

***“Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians —
‘The Blessings of Pastoral Fellowship and Care, From Now Until Eternity’”***

Review:

- ***Without Ceasing, God Works through Prayer and the Word, Always***

[READ] 1 Thess. 2:13-14

13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received [it] not [as] the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they [have] of the Jews:

- ***There are many parallels, as we have seen, between chapters 1 and 2 of this first letter to the Thessalonians. Both chapters emphasize the salvation of these believers through Paul's preaching and they had believed with their salvation as the result. Then, through their testimony they had entered into great suffering and persecution. The gospel was indeed the power of God unto salvation AND sanctification (“sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” — 2 Thess. 2:13):***
 - ***1:5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only / 2:8 not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls. They had believed and were saved but then in addition, they became “followers” or “imitators” and here the reference is to their persecution as the church.***
 - ***Both chapters end with the patient waiting for the return of the Lord. They become a powerful example for many others as he noted there in those verses. That was a great work of the Lord God indeed. The only difference there is the emphasis in chapter two on Satan's ongoing interference in Paul's ministry and specifically his desire to again visit the believers in Thessalonica.***
- ***Satan's Failure but the Lord's Victory — Glory, Glory, Glory!***

1 Thess. 2:17-20

17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

19 For what [is] our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? [Are] not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

20 For ye are our glory and joy.

- *Glory is the theme here, God's glory. Satan may interfere but he cannot be the victor. God's overriding will shall always be brought to pass, whatever the circumstances of the moment. We must never forget this.*
- *Paul was so powerfully motivated by his future hope of reunion with these believers in Thessalonica that he would have changed his plan of ministry for it – if the Lord had allowed.*

A visit to Thessalonica would have been no small thing in those days. True, Satan had changed his plans by necessity, but, in the end, it was matters of the heart that really made the difference. Our greatest enemy, Satan himself, still has great power over the saints – but he STANDS defeated but nevertheless by the power and ordination of Almighty God.

- *Are we like the Thessalonian believers in that we are Paul's and others' "joy and crown of rejoicing"? In this case Satan hindered but God nevertheless brought great blessing! Even we today reading this letter are swept up in this cloud of blessing. Glory is the theme here therefore – God's working in and through his saints, whatever circumstances come. Amen and amen.*

Our Outline Today:

- ***Trials and Tribulations are to be Expected – But Never Give Satan the Victory***
- ***But, Our "Sense" of Wellbeing Is Often Dependent on Others' Wellbeing***
- ***However, Our Blessings Shall Abound, From Now Until Eternity***

I. Trials and Tribulations are to be Expected — But Never Give Satan the Victory:

[READ] 1 Thess. 3:1-5

1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

- *Now, here in the beginning of chapter 3 he writes concerning his zeal for them and his former teaching. He knew from Timothy who had been sent from Athens to Thessalonica and who had now returned, that they were still rejoicing — but there had been some challenges now that some had died and the promised Lord had still not returned as had been expected.*
- **Verses 1-2 — “Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone. And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith”:**
- **Verses 3 & 4 — “That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know”:**
 - *Paul was rightly concerned. Trials and tribulation in this world are to be expected, not the opposite, beloved! How can it be otherwise? Remember our last study here? One of the main points was this: Though Satan is often allowed to interfere in the lives of the saints, he cannot in the end win the battle since he cannot ultimately thwart the plan of Almighty God.*

- *The challenge for us believers is to never let Satan steal away our joy, to never surrender and therefore become unfruitful. For it is always the will of God that we be thankful.*
- **Verse 5** — “For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain”: *Remember 1Thess. 2:18 here as that theme is continued here in chapter three:* “Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.”
- *If even our Lord was himself tempted, why should they (or, we) be exempt. That is the argument of the apostle here. Matthew’s gospel has the details of our Lord’s testings. His defense against Satan’s lies are instructive for us:*

[READ] Matt. 4:1-4

1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

- *As we have seen, the correct response to the enemy’s testings is the proper invocation of the word of God. Note that it was not just anything from the word of God, perhaps often without regard to the context at all, but the specific word that relates directly to the challenge at hand. Here it is a direct quotation from Deut. 8:3. Satan’s attacks were to subtly take the promises of God out of context misapplying them to this specific situation that the Lord was in there for 40 days in the wilderness without food. But the Lord’s response from God’s word with scripture in context is most helpful to us:*

Deut. 8:2-3

2 . . . And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, [and] to prove thee, to know what [was] in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know;

that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every [word] that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

- *The bottom line is this: Satan wishes to derail us in our walk with the Lord. He does this through lies and false teaching. The word of truth shall always be our defense.*

II. But, Our “Sense” of Wellbeing Is Often Dependent on Others’ Wellbeing:

[READ] 1 Thess. 3:6-10

6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also [to see] you:

7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

- **Verses 6-7** — “But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also [to see] you. Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith”: *The many blessings of fellowship with the brethren we care so much about is the apostle’s focus here. Their comfort was his joy even to the extent that their testimony and Timothy’s report of that to the apostle had changed his own trials and sufferings into joy:*

Ps. 30:11-12 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

- **Verses 8-9** — “For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God”: *Their spiritual well being was his greatest desire of all:*

- **Verse 10** — “Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?”:
- **Paul’s desire for the Thessalonians was a proper and spiritual desire. He wanted to “perfect that which is lacking” in their faith. It is not going beyond the text here to also point out that Paul’s concern for these believers was directly related to their sadness regarding the death of some of their own. Some had gone on to be with the Lord and that was upsetting them even spiritually, not only emotionally but also spiritually. They had bought into what false teachers had been preaching to them. This had turned their life and hope upside down. Paul was rightly concerned. Thus the writing of this letter.**

Paul had taught them the Pre-Tribulational Return of the Lord, the Rapture, but the false teachers had taught them a very different doctrine indeed.

III. However, Our Blessings Shall Abound, From Now Until Eternity

[READ] 1 Thess. 3:11-13

11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, **[may he]** direct our way unto you.

12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all [men], even as we [do] toward you:

13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

- **Verse 11** — “Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.”: **This is Paul’s hope and expectation, even his prayer. Being with them face to face would have advanced his ministry, in his view, at least.**
- **Verse 12** — “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all [men], even as we [do] toward you”: **Nevertheless, even absent from them, God’s never ceasing work in them was sure and it would never cease. The pure doctrine of the return of the Lord was still the key, he writes here, of their spiritual wellbeing.**

This pure doctrine has been nearly entirely lost in the churches today since in the seeker-friendly and really “new age” churches simply building church attendance is a main goal demanding a strict limit on the proper teaching of Bible doctrine.

- *For example, since there are so many different views on Christ's coming that are now "acceptable", the true teaching is often withheld. That teaching is concerning the Pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church which is his Body.*
- *Paul ends chapter 3 as well with the reference to the return of the Lord for his saints and the glory of that reunion:*
 - **Verse 13** — "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.": ***Blessings unlimited await us, but the glory is all his. It is his work, not ours. Building up the brethren was so important, and the fruit of the spirit (as represented here by love) was so crucial to that work of the Lord in them. Amen.***

Our Outline Today Was:

- ***Trials and Tribulations are to be Expected — But Never Give Satan the Victory [He always wants to steal away our joy]***
- ***But, Our "Sense" of Wellbeing Is Often Dependent on Others' Wellbeing [And this is not bad if our joy is based on their joy, but there are always challenges]***
- ***However, Our Blessings Shall Abound From Now Until Eternity [Nevertheless, God's blessings SHALL abound, now — and always!]***

Our Conclusions:

- ***True and authentic fellowship is of critical value and God works his miracles through that fellowship.***
- ***Suffering and trials through persecution are inevitable for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus.***
- ***Our constant hope must always be in the Lord and his return for us. Such glory! Amen.***