**NOW WE REALLY LIVE SINCE YOU ARE STANDING FIRM**

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

Key Verse 3:8

“For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.”

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |

**Introduction**



 Today’s passage is mainly Apostle Paul’s concern, thanks and prayers for Thessalonian Christians who were going through times of trials and persecutions. As a shepherd for Thessalonian church believers, he showed his heart and love continually. In the previous passage he identified himself as a young child, a mother, and a father to build them up in Christ Jesus. His heart and prayer continued at today’s passage. He pointed out that now he really live when he heard a good news about their faith and love. This passage is encouraging us in that we can follow his example to live for others. May the Lord raise us up to be good shepherds so that I may devote our whole heart to serve young people in our times. Amen.

1. Read 2:17-20. How were Paul and his associates separated from the

Thessalonians? (17, Acts 17:10) Why did they want to come and see them? (18)

How did they regard the Thessalonian believers? (19-20)

1-1, Read 2:17-20.

 But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. 18 For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way. 19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? 20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

1-2, How were Paul and his associates separated from the Thessalonians? (17, Acts 17:10)

***But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you.***

***As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. (Acts 17:10)***

* Due to persecutions, Christians in Thessalonica had to send Paul, Silas and Timothy away to Berea.
* They had to move one place to another constantly. How hard it could have been for them to endure? But their concern was about Thessalonian believers.
* Even though they were separated, they were in their thought like a lover. Even though their bodies were separated, they were together in their prayer and concern.
* They wanted to see the Thessalonians like parents who wanted to see their children. They wanted to see them in order to provide anything lacking in their faith.
* The new believers needed to stand firm going through persecutions. They were being tempted from the influence of the world.

1-3, Why did they want to come and see them? (18)

***18 For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way.***

* They tried to come, especially Paul tried again and again, but could not because Satan blocked their way.
* We do not know how Satan blocked his way, but we know for sure that there was hindrance for Paul to go to Thessalonica.

Acts 17:13 reads,

 But when the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, some of them went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up.

* Paul is saying that the devil is real, and that he tries to hinder the ministry of the gospel, especially among new believers, planting doubt, mistrust and suspicion.
* Paul was in a spiritual battle against him. If we’re going to be effective in leading people to Christ, we too need to be fighting against Satan.

1-4, How did they regard the Thessalonian believers? (19-20)

***19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?***

* Paul was afraid that the Christians in Thessalonica were being persecuted and lost. He loved them so much because they were his hope, joy and crown in the presence of the coming Jesus.
* Because they witnessed firsthand their transformation by the work of the Holy Spirit, they could not but love these people so much.
* When we share the gospel with someone and they accept it, we become like their spiritual parent.
* There are many reasons to love people. But there’s a very special love that grows out of seeing people accept Jesus personally.
* There’s the saying, “Out of sight, out of mind.” When we don’t see people we easily forget about them.
* But Paul didn’t forget about them at all. He saw these people as his hope, joy and crown. And his focus on them is related to a great future event.
* When the Lord Jesus comes again, and believers get to be in his presence. At that time, all those who believe in Jesus will receive “the crown of righteousness”.
* In this world, those who love Jesus are slandered and shamed, but when he comes again, they’ll receive a glorious, eternal crown.

***20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy.***

* It tells us how much these new believers meant to Paul. It was not a mere number but each one was so precious. Each one was like a precious jewel.
* This is why Paul longed so intensely to see them, and why they were constantly in his mind.
* It was based not on self-glory, but on the healthy desire to see them standing firm in faith and love in Jesus.

2. Read 3:1-5. Why did Paul go to Athens (1; Acts 17:14-15)? Why did he send

Timothy? (2) What did they keep telling the Thessalonian Christians? (3-4) What

else did he do to help them? (5)

2-1, Read 3:1-5.

 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.

2-2, Why did Paul go to Athens (1; Acts 17:14-15)?

 ***So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens.***

***The believers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea. Those who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible. (Acts 17:14, 15)***

* What is worse, Paul alone had to go to Athens due to persecution in Berea by the Thessalonian Jews instead of going to see Christians in Thessalonica.

2-3, Why did he send Timothy? (2)

***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,***

* But Paul had to do something. Paul tried again and again but could not wait any longer. So he decided to send Timothy to them in order to strengthen and encourage them in their faith.

2-4, What did they keep telling the Thessalonian Christians? (3-4)

***3 so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For you know quite well that we are destined for them.***

* They need to be strengthened to settle during these trials. Paul did not limit his topic to persecutions, but said trials because they were going through many trials of life.
* When people go through trials, our hearts go through turmoil like a small boat in a storm, sailing up and down, not knowing what future will hold. At that time, we easily become anxious and cannot settle down.
* How can we settle down during these trials? We need to know that we are destined for such trials whether we like it or not.
* Sometimes, it seems too much to take. Paul was teaching what should be our attitude toward trials in life.
* This teaches us how to find peace at the time of trials. At the time of trials, we can settle down when we must listen to the voice of Jesus and let him come into our hearts and lives.

***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.***

* While Paul was with them, he told them that they would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, which means that they are being persecuted.
* Paul as a good shepherd after our Lord Jesus Christ, prepared the Thessalonians for the time of persecution.

2-5, What else did he do to help them? (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.***

* Paul was very anxious to find out how they were doing, just like a mother worrying about her own children.
* So he sent Timothy to strengthen their faith. He was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted them and that their labors might have been in vain.
* Paul’s concern for them can be our concern in this generation. There are so many temptations Christians have to face.
* In this ‘Social Media’ age, we have a quite unique temptation, being lost in fantasy world. Many young people are drawing away from reality and tempted by LGBT.
* They do not know how to have relationship with others properly. They are becoming more and more self-centered.
* They do not know how to consider others but their own world and enjoyment. Even though they accept Jesus as their savior, they are constantly think of themselves only, not others, which is human sinful nature.
* May God strengthen each one of us to continue to teach the Biblical values so that they may overcome temptations and be sacrificial servants of Jesus, shining the light of Jesus in this generation which is getting darker. Amen.

3. Read 3:6-13. What news did Timothy bring about Thessalonian Christians? (6)

Why were they encouraged and thankful? (7-9) What did they pray further for the Thessalonian believers? (10-13)

3-1, Read 3:6-13.

 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.

3-2, What news did Timothy bring about Thessalonian Christians? (6)

***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.***

* Timothy brought good news about their faith and love. They kept their faith during the time of trials and persecutions.
* They stood firm on the gospel of Jesus. They did not follow the people of the world. They hated sin but loved sinners with the love of Christ.
* They longed to see Paul and Silas, their shepherds. Timothy told them that they always had pleasant memories of Paul and Silas and longed to see them.

3-3, Why were they encouraged and thankful? (7-9)

 ***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?***

* Paul and Silas was happy to hear the news. It was refreshing for them while they were also lonely in the midst of trials and persecutions.
* Their life of faith truly encouraged them, so much so that they could really live, living in peace and joy. Paul and Silas were thankful to God for their faith.
* This verse 8 may reminds us of Paul’s goal in his life. Some people aim for a great achievement. Some are looking for love and some are looking for big money.
* But most goals in life are at best temporal, and even after attaining them we feel meaningless.
* Paul shares with the Thessalonians that his goal in life is helping people become genuine Christians and let be ready for Jesus’ 2nd coming.
* Paul values life after death more than anything. So Paul was trying to encourage the Thessalonian believers to earn their way into Heaven despite persecution.
* There is a saying, "He Who Dies With the Most Toys, Wins." It means that he who acquires the most by the time he dies, has succeeded the most.
* Paul’s view was quite opposite! We cannot take these "toys" with us so we have not won anything. But those who put their hope in Jesus’ coming will receive the crown of life and glory from our Lord.
* To really live or not is therefore our real question on earth! God created us in His own image and in His own likeness. When we reflect godly image to others, we are truly live a fruitful life like apostle Paul. May the Lord help us to be fruitful!

3-4, What did they pray further for the Thessalonian believers? (10-13)

***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.***

* They prayed for the way to come to the Thessalonians. Even though he heard the good news about their faith, he still longed to see them face to face and have fellowship with them in person.

***12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.***

* They prayed to increase and overflow their love for each other and for everyone else. This means that our love has limitation by nature.
* We love whom we like or people who are nice to us or when they behave. We must struggle to love, denying our natural feeling and overcoming our limits.
* Love covers a multitude of sins. At the time of trials, it is easy for anyone to point fingers toward each other.

***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.***

* They prayed to strengthen their hearts. Heart is the source of strength. Therefore, we must protect our hearts. When we lose our heart, we lose our strength.
* When we feed our hearts with God’s word, our hearts get stronger and bear much fruit inside and out. We will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father at the time of the Second Coming of Jesus!
* May God bless us to meditate on the word of God so that our hearts may be strengthened and bear much fruit for the glory God our Father. Amen!

**Conclusion**

 Through today’s passage, we learned Apostle Paul’s concern, thanksgiving and prayer topics for Thessalonian Christians. Pray that we may increase our love when we go beyond our limitations even though it may be painful. When we receive the love of Christ, our love may overflow and reach out to others. Paul also prayed for their hearts to be strengthened. Through meditating on the word of God, our hearts may be strengthened and bear much fruit for the glory of God. May the Lord help us to adopt the same life goal like apostle Paul in this generation.

**One word: Now we really live!**