

## For GC Discussion

- What are the different strategies that the enemy uses to try and cause us to stumble and fall in our walk with Jesus?
- How can we combat these strategies and make sure we remain steadfast in our faith?
- How can we cause our love for the church both near and far to grow to be like Paul's?

**In 2 Weeks:** we'll move on in our study to see Paul exhort the church on the issue of sanctification.

### *Notes and Questions*

**For Worship:** Listen to **'What a day that will be'** by Bart Millard. You can find it on YouTube, or on the Hill City Church blog on the website.



## Week 3: Standing Fast

### 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

#### **This Weeks Summary**

This week we saw the Apostle Paul explain something of his reason for writing this letter, namely his fervent desire that these young believers would be standing fast in their new found faith, and not succumbing to the schemes of the Tempter.

#### **For Study:**

This week we looked at 3 tactics of the enemy that he uses to try and make us stumble - here are some verses on dealing with each one:

<b>Affliction:</b>	Matthew 10:16-42
	Hebrews 11:23-27
	2 Corinthians 1:3-11
	1 Peter 4:1-19
<b>Temptation:</b>	1 Corinthians 10:1-22
	Hebrews 4:11-16
	James 4:1-10
	Matthew 26:36-41
<b>Isolation:</b>	Hebrews 10:19-25
	Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
	1 Corinthians 12:12-13:13

This week we saw Paul articulate his desire for the church to stand strong in the midst of affliction and temptation, and to continue their growth in their new-found faith. Here are a few other things from the text.

### **The Importance of Discipleship**

It's interesting how Paul speaks about this new church and his desire to come and see them. In some of the other letters in the New Testament Paul talks about his confidence in the church he's writing to, and his expectation that they will grow and move on. He may still want to visit these churches for the purpose of mutual encouragement, but with the Thessalonians it seems slightly different. Paul seems really concerned that if this church don't receive any input from himself or one of his team soon then their faith might well be shipwrecked, and they may fall away from the faith. So much so that Paul sends Timothy to them even when it means he will be left alone in Athens. Why does Paul view things this way - can't he just leave the church in God's care? Of course he could, and we know that in exceptional circumstances God can sustain any church through any difficulties, but Paul also knows this: the growth of any church is primarily linked to the practice of discipleship. To grow and mature in our faith we follow those who are already following Christ in a deeper way than we are, and in turn we model that life to those who are younger in the faith than us. Jesus showed us this by example as He took a group of 12 men wherever He went, and lived life with them to the degree that they could see nearly everything He did. This must also be part of the reason Paul's witness in Thessalonica was so powerful - he didn't just preach the truth to them but he shared his life with them (2:8). This way of living is costly, and our culture can throw up all kinds of barriers to it, but we need to do what we can to not only meet to listen to a preacher on a Sunday, but to share our lives with one another that we might grow and mature together into the church God wants us to be. This also leads us onto another area touched by the text:

### **The Balance of God's work and Man's**

As we began to recognise above, it would have been easy for Paul to give up in the idea of visiting the church in Thessalonica. He could have just committed the church into the care of a God who surely would be able to sustain them, protect them, and grow them into the church that Paul so desired they should be. However that wasn't Paul attitude at all - he also knew that, though God was surely able to help this church, He also chooses to do His work through people. People like Paul and Timothy, Silas and Barnabas, and people like you and me. This isn't

always an easy line to tread, but it's one we must understand if we're to live and work as God wants us to. He doesn't want us as His people to take on the burden of changing the world any more than He wants us to sit back doing nothing, and completely misusing the phrase 'let go, and let God'. So how do we walk out this balance? We must come at it from both sides:

1. ***We must know that we serve a God who alone is 'mighty to save'***. To know this, believe this, and allow it to permeate everything we do will stop us ever taking the burden on ourselves of trying to accomplish something that God alone was intended to do. We are weak, but He is strong, and that's ok because He expects nothing more from us than our weakness, and in the midst of that weakness His power is made perfect (2 Cor 12:9). What a relief it is to realise that God doesn't want or need us to change the world - however, we must also come at this tension from the other side:
2. ***God also calls us to strive in our obedience to Him***. The place where this tension is most beautifully brought together in Scripture is where Paul himself says this about his ministry among the church in Colossae: '*I toil, struggling with all His energy*'. Paul isn't sitting back doing nothing, he's toiling, he's struggling, he's labouring because he knows full well the work that God has called him to. However he does it all in the burden-lifting knowledge that it's ultimately the power of God that will make the difference.

So the question for us is this: what has God called us to do? Where does He want us to expend our energy? Wherever that is, let's give ourselves to it, let's work hard, and walk in obedience as far as we're able, but let's rest at the same time - knowing it's God's responsibility to see that toil turn into visible results for the Kingdom of God.

### **Living Ready**

Lastly this week we return to the big picture theme that the Apostle Paul wants the Thessalonian church to grab onto. This week he prays that the Lord would cause them to be blameless at Jesus coming - ready to meet their King with lives fit to be called His people. We too should purify ourselves because of the hope that we have - one day we will see Jesus, and when we see Him we will be like Him (1 John 3:2-3). Not only that, but Paul sees this church as part of his glory on that day (2:19-20), and we too can not only ready ourselves for that day, but look to take as many others with us as we possibly can.