

Life Group Notes 5/5/2024  
Pastor Mark Warren 1 Thessalonians Week 3

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[No doctrine is a given unless it has been found in the Word given by the Holy Spirit and received by you. If you have observations or questions, feel free to send me an email with your comment or observations at [tbeachhead@comcast.net](mailto:tbeachhead@comcast.net). Thank you for taking the time—Pete Mehegan, the Scribe.]

Remember: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP.** BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! **Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study.**

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Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions that Pastor Mark has raised this week, 5/5. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.** I include each of the passages mentioned in full, to facilitate the enjoyment of these notes. Footnotes are not meant to distract. This week's footnotes include:

1. [On Luke's account vs. Paul's account in the letter.](#)

\*\*\***Important:** At the very [end of these notes](#), I've included passages that were mentioned in this week's message for deeper study using SOAP journaling to help further your study during the week. \*\*\*

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Pastor began by speaking about the expectations we often bring with us to church. He said, "We approach Jesus with expectations, and then we get distracted when our expectations aren't met, and we can lose what it is that Jesus wants to do."

1. Do you agree? Do you have a testimony?
2. What distracts you in the service?
3. What do you do about it?

Pastor relates that he went to his future in-law's church service. He said, "It was different."

1. Have you ever had to remind yourself that "...different isn't bad?"
2. What were your first impressions when you came to Grace for the first time?
3. Have you ever been surprised by the Spirit in a church that is different by your standards? Do you have a testimony?
4. What does it mean to "...press in..." to what the Spirit is doing? What is the alternative?
5. Pastor's random thought: "Why do people show up at church?" Answer him.
6. Pastor spoke of being "hungry for more." Did you relate? What are your expectations? Are they focused on the weekly "performance?" Or are you expecting to see something new?
7. If you answered, "something new," explain. What are you expecting and what has given you that expectation?

Pastor spoke of Victoria's message last week about the stranger and the sojourner in our midst.

1. What do you remember?
2. He said some life groups spoke of illegal immigration. How did Victoria avoid that subject?
3. Should the subject be avoided? (Be careful...and kind.)
4. If every illegal immigrant is returned to the land of their origins, will they remember meeting Jesus here? Or will they remember the anger?
5. How can we become party to a divine encounter? Whom do we represent in that encounter?
6. Knowing that a house divided against itself cannot stand, how can we avoid turning the discussion into political division among us?

Pastor began his "actual" message with this invitation: "Give me real evidence to prove that you are a Christian." Take a moment. What is your response? Which of these responses is adequate:

- I live a moral life.
- I follow the rules.
- I am charitable.
- I tithe.
- I go to church.
- I vote a certain way.

Why are they adequate? Why are they not adequate? What's missing in these responses?

*1 Thess 3:1* So when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left on our own in Athens. *2* We sent Timothy, our brother and fellow worker for God in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, *3* so that none of you would be shaken by these trials. For you know that we are destined for this. *4* Indeed, when we were with you, we kept warning you that we would suffer persecution; and as you know, it has come to pass. *5* For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter had somehow tempted you and caused our labor to be in vain.

1. When did warning of persecution become part of the presentation of the gospel to the Thessalonians? How serious was the threat?
2. Have you ever been warned of persecution?
3. What happens to faith under persecution?
4. Have you ever seen people whose stated purpose was to "...incite and agitate the crowds?" When? What was the impact?
5. Why could Paul, when he was in Athens, "...bear it no longer?" What's his concern?
6. How closely knit was the presentation of the gospel in Thessalonica to follow up after leaving the city?

*6* But just now, Timothy has returned from his visit with the good news about your faith, your love, and the fond memories you have preserved, longing to see us just as we long to see you. *7* For this reason, brothers, in all our distress and persecution, we have been reassured about you, because of your faith. *8* For now we can go on living, as long as you are standing firm in the Lord.

1. Did Timothy come to join Paul in Athens? (Look at Acts 18: *1* After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. *2* There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus,

who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to visit them, [3](#)and he stayed and worked with them because they were tentmakers by trade, just as he was. [4](#)Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks alike. [5](#)And when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself fully to the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.) Where did they, in fact, find them?

2. What changes to Paul's ministry in Corinth happened up upon Silas' and Timothy's arrival?
3. Explain. What did Silas and Timothy bring with them (from Philippi) that made full time ministry in Corinth possible? (See Philippians 4:[15](#)*And as you Philippians know, in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church but you partnered with me in the matter of giving and receiving. [16](#)For even while I was in Thessalonica, you provided for my needs again and again. [17](#)Not that I am seeking a gift, but I am looking for the fruit that may be credited to your account. [18](#)I have all I need and more, now that I have received your gifts from Epaphroditus. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. [19](#)And my God will supply all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. [20](#)To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*)
4. What news from Thessalonica do you think Timothy brought to Paul in Corinth? Encouraging or troubling?
5. What was Paul's response? (v. 8) Have you ever been distracted, waiting for news?
6. Had the "...tempter tempted [the Thessalonians]?" How bad was the persecution in Thessalonica?

[9](#)How can we adequately thank God for you in return for our great joy over you in His presence? [10](#)Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking from your faith.

1. What is Paul's response to good news?
2. Is there more prayer? Or less prayer? Explain.
3. What is lacking from their faith? How can Paul supply that? (Review Romans 10:17 "Now faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the Word of God.")
4. Review again what Paul told the Romans in Romans 5: [3](#)*Not only that, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; [4](#) perseverance, character; and character, hope. [5](#)And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.* Is persecution "character building?" Explain.
5. Is Paul instructing his friends on how to live more morally, or on how often they should attend church? What is Paul's focus?

Notice this and comment: Paul's first encounter with the Thessalonians involved a presentation of the gospel which led almost immediately to persecution from former friends and neighbors. This led to Paul's warning that persecution comes with the message.

1. How intense was the persecution?
2. The Bereans, who took the time to do the research, were not attacked by neighbors but by strangers from Thessalonica. What difference did that make?

3. What persecution have you faced since you decided to receive Christ and obey the gospel?
4. Did persecution change the hope of the gospel in any way in Thessalonica or Berea?
5. What was Paul's fear?
6. What evidence did the Bereans have or the Thessalonians that they were Christian?
7. How does their good example instruct us?
8. What does faith in action look like? What is Paul's focus?

Look up Philippians 2: [1](#)Therefore if you have any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, [2](#)then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being united in spirit and purpose. [3](#)Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride, but in humility consider others more important than yourselves. [4](#)Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

1. What does Christian behavior include, as Paul exhorts the Philippians.
2. What does your own personal comfort from His love, fellowship with the Spirit, affection and compassion lead to?
3. How does a company that is "united in spirit and purpose" behave toward each other? Toward the purpose?
4. Does Paul exhort us to neglect our own interests?
5. Review what Paul tells the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 13: [2](#)If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have absolute faith so as to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. [3](#)If I give all I possess to the poor and exult in the surrender of my body, but have not love, I gain nothing. Can great faith prove one's claim to Christianity?
6. Look at Galatians 5: [5](#)But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the hope of righteousness. [6](#)For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. All that matters is faith, expressed through love. What do you see?
7. What is the ultimate evidence that one is a Christian?
8. How is a lack of love proof of a desperate need? What is your response to a lack of love?
9. Jesus warned us that in these last days, because iniquity will abound, the love of many will grow cold. Look at what Jesus says to Laodicea, the church whose love is only lukewarm in Revelation 3: [20](#)Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with Me. What is Jesus' response to cold love? Does He walk away?
10. How does love grow cold?
11. How does love grow warm and abound?

[11](#)Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you. [12](#)And may the Lord cause you to increase and overflow with love for one another and for everyone else, just as our love for you overflows, [13](#)so that He may establish your hearts in blamelessness and holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. Amen.

1. How does love grow warm and abound?
2. Have you ever prayed like this?
3. What does an answer to this prayer look like?
4. What does a heart that is established in blamelessness and holiness act like?

5. Take a minute to pray this over each other in your group.

Review the characteristics of love that Paul brings out in 1 Corinthians 13: [4](#)Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. [5](#)It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no account of wrongs. [6](#)Love takes no pleasure in evil, but rejoices in the truth. [7](#)It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. [8](#)Love never fails.

1. Are there any rules listed here whereby love can be measured and compared?
2. Is love easily recognized? Always?
3. Is “not love” easily recognize?
4. Besides the Spirit Who knows all things, who is the only one qualified to assess your own love? Have you lately?
5. Who is the only one qualified to assess your spouse’s love? ...your children’s love?
6. Have you ever made the decision to ascribe each of these characteristics to your spouse or a loved one? How did just saying they have achieved this state change the way you look at them (“My spouse is patient. My spouse is kind...”)?
7. If, as John is told in Revelation 19, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,” how does this exercise become an exercise in prophesying life over our loved ones?

**Pastor’s conclusion:**

Pastor Mark ended by saying, “We need to be a community of Jesus followers that is known for the love that we have one for another. Not known for our political views. Not known for our agenda. Not known for our religious culture. We need to look like what Jesus asked us to look like, and He said, ‘The world will know my disciples through the love that they have one for another.’”

1. What does that love look like?
2. What does that love not look like?
3. What have centuries of “church” given the world to look at?
4. Describe the challenge Pastor is offering us? How achievable is it?
5. What will it take to look like Him? What will it take to look like a Father Who is caring for His Son?

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***The Follow-up Application***

1. Use the [SOAP journal studies](#) below throughout the week.
2. Pick a loved one and replace the word “love” in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 with their name. Pick another and another. Note how your own thoughts concerning them change as you begin to see Jesus’ thoughts concerning them.
3. Do the same, replacing “love” with “I.” Does your own hope increase?
4. Pray Paul’s prayer in verses 11-13 over you and your family. Now pray it over your work. Don’t tell anyone and note any changes this week.
5. Be prepared to sacrifice time or resources.
6. Practice being concerned about the spiritual condition of those around you.
7. Encourage one another unto love and good works. When you ask, “How are you,” take the time to listen to the answer and show care and concern.

**Take the time to pray.**

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**Scribe's Notes:**

1. **On Luke's account vs. Paul's account in the letter**—In Acts 17, according to Luke, Paul sends word to Timothy and Silas to join him as quickly as possible through the Bereans that had accompanied him to Athens. They did not join him immediately. In fact, Luke tells us that they joined him in Corinth. Apparently, Paul had instructed them to return to Thessalonica to see if the Word they had planted had taken root. Paul did not start a religion in Thessalonica. He had created relationships that were so real, he "...never stopped praying..." for his newfound family. What is most pertinent, indeed most poignant in biblical accounts can be what is left unsaid. We know how bad the persecution became in Thessalonica... enough to drive Paul and his company away from the city. What we are not told by Luke, and what is made apparent in Paul's most personal letters, is the degree of care Paul took for every person planted in every church he had planted. These details can only be discovered when you take the time to read Luke's account in tandem with Paul's letters. Consider:
    - a. Review Paul's travels. Look at Acts 17: *13But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that Paul was also proclaiming the word of God in Berea, they went there themselves to incite and agitate the crowds. 14The brothers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy remained in Berea. 15Those who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then returned with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible. 16While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply disturbed in his spirit to see that the city was full of idols. 17So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles, and in the marketplace with those he met each day.*
    - b. What do you see? Remember, Berea was the third city visited by the team after Philippi and Thessalonica. Do you see a contradiction between Paul's account and Luke's?
    - c. Harmonize the account. Did Timothy accompany Paul to Athens? Why do you think Timothy and Silas stayed in Berea?
    - d. If the unfaithful Thessalonians came to Berea to hinder Paul's work there, what were they doing in Thessalonica to new believers? When Paul sent instructions to Silas and Timothy in Berea to join him, what do you think Paul included with those instructions?
    - e. Had Paul ever *not* been "...on his own in Athens..."? How long did Paul stay in Athens? (Long time? Or short time?) Where did he go next? What do you know of Corinth and Paul's time and success there?
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**For further study:**

Take a moment each day this week to apply the **SOAP**... (**S**cripture—Copy the scripture. / **O**bservation—Write what you see. / **A**pplication—What is God saying? / **P**ray—What is your response?) ...method to some of the scripture we looked at this week:

Monday: 1 Thessalonians 3:2-5
Tuesday: Philippians 4:15-20
Wednesday: Acts 18:1-5
Thursday: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
Friday: Philippians 2:1-4
Saturday: 1 Corinthians 13:2-3
Sunday: Galatians 5:5-6

Once again, some passages suggested here have more than the usual number of verses. This is not to increase the burden but to provide clarity of context. Pick the verses that speak to you most clearly, and run these through the SOAP steps.