

## Don't Lose Hope! – 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3 – October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019

- I want to talk with you today about those who find themselves losing hope in the midst of the difficult trials all of us face in life.
- This because of what the Apostle Paul writes to this battle weary church in Thessalonica concerning what they were enduring.
- Before we jump into our text, I think it would be good to quickly mention a little bit about the back-story leading up to this letter.

- Paul only stays in Thessalonica for what some believe is about three weeks, this after he's miraculously released from prison.
- This is the first letter Paul wrote and it begins what we know today as the New Testament epistles inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- It was written in response to a visit from Silas and Timothy who just returned from Thessalonica while Paul was still in Corinth.

- What's striking to me about how he starts this letter is that it's the first time he mentions what's known as the triad in this order.
- In his subsequent letters, he refers to the triad as faith, hope and love in that order, but not here to the church in Thessalonica.
- I am of the belief the reason for listing hope last is because it was their hope that inspired them to endure by faith and in love.

### **1. Hope inspires endurance**

- You'll forgive me for working our way backwards, but I need to start with hope first, and how it's hope that inspires endurance.
- I would suggest not only does hope inspire endurance but it's that which leads to love prompting labor and faith producing work.
- Hope is what fuels our labor of love, and in so doing strengthens our faith to persevere when we are suffering in a difficult trial.

Romans 5:1-5 - 1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

### **2. Love prompts labor**

- The word that Paul uses here for labor is interesting for a number of reasons chief of which is that it carries the idea of exertion.
- Exertion to the point of exhaustion all prompted and propelled by the love we have, which makes love a get to and not a got to.
- In other words, when you really love in that way, you'll do anything and everything regardless of how heavy the burden can be.

Doubtless you're familiar with that famous song by the Hollies, "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother." What's not as well known is the story that inspired that song. In 1884, James Wells, Moderator of the United Free Church of Scotland, in his book *The Parables of Jesus* tells the story of a little girl carrying a big baby boy. Seeing her struggling, someone asked if she wasn't tired. With surprise she replied: "No, he's not heavy; he's my brother." Later in the 1940's, the title became the motto for Boys Town, a community formed in 1917. Located in Omaha, Nebraska, it was a place where troubled or homeless boys could come for help. In November of 1969, the Hollies, released an album with the song bearing that title.

### **3. Faith produces work**

- While I am keenly aware that a faith-producing work can sound like a paradox of sorts, both of them work in concert together.
- The reason being is that when one has faith, the substance of things hoped for, it will show vis-à-vis the works that will follow.

James 2:18 - But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

John 6:28-29 - 28 Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

Psalms 27:13-14 - 13 I would have lost heart, unless I had believed That I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living. 14 Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!