

LIVING IN LIGHT OF HIS COMING

Week Two Notes/ 1 Thessalonians 2-3

Be Encouraged (part 2)

INTRODUCTION

As we begin chapter 2 and move through chapter 3, we will discover that Paul continues to encourage these new Christians. However, he first addresses false reports about his ministry.

Chapter 2:3-10. Evidently, someone sent a letter to the church, or personally visited them, saying that Paul was deceitful, greedy, and a false teacher seeking his own glory. But Paul assures them there is no error in his message of the gospel, neither is there any deceit or greed in his efforts. He is not trying to please people, rather he only seeks to please God. Furthermore, he is not seeking his own glory.

He uses the metaphor of a mother nursing her newborn baby to describe the manner in which he delivered the good news of the gospel. This is important. He came in gentleness, with much mercy—not shaking a finger, condemning, or bullying in any way. He came in tenderness.

But Paul also is writing to strengthen these new believers. Twice he writes that he wants them to strengthen and encouraged (1 Thess. 2:11 and 3:2). He continues to use a “family” metaphor, but this time he uses the metaphor of a loving father encouraging his own children. Fathers love differently than mothers. The gospel came as a gentle mother, but the exhorting, strengthening, and encouraging comes as a loving father. The image of a good father in Scripture is always one of protecting and providing. Paul is concerned about the church in the midst of much persecution, and he wants them to be firm in their new faith.

I. Walk Worthy

The purpose of strengthening and encouraging is so that they will “walk worthy” (1 Thessalonians 2:12). *“...so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”*

The word **walk** simply means living our everyday lives—Paul uses that description often in his letters. The word **call** is the call to salvation. That call is powerful, precious, and priceless. The word **worthy** is the Greek word **axios**. It means **to be in perfect balance**. Paul is saying our call to salvation and our lifestyle must be in perfect balance with each other. If we are going to profess Christ, we must live Christ-like lives. So, what does a worthy walk entail?

A. Cooperating with the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

The young church had accepted what God said as it pertained to the good news of Christ. But God’s message, or God’s Word continues to do a work in our lives (and theirs). For them, they had the Old Testament, and they had the oral teaching of Paul as well as letters written to them. But today you and I have the complete Word of God—the Bible. Verse 13 says the word of God performs a work in us—it is an active, energetic, ongoing work. Later he will use the

word **sanctification** to describe this ongoing work. Salvation is not the end of God's Word working in us—it is just the beginning!

Since God's Word is actively working in our lives, we have the responsibility to cooperate with that work. Living the Christian life is not a magical experience where we just sit, and God waves a wand over us. We respond to and obey what He tells us in His word. How?

1. Abide

Jesus is clear in *John 15*—we must abide in Him. We must stay connected to Him, and we do this as His Word finds a permanent and productive place in our hearts. But the only way we can abide in Christ and His word is to spend time with Him. It is a privilege, but it is also a discipline. We make time for Him, we listen, we apply what He tells us in His Word. Abiding is very much like any other relationship we value—it must be cultivated.

Colossians 3:16...let the word of Christ richly dwell (settle down and permanently live there) within you. Why? Because God's Word speaks to everything we need to grow in Christ (read 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

2. Allow the Holy Spirit to change your thinking

What we think determines how we behave. God wants our thinking to be transformed. Romans 12:2 says *do not be conformed to this world*. Do not think and behave like people who do not know Christ. BUT *be transformed (Made new) by the renewing of your mind*. Ephesians 4:23 tells us to *be renewed in the spirit of our mind*. How? By the word of God. Saturating our minds with Scripture changes us from the inside out (Ephesians 3:16). As the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to change our thinking, we listen and obey... thus our behavior changes. Not only do we want to do what God says, but He empowers us through the Holy Spirit to actually do it. (Philippians 2;13).

3. Live it out

Walking worthy is not an intellectual exercise—we must get out there and live—with messy people, tough circumstances, and stressful jobs. God's Word will give us insight, wisdom, and discernment as we encounter everyday life. *James 1:22 says we are to be doers of the Word and not hearers only.* *Psalm 119* is the longest chapter in the Bible, filled with insight as to how the Word of God benefits the believer. Read it!

4. Let God's Word adjust you

Hebrews 4:12 is important. *For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword and piercing as far as division of the soul and the spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

God's Word is not a dead, ancient piece of literature. It is alive and active, doing a work in us through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses the Word to convict us, adjust us, teach us. It reaches into places where we cannot even recognize there is a problem. But we must cooperate, responding to the truth of God's word. We must confess and repent when there is sin exposed. We must adjust our thinking or our attitudes as the Word brings them to light.

We cooperate with the working of the Word as we know it and respond to it.

B. Stand Firm (1 Thessalonians 3:5-8)

Paul is concerned for these new Christians because they are facing tribulation and persecution. He is concerned they would get discouraged or that the tempter will tempt them. (verse 5). He

admonishes them to **Stand Firm**. Paul uses this term three times in Ephesians 6 in the context of spiritual warfare. *Stand firm* means to hold your position at a critical time in battle. What is our position? Our position in Christ is that we are children of the Most High God, we are declared holy and blameless before Him, we have been redeemed and forgiven, we have been given the Holy Spirit to indwell us permanently, and we are part of God's church (Ephesians 1:3-14). Our position will never change because it is based on God's faithfulness and not our own. But we do have an enemy that would like to discourage us and render us useless or defeated in our Christian life. Ephesians 2:1-3 tells us that we have a three-pronged enemy: Satan, the world, and our own fleshly nature. While not many of us battle Satan directly, we battle the world and the world system which are under the rule of Satan. Our sinful nature was not eradicated at salvation, but it must die daily, and we are not under obligation to obey our sinful nature.

The tempter, that Paul speaks of, uses the world to entice us to sin, or discourage us in our walk. Our old sinful nature has the ability to take the bait. Satan uses the same weapons against us that he used back in Genesis 3. **Read Genesis 3**. Satan cast doubt on the word of God and the goodness of God. He calls God a liar. The enemy will do the same to us when times get rough. We will be tempted to doubt the character of God, or that God cares specifically for us, or that God's Word is relevant for our circumstances. Satan also uses the weapons of fear and shame against us. When we succumb to sin, shame will rush in as the tempter becomes the accuser. Shame will cause us to isolate, to move away from God's people and God's Word. Fear can set in when we doubt God's Word, accompanied by worry, stress, and anxiety about the future, circumstances, and relationships. We find ourselves wringing our hands instead of standing firm. We find ourselves moving away from Christ instead of toward Him. Paul says emphatically, **'Stand firm!'**

Review Ephesians 6:10- 20. Paul uses an extended metaphor, the armor of a Roman soldier, to describe all that is available to us when the enemy is at work. Each piece of the armor is representative of our position in Christ, but also our practice in Christ. To *Stand Firm* is actually living in obedience. Living in faith—trusting God enough to obey Him—even when times are tough, tribulation is prevalent, and evil seems to be winning. Stand Firm.

C. Grow in Maturity (1Thessalonians 3:9-13)

In verse 10, Paul says he is anxious to see them face to face so he can **complete what is lacking in their faith**. Nothing about the gospel is lacking. Their understanding of all Paul has taught them needed to be strengthened. Remember they were confused about end times. The word **complete** means to mature. Faith must grow, it must mature.

In Verses 11-13, Paul is praying for the church in Thessalonica. He prays that their love would increase and abound. The word *abound* means to super abound, excel, over and above, abundance. The word for love is *agapeo*. Agape love is unconditional love, it is loving as one needs to be loved as opposed to how one wants to be loved, it is intentional, a direction of the will, not based on feelings. Paul says this kind of love must increase even more, not only for each other, but for people who do not know Christ.

As their/our love increases, their/our hearts are established. *To establish* means to set firmly, a resolute direction. *The heart* is the mind, understanding, intentions, affections, and desires. Love establishes their/our hearts unblameable in holiness. *Unblameable* means no fault found. *Holiness* is a quality that can be perceived in our words and actions, especially as it pertains to moral purity. We are instructed to be holy as God is Holy. God is perfectly pure, and we share in His purity. Therefore, Paul is saying, abundant love establishes our mind, intentions, affections, and desires, so that when Christ returns, no fault is found in our moral purity. We are indeed living in holiness. We are walking worthy—especially in the area of moral /sexual purity.

Remember! Perfection is not the goal. Surrender is. When we are surrendered to Christ, we are in a permanent relationship of servitude, our will is abandoned to His. Paul wants these believers, and us, to live in such a way that we are unashamed when Christ returns, waiting expectantly and serving faithfully. When He returns, the Lord Jesus Christ should find us walking worthy—living in perfect balance with our high call to salvation.