

## Lighthouse Bible Church

April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015

1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3: 5 – 10 *Scripture Reading: Philippians 2: 12 - 24*

**‘Comforted by your strong faith’**

### Stand – Read – Pray

Last time we saw that the apostle Paul started and finished the passage by saying **I could no longer endure it**, talking about wanting to know the faith of the new believers in the church at Thessalonica.

Because he and Timothy and Silas had spent some time with them sharing the gospel and then some of them coming to Christ and forming this new body of believers that formed the new church in Thessalonica.

They started by sharing with them the foundation of the Christian faith and that is about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and that Jesus was the Messiah of the Old Testament. Because of these beliefs, chapter one said they turned from idols to serve the living God and they began to tell others about their faith in Christ. As a result of that, the unbelieving Jews forced Paul out of Thessalonica before he had a chance to really establish the new believers in their faith.

Because he loved them like a mother her nursing child or a father his children, and they had become dear to him, and because he knew they were undergoing persecution and couldn't be there with them, his heart ached to know how they were doing and how their faith was holding up through the persecution and tribulations that he told them beforehand they would go through.

So, you remember, he sent Timothy back to them to report on how they were doing and to encourage them concerning their faith. He sent Timothy because Timothy was a trusted brother in Christ and servant and fellow laborer in the gospel.

So that is why he says at the beginning of Verse 5, as he did in verse one, **when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith..** and that is where we want to pick it up this morning at the end of verse 5 where Paul says **lest by some means the tempter had tempted you and our labor might be in vain.**

That was a real concern for Paul; that these people made a profession of faith and yet when the tribulations and persecutions began from **the tempter**, they would abandoned their faith, that they would have **labored in vain**. Much like the parable of the soils in **Matthew 13: 20 - 21** where it says **he who received the seed on the stony places , this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has not root in himself but endures only for a while. FOR when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles...** That was Paul's fear for this church as well.

Keep in mind, back in chapter one, we had seen how this church was doing; because Paul had sent Timothy and had come back and given him the report. But in chapter 3, Paul doesn't know yet because Timothy hadn't come back yet, so he was concerned that the tempter would destroy the work he began.

Remember what Paul told the church at Ephesus when he left them for the last time in **Acts 20: 29 – 30** **after my departure savage wolves will come in not sparing the flock and men will rise up from among you to draw disciples after themselves.** That was Paul's fear for the church at Thessalonica.

Paul wrote to Timothy in **1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4: 1** saying **...in the latter times some will depart from the faith giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy....** Paul says in our passage here 'I was concerned that they may have happened to you'. But that is the love that a Pastor has for his people.

Listen, these were all baby Christians, new in the faith Christians, open to temptation and fleshly desires and weaknesses and persecutions and temptations and fear and failure and guilt. So Paul has a deep concern for where there are in their faith with all that is going on around them and wants to protect them.

And of course, we know the **tempter** is Satan himself. Remember in **Matthew 4: 1 – 3** where it says **Jesus was led in the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil ... now when the tempter came to Him.** He tempted Jesus in three areas where he tempts everyone and that is in the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life as **1<sup>st</sup> John 2: 17** says.

He tries to keep people from believing by blinding their eyes to the truth **2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4: 4**. He removes the word sown in a heart that has no root so they are not saved **Matthew 13: 20 – 21** said. And when someone is saved, by God's sovereign design that he can not stop, then he tries to weaken or lead them astray from their faith **2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11: 3** says.

He will try to tempt you in your marriage to sexual immorality when you deprive one another of physical affection as husband and wife **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7: 5** says. **That Satan not tempt you for your lack of self control.** Because Satan **2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 2: 11**: tries to **take advantage of us**, because, as **2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 5: 8** says **He goes around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.** And he has a good disguise **2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11: 13 – 15** says **he disguises himself as an angel of light and minister of righteousness.** That is why Paul was concerned and wanted to protect the flock entrusted to him.

Like a true shepherd protected his sheep from wolves and poisoned plants and water sources and thieves, so too a Pastor wants to protect his congregation from the onslaughts of the evil one.

That is the heart of Paul here as he is sitting in Athens wondering how his flock is doing because he didn't want all of his hard **labor to be in vain** or for nothing. He had to know. He said a similar thing to the church at Philippi in **Philippians 2: 16** when he said **hold fast the word of life so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.** He wanted to see the fruit of his ministry in the lives of people and it must have broken his heart when some did turn away or deny the faith because it was a profession only and not a conversion of their hearts.

I'm sure it would have broken his heart when some true believers fell into some gross sin or began to be swayed by some false teachers to believe in a different gospel like the church at Galatia. He didn't want his life and ministry to be in vain because, I'm sure, he would have felt like he had failed. He was protective of them as we are to be of you as well.

**Verse 6: but now that Timothy has come to us from you and brought us good news of your faith and love and that you always have a good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you...**

Paul leaves Athens and arrives in Corinth. Silas leaves Macedonia and arrives in Corinth and then Timothy arrives in Corinth to tell us **the good news** Paul says. And then a very short time later Paul pens 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians and sends it to them. By the way, that word 'good news' is always used in the N. T. scripture of the gospel, *eungellionidzo*, the greatest, most thrilling news of all about the salvation of Jesus Christ. Paul uses that same word.

What was the good news that Timothy brought back about the church at Thessalonica? First of all it was good news about **their faith**, their faith being true and genuine because it began on the fertile soil of their hearts as the seed of the gospel did in **Matthew 13: 23**. Their faith was real.

The good news was also about their **love**. Their *agape* love; for God, for Christ for His word, for each other and for the lost. Their love was also genuine and real. And doesn't that really sum up the Christian life, even for us today. True genuine faith from a converted heart that loves the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and then your neighbor as yourself.

Not only that, but your genuine faith showing itself in genuine love becomes a great testimony and witnessing tool to a lost a dying world that we are disciples of Christ, doesn't it. Isn't that what Jesus said in **John 13: 34 – 35** **by this all will know you are My disciples by the love you have for one...** It is like what **Galatians 5: 6** says **faith working through love**.

The good news was also the fact, Verse 6 says, that the Thessalonian church **always have a good remembrance of us**. Paul may have been concerned, as he was in Chapter 2, that the church people would begin to believe the tempter and all the lies and rumors said about him and the opposition to him by others. He may have been thinking, 'what are they going to remember about us' and Timothy says 'they ALWAYS have a good remembrance of us'. What a relief for Paul and the others to hear.

Because there were some in some churches that turned away from Paul because of what they had heard by way of rumors or accusations or falsehoods. You see that in **2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12: 14 – 21**, you see it in **2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1: 15** where he says **All of Asia has turned away from me..** So he was afraid the same thing may have happened here but it had not.

The final good news was in the fact that the people of the church at Thessalonica **greatly desired to see us**. Not only had they had a good remembrance of them but they really wanted to see them as much as Paul and the others wanted to see them, as well. And that was all worth it to Paul. As a matter of fact, look at how important that good news was to him and how it affected him and the others in Verse 7.

**Verse 7: therefore, brethren, in all our afflictions and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith.**

Because of that good news from Timothy about the church at Thessalonica, Paul **was comforted**. Paul experienced that kind of comfort many times from the people he was not able to see but got good news about. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 7: 6 – 7 it says **nevertheless God who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus and not only by his coming but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.**

Paul told the church at Philippi in Philippians 2: 19 **but I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.**

It can't be summed up any better than what the Apostle John wrote in 3<sup>rd</sup> John 1: 3 – 4: **For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.**

That is what caused Paul great joy and comfort when he heard how the Thessalonian believers were doing and it was that comfort that would get him through all of the **afflictions and distresses** he was going through.

That is what a good word can do, can't it? In **Proverbs 12: 25** says **worry in the heart of man causes depression but a good word makes it glad**, especially when it is about a person's faith in God and their walk before God being strong. Paul was able to be **comforted in all their afflictions and distress** because of that good news of their faith.

You know what brings me and should bring any Pastor joy and comfort in their hearts? It is not in a church building, as exciting as that prospect is for us, it is not in how much money I make or how much success I may have, it is not in how many people we have attending this church or the number of programs. My joy and comfort and rejoicing, as your Pastor, is in your coming to faith in Christ and then living out that faith in your everyday life; that encourages me, that makes all my involvement in ministry worth it. The Apostle Paul says in Verse 8

### **Verse 8: For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord**

He is **alive**, he is revived again in his spirit by the good news of their **standing fast in their faith in the Lord** of those he had the privilege of ministering too. That word 'stand fast' means a refusal to retreat and to stand one's ground, and in this case, in their faith in the Lord, and that brought Paul back to life again. That phrase 'stand fast in the Lord' is one he used over and over again to the different churches because it was so important to him.

That joy, rejoicing and comfort causes Paul to once again thank God on their behalf. Look at verse 9.

**Verse 9: for what thanks can we render to God for you for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith.**

Notice that Paul says **for what thanks can we render to** whom **God**. He is the source of their faith and the strength of their faith and the progress of their faith. Paul, in essence, says his thanks can-not render to God what is due Him for His divine work in the lives of the Thessalonian believers.

So all he can do is **rejoice for their sake before God** which then causes them to **see them face to face** so they are **praying exceedingly** that God will open the door for them to go back.

They not only want to go back to see them and reunite in their love relationship with them but, more importantly, Paul says **to perfect what is lacking in your faith**.

Paul's desire was to see them again so that he could continue to instruct them on those things they were still **lacking in their faith**, in other words, to help them grow spiritually. Paul, as a faithful pastor, knew his congregation well enough to know what they were lacking and what they needed to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

By the way, that word 'perfect' is *kataridzo* and it means to complete, repair, to fit together. It is used of mending a net or fixing a broken bone. Paul says 'I want to complete you, put you together, mend you, in what may be lacking in your faith.'



As their Pastor, Paul knows that this perfecting and completing of their faith is the work of Christ through the Holy Spirit by the teaching of His word. He told the church at Philippi in **Philippians 1: 6** that **HE who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.**

That is why **2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3: 16** says **all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction...a**

**Psalm 19: 7 – 8** says **the law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart, the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes...**

**Psalm 119: 9** how can a young man cleanse his way? **By taking heed according to your word...**

End with; Peter telling the people to whom he was writing in **2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3: 14**  
**- 18**

Closing Prayer – Gospel

**Lighthouse Bible Church**  
**April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3: 5 – 10**  
**‘Comforted by your strong Faith’**

Introduction and Review:

Verse 5:

Matthew 13: 20 – 21, 4: 1 – 3, Acts 20: 29 – 30  
1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4: 1, 1<sup>st</sup> John 2: ;17, 2 Corinthians 4: 4  
2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11: 3, 13 – 15, 2: 11  
1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7: 5, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 5: 8  
Philippians 2: 16

Verse 6:

Matthew 13: 23, John 13: 34 – 35, Galatians 5: 6  
2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12: 14 – 21, 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1: 15

Verse 7:

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 7: 6 – 7, Philippians 2: 19  
3<sup>rd</sup> John 1: 3 – 4, Proverbs 12: 25

Verses 8 – 10:

Philippians 1: 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3: 16  
Psalm 19: 7 – 8, 119: 9, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3: 14 – 18

**Lighthouse Bible Church**  
**April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3: 5 – 10**  
**‘Comforted by your strong Faith’**

Introduction and Review:

Verse 5:

Matthew 13: 20 – 21, 4: 1 – 3, Acts 20: 29 – 30  
1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4: 1, 1<sup>st</sup> John 2: ;17, 2 Corinthians 4: 4  
2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11: 3, 13 – 15, 2: 11  
1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7: 5, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 5: 8  
Philippians 2: 16

Verse 6:

Matthew 13: 23, John 13: 34 – 35, Galatians 5: 6  
2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12: 14 – 21, 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1: 15

Verse 7:

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 7: 6 – 7, Philippians 2: 19  
3<sup>rd</sup> John 1: 3 – 4, Proverbs 12: 25

Verses 8 – 10:

Philippians 1: 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3: 16  
Psalm 19: 7 – 8, 119: 9, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3: 14 – 18