

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

1 So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. **2** We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, **3** so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For you know quite well that we are destined for them. **4** In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. **5** For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain.

Timothy's Encouraging Report

6 But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. **7** Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. **8** For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. **9** How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? **10** Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. **12** May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. **13** May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

Discussion Questions

- 1. Have you ever experienced anxiety or stress from waiting on the results of something? (ex: an important test grade, a sick family member's test result, etc.)**

Leader Tip: This passage highlights Paul's anxious feelings about the Thessalonian church and if they were still following Christ despite persecution. Encourage your kids to share about times of similar anxiety for their own loved ones or very close friends.

- 2. Paul's concern for them was not their wealth, health, self-esteem, or successes, but rather about their FAITH! Why do you think Paul prioritized faith over everything else?**
- 3. Read verses 1-5. What are some things Paul says about suffering and persecution?**

Leader Tip: Notice how Paul has a burdened heart for the people, and how often he mentions suffering or affliction. In Ch. 1 & 2, recall how he reminds them this is a normal occurrence in the faith. If your group is up for the task, have them take 3 min. to individually write down some things that Paul mentions about suffering.

- 4. How does the Thessalonians' faith in the midst of suffering encourage Paul (who is also suffering)?**

Theological Thought: If a person knows that something unpleasant is part of his destiny, something that is inevitable, then he/she will brace themselves to meet it and will not think that it is a sign that they are on the wrong track or being taken by surprise by it. ---- Our faith in Christ elevates our perspective above just what we see in the world and the temptation/suffering coming towards us, and that helps us prepare for it. Paul fears that if they don't prepare for it, they will give in to the temptor, and their labor would be for nothing. Therefore, Paul is trying to direct them to the greater hope that comes from Jesus, rather than knowing pain is coming and letting anxiety cripple them.

- 5. Read verses 6-10. Again, Paul seems to be focused specifically on the maturity of their faith. In v. 10, how is Paul praying? If someone was praying earnestly for your own faith, what part is lacking that you would want them to pray for?**

Leader Tip: This could be a cool opportunity to assign prayer partners/accountability to pray together or pray for their partner throughout the week.

- 6. Read verses 11-13. What is Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians?**
- 7. Remember back to Chapter 1. Paul encouraged them to imitate him as he is imitating Christ. In 1 Thess. 3:12 he asks them to imitate his Christlike love (for others, and everyone). Is there a parent or mentor in your life who you would like to imitate? Why?**
- 8. Paul talks about being blameless and holy when Jesus returns. Pray that our love for others would make us holy this week.**