

Taking Steps Filled with Abundance 2:13-3:10

vs. 13a, We are so thankful.

vs. 13b, It works effectively in you who believe.

Word of God -> not fleeting, not unfulfilling.

God is alive, powerful, and at work. You can see it all around the Thessalonians.

Your life is different.

Question: Is your life different because of Jesus?

vs. 14, You too are a church that is experiencing opposition (persecution).

Your situation, Thessalonian church, is not unique.

The holy and faithful people of God who follow the Messiah Jesus are suffering, facing humiliation, and those who persecute seem to be "on top."

How could God let this happen?

vs. 15-16, Paul's response.

Judgement awaits those who lash out against God's innocent people.

Jesus knows this (experientially).

The prophets know this (experientially).

John 16:2-3 They will ban you from the synagogues. In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering service to God. **3** They will do these things because they haven't known the Father or me.

Despite the ignorance and judgement of the persecutors, their hostility remains sinful and will be met with judgement.

"God's anger for justice has come upon them and there is no turning back." ~ Nijay Gupta

Paul is speaking very specifically about a certain group of Jews.

1 Thessalonians 4:6 This means one must not transgress against and take advantage of a brother or sister in this manner, because the Lord is an avenger of all these offenses, as we also previously told and warned you.

Paul's emphasis

Romans 12:19-20 Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for God's wrath, because it is written, Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord. **20** But If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head.

- Non-retaliation
- Benevolence
- Generosity toward enemies

The Messiah Jesus is for all people! Jew and Gentile.

The gospel does not discriminate even when we have such a propensity to classify and separate.

We must look beyond our own experience / our own insulated selves.

Question: Are you aware of those around you who are not like you?
Are you engaging? Are you welcoming? Are you learning?

Hospitality

“Hospitality means primarily the creation of free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place.... It is not a method of making our God and our way into the criteria of happiness, but the opening of an opportunity to others to find their God and their way ... Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the life style of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own.” ~ Henri Nouwen

(Clothed in the gospel)

Engaging others in this way (hospitality) moves us to a place of understanding. Understanding opens the door to a space where one can become aware of the needs of our neighbor. This creates the framework for the healing of each other's wounds.

vs. 17-20, We have genuinely tried to return to you. We have been hindered.

Leave you (separated) -> orphaned

- Paul could be speaking of all kinds of obstacles.
- He summarizes the ultimate reason by stating, “Satan hindered us.”
- The reasons fall squarely on the real enemy, God's adversary.

Romans 16:20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

1 Timothy 5:15 For some have already turned away to follow Satan.

You are our hope, joy, crown.

They are Paul's hope. -> Recognizing God's work in one's life and ministry.

Philippians 2:16 by holding firm to the word of life. Then I can boast in the day of Christ that I didn't run or labor for nothing.

You are my glory. I beam with pride and delight because of you. Because of **my** calling I look to **you**. My **hope** is your **maturity**.

3:1, Therefore... we sent Timothy.

How are they? How is the church?

Is their faith intact?

Timothy's task - to help them understand and live out what it means to be member's of God's family.

vs. 3, Following Jesus includes suffering.

Philippians 1:29 For it has been granted to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him,

Romans 8:17 and if children, also heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Why?

- Because the kingdom operates in direct opposition to the sinful way of the world.
- Despite this suffering we maintain wholeness and holiness.
- We understand these realities and therefore we live a counter-cultural existence.
- We consistently and actively engage in loving our neighbor.

Shaken -> emotionally disturbed as to give up one's belief.

De-construction - there are positive and negative implications to this term.

The pressure, cognitive and social, if not dealt with can lead to a world-view collapse.

Question: Are you dealing with the sharp contrast of kingdom living?

Have you allowed the voices of culture or the disgust of “Christian” hypocrisy to distract you from the truth of God’s word?

vs. 4-5, This is Paul’s concern. He is focused on their faith (loyalty) / Jesus centrality.

If you need to tear it all down -> do it.

But don’t rebuild based on personal preference.

Rebuild with humility, trusted expertise, quality materials, and faithful diligence.

The tempter is hard at work sowing confusion, creating distractions, promoting fear and doubt.

Stand firm (Smyrian Church)

Revelation 2:10 Don’t be afraid of what you are about to suffer. Look, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison to test you, and you will experience affliction for ten days. Be faithful to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Keep pressing on (persevere)!

- God is at work.
- Our faith is strengthened through trial.

Romans 5:3-4 And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, 4 endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope.

3:6 Timothy has brought to us good news about your faith and love.

This is a beautiful biblical example of linking arms and tightening grips.

- We have partnered together to share the gospel.
- We are filled with the same Spirit that inspires endurance.
- We embrace the same Messiah Jesus that models and guides our love.
- Motivation and momentum are generated because of the on-going mutual encouragement.
- Faithfulness produces faithfulness and obedience produces obedience.

vs. 7-10, Intimacy and close friendship

We felt alive again. We are so encouraged!

Romans 1:12 that is, to be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.

Relationship involves prayer.

- Thanksgiving
- Aligning our hearts with the will of God concerning unity.
- Meaningful completeness (Faith, Hope, Love)

Question: Is Second Mile going to a place of Jesus saturated hospitality? Are you going to cultivate the type of relationships in this church that are described between Paul, Silas, Timothy and the Thessalonians believers? Are you filled with thanksgiving? Are your hearts aligned? Do you on a regular basis experience meaningful completeness?