

Scripture Text

1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Context

The Thessalonian Church is planted by Paul through the preaching of the gospel and the message was well received. (Acts 17:1-7, 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10) However, from both the relatively short account in Acts and 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16, they were under some heavy persecution from the Jews. As such Paul is concerned for them and sent Timothy to them (1 Thessalonians 3:1), and now Paul has received an excellent report from Timothy regarding their spiritual condition (1 Thessalonians 3:6).

Observation and Meaning

- Read 3:6-7. What is the reason that Paul and his companions are comforted in all their distress and afflictions(3:7)?
- What kind of attitude or assumptions that Paul must be having, that he is comforted by this good news in spite that they themselves are in distress and afflictions?
- What is Paul and his companions praying for? (3:10)
- In what manner are Paul and his companions carrying out the prayer? (3:10)
- How does the word “as” in v 10 connect with “all the joy” in v9?
- How would you summarise the push/pull factors for Paul’s prayer?
- Read 3:11-13. Who does Paul expect to be the primary actor in this prayer? What does this tell us about his view of God?
- Read 3:11-13. Paul prays for they will abound in love for one another, “as we do for you”. How does that inform you about why Paul went at length to describe their response and feelings in 3:6-10?
- Read 3:11-13. What is the end goal of his prayer for the Thessalonians? How does Paul connect the end goal with the end goal of history?

Big Idea

Our prayer life is really an outflow of consideration of how Christ has loved, cared and prayed for us.

Connecting to the Bible’s storyline

We are living between the already and not yet. However, this life is a preparation for the life after life – when we see Jesus face to face, and when he comes back to bring the new heavens and the new earth. Hence, our priorities and love ought to be changed in light of this.

Application

- What is our main concern and priority when caring for others?
- Do we long to see each other, in order to supply what is lacking in each other’s faith? (cf Romans 1:12)
- Share our experiences that have seen how joy, earnest prayer and thanksgiving intersect.
- How does Jesus care and love us? What would be the goal of Jesus prayer for us? Read John 17:16-25. We need to receive the love of Jesus and learn to love others with the love of Jesus.
- Pray as a group using 3:11-13 as a basis. Pray for love and spiritual growth.

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. “for”, “if”, “therefore”), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author’s purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?
 What is the situation of the author and of the readers?
 Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?
 Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God’s word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good “heart” questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.