul could never pay God back for all that God has done for him and ultimately the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 3:9 (ESV) **For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you**, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God,

"Everyone loves the blessings of God, but a godly person loves the God who blesses."

Flavel, John. The Mystery of Providence (in Modern English) (p. 160). Kindle Edition.

V. Paul describes his prayers to God concerning the Thessalonians.

A. First Paul prays with a fervency

1 Thessalonians 3:10 (ESV) **as we pray most earnestly night and day** that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?

It is good to understand that Paul's comfort regarding the Thessalonians does not lead to apathy but even more fervent prayer.

B. Paul prays that he would be able to personally fellowship with them once again.

1 Thessalonians 3:10 (ESV) as we pray most earnestly night and day **that we may see you face to face** and supply what is lacking in your faith?

C. Paul prays that he would be able to come and minister the word to them more fully.

1 Thessalonians 3:10 (ESV) as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face **and supply what is lacking in your faith?**

1. Their faith was strong but it still was not complete. There was still more for them to know and to appropriate.
2. Here we learn how important other people can be in our spiritual growth and development.
 - a. While they could get along without Paul, nevertheless, Paul's presence and instruction would be very helpful and in fact needed.
 - b. Here is a positive view of the spiritual dependence that we have upon others.
 - c. God places people in our lives to help us grow in our faith.
 - d. The Thessalonians understood and appreciated that fact.

VI. Paul prays for the Thessalonians. This prayer consists of three requests.

- A. First, that God would enable Paul and his co-workers return to Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians 3:11 (ESV) Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, **direct our way to you,**

- B. That God would cause the believers love to continue to grow and overflow.

1 Thessalonians 3:12 (ESV) **and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all,** as we do for you,

What is important here is to note that prayer needs to precede and accompany instruction.

1 Thessalonians 4:9 (ESV) **Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,**

1 Thessalonians 4:10 (ESV) for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. **But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more,**

1 Thessalonians 4:11 (ESV) and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you,

1 Thessalonians 4:12 (ESV) so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

C. That God would cause His work to prosper in them.

1 Thessalonians 3:13 (ESV) so **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.

1. Here we see the need for God's enablement and blessing if our work is to prosper.
2. For Paul is praying that God would bring to fulfillment the work of Timothy.

1 Thessalonians 3:2 (ESV) and we sent **Timothy**, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, **to establish** and exhort you in your faith,

3. We should not separate prayer and our service for God- both are essential.

VII. Conclusion:

- A. We should be truly concerned about the spiritual well being of the people to whom we minister.
- B. In turn we should appreciate those who minister to us.
- C. Prayer and ministry are to go hand in hand.
- D. It is very comforting to hear and see God at work in people's lives.
- E. God is to be praised for His faithfulness in caring for His people.