

April 23, 2017

“Abound in Love”

Focal Passage: 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13 (NASB)

Cross References: Matthew 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; 16:33; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; 15:58; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Matthew 24:36-51; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Timothy 3:10-13

Lesson Idea: We should thank God for the fellow believers He puts in our lives and pray for the Lord to increase our love for one another.

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Apr 16 1 Kings 10-11	Apr 17 1 Kings 12-14
Apr 18 1 Kings 15-17	Apr 19 1 Kings 18-20
Apr 20 1 Kings 21-22	Apr 21 2 Kings 1-3
Apr 22 2 Kings 4-5	Apr 23 2 Kings 6-8

Background: from David Guzik concerning 1 Thess. 3:1-2

Sent Timothy . . . to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith: In the previous chapter Paul explained how much he wanted to be with the Thessalonians during their time of trial (1 Thessalonians 2:17-18). However, since Paul could not be with the Thessalonians himself he did the next best thing. He sent his trusted companion and fellow worker Timothy to them.

We thought it good to be left in Athens alone: For the sake of the Thessalonians, Paul was willing to be left in Athens alone. It cost him something to send Timothy to the Thessalonians, and he thought it was good to pay that cost.

1 Thessalonians 3

1 Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, 2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, 3 so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. 4 For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. 5 For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain.

6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, 7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; 8 for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord. 9 For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, 10 as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?

11 Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; 12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; 13 so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

DISCUSSION:

- v 1-2. Why did Paul send Timothy to the Thessalonians? How did Paul describe Timothy? Could you be described in the same way? Why or why not?
- v 2. How should we strengthen and encourage others in their faith?
- v 3-4. Why should believers not be “disturbed” by their afflictions? (see Matthew 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; 16:33; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 2 Timothy 3:10-13)
NOTE: see more about affliction from Guzik at the end of this lesson.
- v 5. Why was Paul fearful concerning the faith of the Thessalonians? How does Satan tempt people to leave the faith today? What keeps you solid in your faith?
- v 6-8. What comforted Paul in his distress and affliction? How does seeing others walk in the faith comfort you?
- v 8. What brought meaning to Paul’s life? Why? What does it mean to “stand firm” in the Lord? (see 1 Corinthians 15:58)
- v 9-10. Why did Paul give thanks to God? Who brings you that kind of joy before our God?

- v 10. How did Paul pray for the Thessalonians? What could Paul do to complete what was “lacking” in their faith? What is lacking in your faith, and how can it be brought to completion?
- v 11-13. How could you pray this prayer for your brothers and sisters in Christ?
- v 12. How can your love “increase and abound?” Who do you struggle to love? What does this verse teach about that?

NOTE: from Guzik:

And may the Lord make you increase and about in love: This was not a loveless church, but they still had room to grown in love, because love is an essential mark of the Christian faith.

Jesus spoke of the essential place love has as an identifying mark of the Christian: By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:35). The Apostle John also emphasized this principle: If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? (1 John 4:20)

Abound in love to one another and to all: Paul looked for them to show love to one another and to all. This love begins in the family of God, but it must go beyond. Jesus told us that our love is small and shallow if we only love those who love us also (Matthew 5:46-47).

Just as we do to you: Paul daringly set himself as a standard of love to be emulated. We should live such Christian lives that we could tell young Christians, “Love other people just the way that I do.”

- v 13. What does God desire to do in believers’ hearts? How can you be established and “without blame in holiness?” When will we be completely established? (see 1 Corinthians 1:4-9)
- How are you preparing for the coming of our Lord Jesus? How does God call “all His saints” to prepare together? (see Matthew 24:36-51; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

APPLICATION:

- ✓ How do you handle the afflictions that come your way? How can you trust the Lord in the midst of them? How is your love increasing?

Lesson by Bro Stan

More from Guzik about affliction:

To establish and encourage you concerning your faith: Paul wanted Timothy to do two things - to establish and encourage the Thessalonians. Both are necessary, but establishing comes first. Encouragement can really only come after we are established in the right direction; otherwise, we are only encouraged in the wrong course.

That no one should be shaken by these afflictions: As the Thessalonians were established and encouraged, they would not be shaken by these afflictions. Timothy’s ministry would help them to endure their present hardship... Without a good understanding of the truth concerning the place of suffering in the life of the believer, we are in great danger of being shaken in our faith.

These afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this: Paul wanted the Thessalonians to know that their time of present suffering was in God’s control. These were afflictions they were appointed to. As part of the normal Christian life, believers have an appointment with affliction.

Some believe that Christians shouldn’t suffer affliction and that God wants to teach us only by His word, and not through trial or tribulation. It is true that there is a great deal of suffering we could be spared by simply obeying God’s Word, and God wants to spare us that suffering. Nevertheless, suffering was good enough to teach Jesus (Hebrews 2:10; Hebrews 5:8), therefore it is good enough to teach us. God does teach the believer perseverance, obedience, how to comfort others, and deeper fellowship with Jesus in trials.

Some believe that the only kind of affliction a Christian should experience is persecution. The truth is that there are two ancient Greek words used to translate the concept of suffering, and neither of them is used exclusively in regard to persecution. *Thilipsis* was used for such things as physical pain, emotional hardships, and suffering under temptation. *Pasko* was used for such things as physical sufferings unrelated to persecution, suffering under temptation, and hardships in a general sense.

Some believe that affliction means God is angry at the believer. The truth is that affliction means that God loves us enough to give the best when we may only desire what is easy. The symbol of Christianity is the cross, not a feather bed. Affliction is just part of following Jesus; therefore Paul recognized that Christians are appointed to affliction... Affliction should never surprise the Christian.