

Living in Light of His Coming

Strengthened in Faith

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

Introduction: Continuing through 1 Thessalonians, today's message, takes us deeper into Paul's heart for the Thessalonian church. We've seen how their faith inspires us and the cost of following Christ. Now, we'll explore Paul's longing to be with them, the good news Timothy brings back, and how Paul prays for their growth.

I. Paul's Longing and Concern for the Thessalonians (2:17-20)

1. Paul expressed his deep longing to see the Thessalonians again, even though he was physically separated from them.
2. Despite being apart, Paul's commitment to their spiritual well-being remained unwavering.
3. Paul viewed the Thessalonians as his hope, joy, and crown of boasting before the Lord at His coming, highlighting his eternal perspective and valuing their spiritual growth and perseverance.

II. Timothy's Encouraging Report (3:1-8)

1. Unable to bear the separation any longer, Paul sent Timothy to strengthen and encourage the Thessalonians in their faith.
2. Paul reminded the Thessalonians that they were destined for trials, as Jesus had also warned His followers about persecution (Matthew 5:10-12, John 15:18-20, Luke 9:23-24).
3. Paul's concern for their faith amid afflictions prompted him to send Timothy, and Timothy's positive report brought great relief and joy to Paul.
4. The Thessalonians' steadfast faith and love, despite challenges, provided mutual encouragement between Paul and the believers.

III. Paul's Prayer for the Thessalonians (3:9-13)

1. Paul expressed overwhelming thankfulness and joy for the Thessalonians, constantly praying to see them and supply what was lacking in their faith.

2. Paul's prayer encompassed three key requests: (1) that God would direct his way to them, (2) that the Lord would make their love increase and overflow, and (3) that God would strengthen their hearts to be blameless in holiness before Him at the coming of Jesus.

IV. Strengthened in Faith: The Contrast with the Health, Wealth, and Prosperity Gospel

1. This passage stands in stark contrast to the Health, Wealth, and Prosperity Gospel, which promises material blessings, health, and success as signs of God's favor.
2. The Thessalonians were reminded to expect trials rather than avoiding them, focusing on spiritual growth rather than material gain, embracing sacrifice rather than seeking comfort, and finding joy in spiritual encouragement rather than material blessings.

V. Strengthened in Faith: Practical Applications

1. Maintain deep bonds with fellow believers, cultivating meaningful relationships through regular fellowship, prayer, and support.
2. Encourage and strengthen each other, building each other up, especially during trials.
3. Expect and embrace trials as part of the Christian journey, trusting in God's purpose through suffering and knowing that it refines our faith.
4. Pray fervently for one another's spiritual growth, love, and holiness.
5. Focus on eternal perspectives, valuing spiritual growth and perseverance in ourselves and others.

Conclusion: As we continue to live in light of Christ's coming, we must be strengthened in our faith by embracing the deep bonds we share, encouraging one another, enduring trials with steadfast faith, and praying fervently for each other's growth. May our love increase and overflow, and may our hearts be strengthened to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.