# First Thessalonians 3:1-13

"For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.
I Thessalonians 3:8

***Introduction:***

*1. A simple reading of this chapter shows very little, but there are some valuable things for truth seekers.*
*2. I want the mind of Christ, and I want you to have the mind of Christ. We learn it by the Word of God.*
*3. I went by way of video into a couple mega churches this week, but I prefer the Lord's Word and truth.*
*4. Let us remember where we have been by recalling Acts 17:1-15 and the first two chapters of the book.*

**Intro: Paul describes his great care for them and their faith, and he exhorts them to perfection.**

1. After two chapters of ministerial praise and review, he describes his fatherly worries.
2. They had been hindered in visiting again, so these ministers had great concern for them.
3. But Timothy brought a good report of faithfulness, which caused great comfort and joy.
4. They state a desire to perfect the church and exhort them to greater love and holiness.

**3:1 Because they could not wait for a convenient visit, they sent Timothy to check on them**.

1. "Wherefore" refers us back to 2:17-18, where they had been hindered from visiting.
2. **Forbear**. Bear, endure, submit to; bear with, have patience with, put up with, tolerate.
3. Their ministerial impatience was noble, in that they greatly desired to perfect their faith.
4. Paul and Silas agreed to stay at Athens "alone" and wait for Timothy to bring a report.

**3:2 They sent Timothy, a trusted fellowlabourer, to confirm and comfort them in their faith.**

1. The unity among these three ministers for their faith is outstanding and encouraging.
2. Timothy was brother by adoption, a minister of God, and a fellowlabourer in the gospel.
3. His reputation among the churches and with Paul was great (Phil 2:19-22; II Tim 1:5).
4. The purpose for ministerial follow-up here was to establish them and comfort them.
    a. Saints are to be perpetually learning and growing in Christ's gospel, which takes regular instruction and correction to establish them in the truth (Eph 4:11-15).
    b. They needed comfort in the face of the heavy persecution they were receiving.

**3:3 Since God has promised affliction for believers, we should not be moved by them.**

1. Afflictions should not move us from the hope of the gospel. They cannot alter our faith.
    a. Life's circumstances do not have inherent value in proving or confirming truth.
    b. Yet evil circumstances can often drag our souls and spirits to negative thinking.
    c. See Paul's careful distinction between troubles and losing faith (II Cor 4:8-12).
2. We have been appointed to affliction and persecution for sober reasons of God's choice.
    a. We learn more about Him by suffering like He did (Phil 3:10; I Peter 2:21-24).
    b. We grow in faith by having our faith tried in the fire of affliction (I Pet 1:6-9).
    c. We prove our love to Christ by giving up life's joys (Matt 6:24; I John 2:15).
    d. We prove worthiness of Christ's kingdom by suffering (II Thess 1:5; Rev 2:7).
    e. We provide cause for God's righteous judgment of the wicked (II Thess 1:3-10).
3. We cannot ignore this warning – it is a fundamental axiom of true Christianity, and it does not go away just because we live in the peaceful United States of America.
    a. There is no persecution for carnal Christians, for Satan is happy with their defilement by the world, and the world does not find them objectionable at all.
    b. The warning is particularly stated in foretelling our perilous times (II Tim 3:12).
    c. A major function of the ministry is to warn of certain tribulation (Acts 14:12).

d. Jesus did not come to bring peace or unite families, regardless of what you think or your mother taught you (Matthew 10:21-22,34-39; Luke 14:26-33). Family is not all-important to God or Christ. He will test your love of Him by your family, and this is a prophecy and law of Scripture as certain and sure as any.
e. But He did attach several blessings for losing such (Matt 5:10-12; 19:27-29).
f. Jesus told His men they would have tribulation in the world, but . . . (Jn 16:33).

**3:4 <u>Paul faithfully warned them in advance, to prepare them for the affliction that did come</u>.**

1. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed" is wisdom in an American proverb. It's true.
2. Jesus warned His apostles of trouble that would come because of Him (John 15:18-25).
3. Paul warned the early churches with the message of much tribulation (Acts 14:22).
4. Paul warned Timothy that godliness would certainly bring persecution (II Tim 3:12).
5. Consider a few of the recent subjects preached in this church and their consequences.
   a. Take a stand against gluttony among young males and see what friends it wins.
   b. Take a stand against WWJD bracelets with Matt 23:5 and check your popularity.
   c. Take a stand for the King James against modern versions and count your friends.
   d. Take a stand for required attendance on Wednesday nights and feel the warmth.
   e. Take a stand for regeneration prior to faith and see how many love your insight.
   f. Take a stand on female modesty in clothing and be falsely accused for extremes.
   g. Take a stand on strong marriage covenants or godly weddings and feel the heat.
   h. Take a stand for authority in parents, husbands, or pastors and be a cult dictator.
   i. Take a stand for church discipline and separation and be reviled for isolationism.
   j. Take a stand for boldly preaching God's word and be called proud and arrogant.
6. And it came to pass in Thessalonica, and they knew it well (Acts 17:1-15; II Thess 1:4).
   a. The Jews hated these new saints out of envy, for their synagogue was reduced.
   b. The pagans hated them for greed, for their cash was threatened (Acts 19:23-28).
7. But all persecution rises fundamentally from Satan's hatred of Jesus Christ and truth.
   a. He attacked true worship with lies from the start (Gen 3:1-5; 4:1-12; I Jn 3:12).
   b. We are engaged in a spiritual warfare (Dan 10:20; Eph 6:10-18; Rev 10:12-17).

**3:5 <u>Since many fall away under persecution, Paul sent Timothy to confirm their gospel work</u>.**

1. Paul, ever the consummate pastor, ran out of patience in his worrying about their souls.
2. Observe the switch here from plural to singular pronouns, emphasizing Paul and his personal affection for them, which reminds us of his love (Rom 9:3; 10:1; II Cor 12:15).
3. In spite of all the miracles and ministerial integrity reviewed earlier, Paul knew Satan could move them from their steadfastness in his gospel (II Cor 11:1-4; II Tim 2:24-26).
4. Remember the sober warning of our Lord about the stony ground (Matt 13:5-6,20-21), and Satan is just as much behind the dangers of the others grounds as well (I Cor 7:5).
5. It behooves us to soberly consider the warning and take heed (II Pet 3:17-18; I Pet 5:8).
6. The grace of God – as knowledge of it – may be lost (Gal 5:4; II Cor 6:1; Heb 12:15).

**3:6 <u>Timothy brought an excellent report back to Paul and Silvanus from Thessalonica</u>.**

1. He could report that in spite of severe persecution, they were strong in faith and charity.
2. Earlier in this epistle he had recognized their work of faith and labour of love (1:3), and here he takes note of it again, which reminds us of the great importance of these two.
   a. Faith is that confidence in God and His promises and word leading to obedience.
   b. Charity is that benevolent care one of another only experienced by the spiritual.
3. Their patience of hope is not mentioned here, for maintaining faith and love in the face of such opposition was rather clear evidence of their patience and hope.

4. He also recognized their good remembrance of them and their desire to see them again.
    a. Ministers sense quickly when saints are disaffected, and it is painful and fearful.
    b. Sin, heresy, strife, or envy cannot exist easily where a people love a true pastor.

**3:7 <u>Paul and friends were comforted in their own evil circumstances by their reported faith.</u>**

1. Ministers can be comforted through circumstances and troubles by their hearers' faith.
2. The purpose of the ministry is the perfection of the saints, and favorable reports that this objective is being met comforts a man of God, regardless of what he may be facing.
    a. Fear and worry about weak and compromising members are pains in his soul.
    b. Joy and confidence about strong and zealous members are hormones of healing.
    c. Parents know some of this condition from the affect of children on their hearts.
3. The description of affliction and distress seems to indicate Paul may have left Athens for Corinth (Acts 18:1-18), possibly while Timotheus was visiting in Thessalonica.

**3:8 <u>These ministers received the good report of their strong faith as a reviving of their souls</u>.**

1. Should we find in this text a new means for regeneration, as most Arminians would?
2. "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country" (Proverbs 25:25).
3. This reviving of spirits was comparable to the glory and joy they took of them (2:20).
4. Observe that ministerial approval and joy depends on them "standing fast in the Lord."
    1. Standing is not the same as sitting (Eph 6:10-14; I Cor 16:13; Colossians 4:12).
    2. **Fast**. 1. Firmly fixed in its place; not easily moved or shaken; settled, stable.
    3. Ministers are to help saints not be moved (3:3; Col 1:23; Eph 4:14; I Cor 15:58).
    4. There is only place to stand – in the Lord, as all other locations are dangerous.

**3:9 <u>Their thanks to God was at the highest level possible due to the joy at knowing their faith</u>.**

1. Paul and his companions had such great joy they did not know how to rightly express it.
2. They did not know how to adequately express thanksgiving to God for such a blessing.
3. The Psalmist expressed a similar dilemma in the face of God's benefits (Psalm 116:12).
4. Their joy was clearly to God ("to God"), for the Thessalonians ("for you" and "for your sakes"), and clearly before God in a spiritual sense ("before our God").
5. They had been joyfully thankful before and were pressed to it <u>again</u> (Compare 1:2).
6. They had just been comforted with Timothy's report, but now they were joyful (3:7).

**3:10 <u>Their zeal for the Thessalonians had only been provoked further by the good report</u>.**

1. They had fervent zeal to see them again, and they prayed abundantly to be able to do so.
2. Though very thankful for their faith (1:3; 3:6), they wanted to perfect it even further.

**3:11 <u>They trusted wholly in God's sovereignty to direct their travels to Thessalonica again</u>.**

1. Is God different from our Father? Or is "and" an explanatory connective here?
    a. **And**. IV. Quasi-adverbially. 13. Also; even. *Obsolete or archaic.*
    b. You may not be familiar with this usage of "and", but compare 3:11 with 3:13.
    c. Compare also I Thess 1:3 with II Thess 2:16, to see this use of "and" again.
2. No one has believed the sovereignty of God more than our beloved brother Paul.
    a. He knew God made an enormous difference in his life on the road to Damascus.
    b. The Lord had clearly directed him in his travels (Acts 16:6-10), so he trusted all such desires and travels to God's will (Acts 18:21; I Cor 4:19; 16:7; Rom 1:10).
    c. And his wonderful example was followed by knowledgeable saints (Acts 21:14).
    d. He did not even presume on growth in learning without the will of God (He 6:3).
    e. James sheds further light on this faith by submitting all to His will (Jas 4:13-16).

**3:12 <u>Paul and friends exhorted the Thessalonians to grow and increase in their love to others</u>.**

1. Love is the best mark of a saint – both outside and inside (John 13:35; I John 3:18-19).
2. For our natural condition is one of active hatred and full of malice and envy (Titus 3:3).
3. Compare the hateful works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:19-22-23).
4. Observe the double mention of love in the things proving our election (II Peter 1:5-10).
5. They had commended and would commend their love, but sought more (1:3; 4:9-10).
6. And they were able to use their own example, which is a large part of the ministry.
7. God's ministers are never content – they never end a lesson with merely praise. Sorry.
8. The exhortation seemed to have taken, for they highly praised them later (II Thess 1:3).
9. Do we pray with the same sovereign trust as Paul? "The Lord make you to increase"?

**3:13 <u>Their desire and purpose in exhortation was unblameable holiness at Christ's coming</u>.**

1. Though they had much to thank God for in the lives of these saints, they pressed on in holy zeal to perfect them before God our Father, Jesus Christ, and the saints; for our holiness will still be short of His (Ps 130:3; Isaiah 6:1-5; 64:6; Luke 5:8; Phil 3:7-15).
2. The apostle's great objective for them – indicated by the words "to the end" – was blameless character before God, even our Father, at Christ's coming (Col 1:28-29).
3. Observe that we are dealing with unblameable holiness in the <u>hearts</u> of these saints.
4. He admits the necessity of God establishing their hearts in this glorious condition, which is what we considered at length in our study of A PURE HEART (Ps 51:10).
5. **Stablish**. **[Variant of Establish** *v.***]** = Establish *v.* in various senses. To confirm, settle, strengthen, or fix that which may be weak or wavering.
6. How do these last two verses go together? It is by unfeigned love of the brethren – a true alteration of character – that we purify our hearts before God (I Peter 1:22).
7. Why is holiness important? Because without it we shall never see the Lord (Heb 12:14).
    a. For nothing defiled shall enter into that holy place we call heaven (Rev 21:27).
    b. We are holy eternally by election (Ep 1:4); legally by Christ's death (Heb 10:19-22), vitally by the Spirit's work (Eph 4:24); and finally by God (I Thes 5:23-24).
    c. But we have also been called to holiness practically (I Pet 1:13-17; Rom 12:1-2).
    d. As we see in the next chapter, practical holiness is God's will for us (4:3-7).
    e. Take the time to soberly review the sermons and/or outlines for HOLINESS.
8. The only way to be unblameable is to be thoroughly holy, which is moral perfection.
9. The prospect of our Lord's coming should have a profound affect on our earthly lives.
    a. Self-denial and godliness is based on looking for His coming (Titus 2:11-14).
    b. It is high motivation for being faithful (II Tim 4:1; I Tim 6:13-14; Phil 3:17-20).
    c. We should look for and love His appearing (II Timothy 4:8; Hebrews 9:27-28).
    d. Do we meet Him confidently or shamefully? It is our choice (I John 2:28 – 3:3).
    e. If you knew He was coming tomorrow, what would you do more of today? Prayer? Reading? Confession? Love? Reconciliation and peace making? Holiness? Guarding speech? Singing? Spiritually minded? Faith? TV off?
    f. He will bring a great crowd of witnesses – just and holy men (He 12:1-4,22-24).