

Hidden Hills Sovereign Grace Baptist Church

Wednesday Sermon

Date: April 1, 2020

Text: 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

Subject: Appointed to trials – encouraged - exhorted to holiness

This letter was written from Corinth, in AD 54, shortly after Paul's departure from Thessalonica (Acts 16,17) and is the earliest of his letters.

A major purpose of this letter was to confirm or encourage the Thessalonian Church concerning the doctrines already taught them when Paul was with them.

1 Thessalonians 3:1 (KJV) *Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;*

Wherefore – Because we have “endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.” (1Th. 2:17). You are our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing – our glory and joy in the LORD.

When we could no longer forbear, -- The apostles' desire to see their face weighed so heavily on them that were not able to forbear any longer. Something had to be done, they must have thought! How can we encourage and exhort them? They didn't have telephones and e-mail – letters took a long time.

We thought it good to be left at Athens alone; -- I am not sure why Paul chose the plural pronoun “we;” We are not sure whether or not he is speaking of himself in the plural number or if one or more of his former companions have joined with him in Athens. Paul seems to have been alone at Athens, because there is no written record that either Timothy or Silas had arrived there. When

Paul was leaving Berea to come to Athens, he commanded Silas and Timotheos to come to him with all speed (Acts 17:15). If they came to him to Athens, of which Luke gives no account, Paul immediately dispatched Timothy to Thessalonica, and Silas to some other part of Macedonia. Why do we say that? Because it was from Macedonia that both of them came to him at Corinth, (**Acts 18:5**). We know that Paul departed from Athens a bit later and came from there to Corinth. Notice this verse after Paul's arrival in Corinth from Athens. So, all that notwithstanding, it was deemed good that Paul stay in Athens for a time.

Acts 18:5 (KJV) *And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.*

1 Thessalonians 3:2 (KJV) *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:*

And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, -- Paul sent Timotheus, whom he calls "our brother." Elsewhere he calls him his son; here he calls him brother. The descriptive words which Paul uses of Timothy, shows that Paul, considered Timothy an equal – a brother, a minister of God, a fellow-laborer in the gospel of Christ, even though Paul was The Apostle to the Gentiles.

to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: --

This was Paul's purpose in sending Timothy to them. To establish them! What does that mean? Establish comes from a Greek word which is also translated as: "stablish, strengthen, fix, and stedfastly set." The word "comfort" comes to us from the Greek word παρακαλεω parakaleo which is translated as: "beseech, comfort,

exhort, desire, pray, intreat, misc, and besought.” In other words, Timothy’s mission to them was to make them solid in the faith by beseeching them; exhorting them; praying them; intreating them – by preaching the word. This is that which preachers are commanded to do.

2 Timothy 4:1-2 (KJV) *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; **2 Preach the word;** be instant in season, out of season; **reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.***

Establishing and comforting is usually done by the ministry of the word. It is a major purpose of the Gospel nurturing in the churches. It is true, apart from this preaching, the saints are in a stable condition, in the arms of love, and in the hands of Christ, and in the covenant of grace, and upon the rock of ages. They have been regenerationed, justified, and given the Spirit of adoption. From this they can never fall totally and finally. Still they are often very unstable in their hearts and minds, in the discharge of duty, and in their adherence to the cause of Christ. Sometimes they fail to observe the ordinances of Christ, because of their inward corruption, the temptations of Satan, and the reproaches and persecutions of men. Too, these Thessalonians were young converts, and were very recently planted together as a church. As they first began their walk together as a church, sustained a considerable shock of afflictions and persecutions. This made the apostle concerned for their establishment in the faith which they had received.

1 Thessalonians 3:3 (KJV) *That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.*

That no man should be moved by these afflictions: -- All of us need to be established, comforted and reminded by the preaching of the word so that we are never moved (agitated, disturbed, troubled) because of afflictions.

1 Timothy 4:6 (KJV) *If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.*

Brothers and sisters! We are going to experience afflictions! Afflict means to be downcast with trouble! Afflictions is a state of being downcast with trouble! These Thessalonians had doubtless seen the afflictions the apostles and preachers of the gospel experienced while with them. This might possibly cause them to stumble or moved by these things. It is certain there is a possibility that we – you and I can be moved by such things.

for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. – It is the will and purpose of God that *through many afflictions we must enter into his kingdom.* Their troubles and persecutions did not come by mere chance, not merely from the wrath and malice of the enemies of the cross, but by the appointment of God. Our afflictions are appointed us by the immutable decree of God: afflictions, as to their nature, measure, and duration, are appointed for the people of God, and they are appointed for them. This is the case of all who will live godly in Christ Jesus. These saints had been clearly made aware of that truth shown us by the phrase “for yourselves know.” Therefore this was nothing new, unheard of, and unexpected, or to be looked upon as a strange thing. Seeing this was the appointment of heaven, and the will of God, these afflictions should be patiently endured, and quietly submitted to. Why does the apostle say this to them?

1 Thessalonians 3:4 (KJV) *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.*

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; -- Truly, the apostle reminds the Thessalonians – when we were there with you, we told you these tribulations would come.

even as it came to pass, and ye know. – And so the tribulations did come to pass – you know, you experienced them and you know of them.

1 Thessalonians 3:5 (KJV) *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.*

To perhaps paraphrase Paul, I say this: “Because of those tribulations which I knew about – was thinking about and praying about. I just had to know how you were doing – how your faith was standing. I was not ignorant of the temptations of the tempter because he is the master of tricks, guiles, and deceits. Satan will use any means – any means to deceive us and we are well aware of that. Too, we didn’t want to see you fail of the grace of God in the affliction and our labor in Thessalonica be all for nothing in that city. I know this cannot be in vain with respect to God, to whom the word never returns void and empty – but it always accomplishes that in which He sends it.”

1 Thessalonians 3:6-7 (KJV) *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:

What a blessing this was for Paul and his companions when Timothy brought good tidings of the Thessalonians' faith and love – and of their earnest desire to see Paul – as he and his companions wanted to see them. So, they were comforted in this matter of their affliction and distress and their faith in the LORD. Joy upon joy to hear of brothers and sisters who have been delivered through the afflictions they endured and came through it all stronger in the faith!

1 Thessalonians 3:8 (KJV) *For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.*

For now we live -- What does Paul mean by this statement? Upon receiving this news, in the midst of all their sore trials and troubles, their spirits revived, and they became alive and cheerful. It was like life from the dead unto them. It was easy to Paul and his companions to bear affliction, or persecution, or fighting from without, when he found the good success of his ministry and the faithfulness of the converts he had made to the LORD and the establishment of another church of Jesus Christ. His distress of mind on account of his fears within, lest he had labored in vain, was now in a good measure over, when he understood their faith and the perseverance of it. This put new life and spirit into the apostle and made him vigorous and active in the work of the Lord. Thus he was not only comforted, but greatly rejoiced also.

If ye stand fast in the Lord. -- It would have been a killing thing to the apostles if the professors of Jesus Christ had been un-steady or proved to be apostates. Nothing was more encouraging than their faithfulness in the face of tribulations and afflictions. What joy it is for any minister of the gospel of Christ to see those who were

converted to Christ under his ministry go on to know the LORD in the face of trials and tribulations. Praise the LORD for that!

1 Thessalonians 3:9-10 (KJV) *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?*

For what thanks can we render to God again for you, -- They had given thanks to God for them before, for their faith, love, and patience.

1 Thessalonians 1:2 (KJV) *We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;*

for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; -- And now having received a further account of their faithfulness under trial, they looked upon themselves bound to give fresh thanks to God for them for the increase of their faith and love and for their perseverance. So they did joy and give thanks.

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

Paul and his companions kept the Thessalonians on their minds and hearts – praying night and day that they might see their face. These ministers of Christ had grave concerns for the flock they had left in that city. They wanted to perfect whatever was lacking in their faith. Though the apostle had before commended their faith, yet there was something lacking in it. No faith is made perfect at first; yea, there is a need for faith to increase.

Romans 1:11-12 (KJV) *For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be*

*established; **12** That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*

2 Corinthians 1:15 (KJV) *And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit;*

2 Corinthians 13:9 (KJV) *For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.*

Colossians 1:28 (KJV) *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:*

Ephesians 4:11-16 (KJV) *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; **12** For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: **13** Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: **14** That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; **15** But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: **16** From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

1 Thessalonians 3:11 (KJV) *Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.*

This is doubtless a prayer. The apostle wanted the perfect will of God and the Lord Jesus Christ to be done in their lives. Their hearts had devised their way to them, but now the LORD must direct their steps.

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 (KJV) *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.*

He prayed "the Lord make you to **increase** and **abound** in love, one toward another and toward all, even as we also towards you." Yes, brothers and sisters, we are to love one another with a pure heart fervently and our neighbors as ourselves! Love is the bond of perfectness. It is the capstone of the fruit of the Spirit and as such the true means of holiness "in order to establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

1 Peter 1:22 (KJV) *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:*

1 Peter 4:8 (KJV) *And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*

This is the third time the coming of our Lord is mentioned by Paul in this Epistle. First, he spoke of waiting for His Son from heaven as the characteristic of a true believer (1:9- 10); then we read of the

gatherings of the saints in the presence of the Lord, the time of glory and joy, when the faithful servant will receive the reward (2:19-20), and now another phase is added. The Lord is coming with all His saints; In this 13th verse, it is now not the coming **for** His saints, but **with** them, in the day of His manifestation as well as the manifestation of all the saints with Him.

And what a glorious day that will be with ALL OF THE SAINTS – the sons of God shall be manifest. Brothers and sisters, the whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain together until now – waiting, anticipating the adoption, the redemption of the bodies of the saints – the placement as sons. Why is that? Because even the creation, itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (**Romans 8:18-23**).

Romans 8:18-23 (KJV) *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. **19** For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. **20** For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, **21** Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. **22** For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. **23** And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*