

We Live IF You Stand Fast

1 Thessalonians 3

1 Peter 4:12-19

3 John

Are We Imitators?

- ▶ We are commanded to imitate Paul - 1 Corinthians 11:1.
 - See 1 Corinthians 4:16; Philippians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:9
- ▶ We are commanded to imitate GOD - Ephesians 5:1
 - See Luke 6:35-36; 1 Peter 1:15-16; 1 John 4:11
- ▶ We are commanded to imitate CHRIST - 1 John 2:6; Philippians 2:4-5
 - John 10:27-28; 13:13-17, 34-35; Luke 9:23; Ephesians 4:32; 1 John 3:3, 16; 1 Peter 2:21;
- ▶ We are commanded to imitate faithful saints - Hebrews 6:11-12.
 - See Hebrews 13:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:6.
- ▶ We are commanded to be examples for others to follow - 1 Tim 4:12.

A Servant's Love (1 Thessalonians 3:1)

- Remember 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20!
- Paul's separation from the Thessalonians was REAL.
- He was willing to sacrifice his own wishes for the spiritual welfare of others.
- He considered the needs of others more important than his own. (Philippians 2:4; 1 Cor. 10:24, 33; Ephesians 5:21)
- Paul was suffering his own troubles and tribulations, but his thoughts and concerns were about others!
- He was preoccupied with others and not himself.
- And as a result of denying himself (Luke 9:23) he experienced the **fullness of joy** that Christ **promised!** - (John 15:11; 16:22, 24; 17:13)
- Paul preached and lived in the **fullness** of the Spirit and the fruit (including joy) of that Spirit **overflowed** from him to others. (Galatians 5:22-23)
 - ★ He practiced **J**esus first; **O**thers next; **Y**ourself last!
- Paul wrote the Corinthians: "I will most gladly spend and be spent for you." (2 Corinthians 12:15)
- Paul parts with one of his closest friends: Timothy.



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- "left" (v. 1) has the meaning of abandonment; hard separation; especially the separation of a loved one at death.
- REAL LOVE makes REAL SACRIFICES.
- Consider Paul's absolute selflessness to those whom he ministered:
 - ★ The saints at Philippi. (Philippians 1:22-26)
 - ★ To unsaved Jews. (Romans 9:1-3)
- **IF CHRIST WAS UNSELFISH FOR PAUL PAUL COULD BE UNSELFISH TOWARDS OTHERS!**

A Qualified Servant (1 Thessalonians 3:2a)

- ① **Brother.** A member of the family of God. Born of God. (John 1:13) A child of God. A brother of Jesus Christ. A son of God.
 - We cannot teach, exhort, and encourage others if we are not saved ourselves.
 - ② **Servant of God:** (or co-worker of God) We are saved unto **WORKS** that God has preordained for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). We must be busy in **THIS** work!! All Christians have WORK of GOD to do!
 - See 1 Corinthians 15:58.
 - ③ **Fellow Laborer:** Timothy was a "fellow-worker" with God and others.
 - He served side-by-side with Paul for 15 years.
 - He obeyed Paul. He left Athens and went to Thessalonika. He returned to Corinth to give his report to Paul.
- Paul and Timothy were "like-minded!" Philippians 2:20.

Timothy's Mission (1 Thessalonians 3:2b-4)

- ① **TO ESTABLISH.** (literally: to strengthen; to make stable; to secure)
 - The **only** way to establish ourselves and others in the faith is to **continually** strengthen ours and their faith.
 - The only way to strengthen faith is to **KNOW and LIVE** the Word of God. (Luke 4:4; Matthew 4:4; 7:21-29; 12:50; James 1:22)
 - We are never FULLY established. We NEED "firming-up" every day.
 - Faith cannot be established without knowledge and understanding.
- ② **TO ENCOURAGE:** (παρακαλέω parakaleo {par-ak-al-eh'-o})
 - "to come alongside to comfort **and** exhort." To stand next to to strengthen.
 - To motivate to stand fast despite troubles, tribulations, and persecutions.

Trouble Is A Part of Being A Christian (1 Thessalonians 3:3-4)

- **FALSE GOSPEL:** Believe in Jesus and all your problems will go away!
- **TRUE GOSPEL:** Count the cost before becoming a Christian because the way is hard and difficult. (Luke 14:28; Matthew 7:13-14)
- The New Testament teaches that trials, troubles, tribulations and persecutions are all part of being a follower of Christ:
 - Jesus taught that we will have tribulations in this world. (John 16:33)

- Jesus promised that if they persecuted Him they **will** persecute you. (John 15:20)
- One enters the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations. (Acts 14:22)
- Those living the Word of God **will** be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3:12)
- Peter tells Christians not be surprised by tribulations. (1 Peter 4:12-19)
- Paul tells the Thessalonians that we are APPOINTED to tribulations. (Acts 9:16; Philippians 1:29)
- It is through tribulations and troubles that our faith grows. (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-3)
- To become a REAL FOLLOWER of JESUS CHRIST is a SERIOUS DECISION that affects EVERY part of one's life. (Luke 9:23; 14:26-33)

BEWARE of the Tempter (1 Thessalonians 3:5)

- In the midst of persecution Christians are more vulnerable to temptations:
- Paul never wanted new converts to be ignorant of Satan's ways (2 Cor. 2:11)
- (Ephesians 6:10-11) The Holy Spirit, through Paul, commands us:
 - ① BE STRONG in the Lord.
 - ② PUT ON the whole armor of God.
 - ③ STAND against the wiles of the devil.
- (1 Peter 5:8) The Holy Spirit, through Peter, commands us to:
 - ① BE **SOBER**
 - ② BE **VIGILANT**
 - ★ BECAUSE the devil, **your** adversary is looking to devour you **and** your brethren.
- Three ways that Satan uses in missionary work:
 - ① Blinding people to the truth. (2 Corinthians 4:4)
 - ② Bring troubles to cause people to forsake what they have heard. (Matthew 13:20-21)
 - ③ Uses deceit/deception/lies. (2 Corinthians 11:3)

The Joy of a Pastor! (1 Thessalonians 3:6-8)

- Timothy's news of the Thessalonians standing fast in the faith brought REAL JOY to Paul. They were STANDING FAST despite troubles, tribulations, and persecutions.
- It did not matter what was happening to him as long as he knew that others were standing firm.
- John say, "I have no greater joy than to know that my children are **walking (living)** in the truth." (3 John 3-4; Colossians 2:5)

PRAYER - PRAYER - PRAYER (1 Thessalonians 3:9-13)

- (v. 9) Paul's joy! Paul's joy is centered in the salvation of His brethren and he gives thanks to GOD!

- (v. 10) Paul prayed! Paul prayed night and day! Paul prayed exceedingly. Paul prayed for others! Paul prayed for his brethren! Are we imitating Paul's prayer life?
 - He prayed to see them FACE-TO-FACE! **Meditate on this!** See 2:17 from last week.
 - He longed to be with his brethren to minister to them. See his concern for their spiritual growth. Are we imitating Paul's concern for our brothers and sisters' spiritual growth?
- (v. 11) Learn from Paul! He was not one who just said, "Well, here I am separated from my brethren and will just wait until God brings me back to them." He did all that he could do but trusted whole hearted in God.
 - Take prayer for example: Read Matthew 7:7-11 and Luke 18:1-8.
- (v. 12) Paul's continued desire and prayer that the saints would grow love for one another - **just as he loved them!**
- (v. 13) Paul wanted his brethren's hearts to be established in holiness before the Lord. (1 Peter 1:15-16; Hebrews 12:14 – see Colossians 1:28-29)

IMITATE PAUL

- ① IN love for your brethren.
- ② IN concern for your brethren's spiritual growth.
- ③ IN warning against the wiles of the devil.
- ④ IN PRAYER for your brethren.
- ⑤ IN anticipation of the Lord's coming.