

## The Hope of Heaven

### 1Thessalonians 3:7-13

- The Apostle Paul has heard some really good things about this early church that he founded back in the city of Thessalonica but every time he tried to go back there to visit he was denied. Paul knew that these denials weren't just some random happenstance either but the work of the enemy **2:18**, who didn't want him journeying back and strengthening this fragile, young group of believers that scripture says were at best three weeks old in the Lord when he departed. So unable to come himself he sends back his trusted companion and protégé Timothy to find out if what they were hearing about the church in Thessalonica was really true.

#### V7-13

- In this chapter Paul describes the feeling they got upon hearing that the reports were true about the church, although being in the midst of persecution and trials were still standing strong in the faith **V7. Acts 18** tell us where he was when he received this good news (Corinth) and here it tells under what circumstances > **"Affliction"** and **"Distress"**, affliction- means trouble, burdened, that was the cause, distress- intense anxiousness, this is the effect.
- Paul was being pressed on all sides, he himself was being chased, threatened, persecuted, remember he had come to Thessalonica from Philippi having been beaten, battered, bloodied and bruised, physically he was a wreck before he got there. Now after being so readily received in Thessalonica here come the Jews filled with envy and jealousy, threatening and rioting, chasing Paul out of there after only three weeks of ministry, to say he was concerned is an understatement. In fact just to emphasize how Paul felt about his church plants > **2Cor 11:24-28**, this allowed him to write > **1Cor 4:15**- that many call themselves teachers but he was a father.
- So this was sweet relief for Paul and it comforted him, **V8-9** for he says that hearing that they stood when they could have fallen renewed his strength > **"for now we live"**. This description gives the picture of an army that's being assaulted by the enemy and yet is refusing to retreat. Also I believe it was Spurgeon who said > **"never is the servant of God so full of delight as when he sees that the Holy Spirit is visiting his hearers"**. For hearing that they were standing in the faith brought about thankfulness and joy for what God was doing > **3Jn 4**.
- **V10 in Ch 1:2** Paul mentioned how they regularly prayed to God for them and here he mentions it again but even more forcefully that he prayed night and day for these believers. Paul says how dear this church was to him, and that he took care of them like a mother does her new born and a father exhorts his sons, now we read how everyday Paul was lifting them up to the Lord. As amazing as that is you know what really makes this unique? He only knew them for three weeks, parents pray for children every day, spouses for spouse, singles to be married, but strangers.

- This is real love, it's all based upon concern, listen if you're not **others centered** or **others oriented** then it will be almost impossible not to sing the song of self "me, me, me, me, me," when you go before the Lord. Look at the prayer it was for two things > **1<sup>st</sup> fellowship**- the good news from Timothy as great as it was still wasn't enough; they genuinely wanted to see them face to face. **2<sup>nd</sup> spiritual growth**- perfect means to mature in areas that lack progress.
- This is still about others, Paul wanted to see them but not merely to satisfy a need in his life, although that might happen, the main reason he wanted to see them was to bless them. He knew that if they were doing this well being around him for only three weeks, just imagine if he had some more time with them, then he could help fortify their faith even that much more. So in order to do that one must be in prayer for those who you're looking to come alongside of and for that to happen you must first have to care about what's happening in their lives >**Col 4:12-13**
- **V11-13** this section is linked to four prayer requests that Paul made for these believers, and their requests that all of us should want for each other > **1<sup>st</sup> mature faith V10**- which is why he wanted to see them again, asking the Lord multiple times to see them, **2<sup>nd</sup> that love may increase V12**- we were already told about their labor of love in **1:3**, but although they were doing well Paul wanted them to strive to do even better, this would protect them from the Christian's arch enemy "**complacency-comfort**". **3<sup>rd</sup> Holiness of life V13**- Paul asks that the saints hearts be rooted-grounded in holiness so they'll be blameless at the coming of our Lord.
- At the end of every chapter of Thessalonians there's mention of the return of Jesus Christ, and one of the reasons we can't tell the difference between the church and the world today is the lack of messages on Jesus coming back. It's the return of Christ that motivated the early church to witness, endure persecution, and give their lives for the faith, and it's that same message that will motivate a believer to live a separated life today, but take that message away and what will you see, people living for now and not for eternity. **2 Pet 1:10-11**- as we continue to add to our faith while on earth now it prepares us for a glorious entrance in heaven in the future.