

STUDY NUMBER FIVE - 1 Thessalonians 3:6-10

Are You an Encouragement to Others in Your Walk with the Lord?

Key Verse 3:7: "because of this we were encouraged, brethren, about you in all our calamities and afflictions through your faith;"

TEXT:

v. 6 But now Timothy, having come to us from you, also brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you are having a kindly remembrance of us always, eagerly desiring to see us as also we are eagerly desiring to see you,

v. 7 because of this we were encouraged, brethren, about you in all our calamities and afflictions through your faith;

v. 8 because now we are living, if you are standing firm in the Lord.

v. 9 For what thanks are we able to return to God concerning you for all the joy with which we are rejoicing on account of you in the presence of our God,

v.10 night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith?

INTRODUCTION:

(Courtship After Marriage: Romance Can Last a Lifetime
by Zig Ziglar)

In 1849 when Nathaniel Hawthorne was dismissed from his government job in the customhouse, he went home in despair. His wife listened to his tale of woe, sat pen and ink on the table before him, lit the fire, put her arms around his shoulders, and said, "Now you will be able to write your novel." Hawthorne did, and the result was that classic The Scarlet Letter.

F. W. Herzberger tells of a time in Martin Luther's life when life was the gloomiest.

It seems at one point, Luther was extremely depressed, refused to eat and drink, would not speak to his anxious wife, his children or friends.

At the point of his deepest gloom, his wife Catherine put on widow's garments and began to assume the position of a person in deepest mourning.

Surprised, Luther asked, "Why are you sorrowing?"

To which his wife, Kathy, replied, "Dear doctor, I have cause for the saddest of weeping, for God in his heaven has died."

This gentlest of rebuke did not fail Luther. With laughter, he kissed his wise spouse, took courage, banished his sorrow, and joy again reigned in the house.

pp. 161-62

(The Power of Optimism by Alan Loy McGinnis)

So characteristic number six is this:

Optimists heighten their powers of appreciation.

Said a sympathetic friend to a crippled woman, "Affliction does so color life."

"Yes," she replied, "but I propose to choose the color."

One of the tenets of this book is that we largely choose our attitude. We choose how to color our days and the events that occur in those days. Such a selection process goes on in the mind constantly. We can't possibly take in all the sights and sounds available to us at any given moment, so we select what we will see, what we will dwell upon.

St. Paul had this advice: "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

p. 71

(Turn It to Gold by D. James Kennedy)

So pervasive has this humanistic way of thinking become that there are very few people who have not imbibed it with their mother's milk and accepted it, uncritically, as the obvious truth. I doubt that there are many people who have not set before their minds, either consciously or unconsciously, the goal of personal independence and self-sufficiency.

THE SHAKY PYRAMID

"Well," you may say, "what is so wrong with that?"

Just this. Christian theologians have always recognized that independence and self-sufficiency are qualities of God. What the Renaissance thinkers bequeathed to us was the notion that human beings are to become their own gods, their own deities.

How was a person's achievement of independence and self-sufficiency to be measured? Why, against the achievements of other independent and self-sufficient people, of course. And since there is only room for one person at the top of the pyramid, the whole world becomes embroiled in a never-ending struggle for place and position, a continual scramble for status and superiority. We begin to seek mastery not only over the impersonal forces of nature, but over each other as well.

The one at the top of the pyramid is never secure, and those at lower levels are never satisfied. Hobbes, the great logician of the Renaissance, said that everyone is a wolf to every other person. Indeed, the whole situation is nothing but the law of the jungle. What a recipe for fear and anxiety on a mass scale!
pp. 54-55

This means that our success is not to be measured by our competition with others in the realm of material acquisition. Of course, materialism is virtually the American way of life. We buy cars and houses and boats, and larger cars and houses and boats, not because we need them, but to demonstrate to others (or to ourselves) that we have arrived at a higher level of independence and self-sufficiency--that we have become more like gods.
p. 56

(Simple Faith by Charles R. Swindoll)

In his book, The Fall of Fortresses, author Elmer Bendiner tells the remarkable story of a B-17 Flying Fortress that flew a bombing mission over Germany toward the end of World War II. The bomber took several direct hits from Nazi antiaircraft guns; a few actually hit the fuel tank. Miraculously, the crippled aircraft made it back without exploding or running out of fuel.

After landing, eleven unexploded twenty millimeter shells were carefully removed from the bomber's fuel tank! Each was dismantled and examined. To everyone's amazement, all eleven were empty of explosive material. Why? How could it be? Why would the enemy fire empty shells? The mystery was solved when a small note was found inside one of the shells, handwritten in Czech. Translated, it read, "This is all we can do for you now."

A member of the Czech underground, working in a Nazi munitions factory, had deliberately omitted the explosives in at least eleven of the shells on his assembly line. Not knowing if any of his sabotage efforts would prove effective, he slipped the note into one of the shells, hoping that someone who benefited from his efforts one day might discover why.

That same person may have died wondering if the quiet work he was doing to subvert the enemy war machine would ever make any difference to the outcome of the war. Nevertheless, he pressed on, doing what little he could each day, letting the future take care of itself . . . and indeed it did. There was a Flying Fortress crew who had him to thank for their lives and their future.

"Each day has enough trouble of its own," said Jesus, urging us to do today only what must be done today. Those who learn to live like that have taken a giant step toward defeating the subtle enemy of simple faith.

pp. 185-86

SAY IT NOW!

I would rather have one little rose
From the garden of a friend,
Than to have the choicest flowers
When my stay on earth must end.

I would rather have a pleasant word
In kindness said to me,
Than flattery when my heart is still,
And life has ceased to be.

I would rather have a loving smile
From friends I know are true,
Than tears shed 'round my casket
When this world I've bid adieu.

Bring me all your flowers today,
Whether pink, or white, or red;
I'd rather have one blossom now,
Than a truckload when I'm dead.

Do you owe someone a word of thanks for appreciation? Don't wait until tomorrow! Say it now!

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

1 Samuel 23:16-18

And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. "Don't be afraid," he said, "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this." The two of them made a covenant before the Lord. Then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh.

Philippians 2:3, 4

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

In our study of the book of 1 Thessalonians we are making a SPIRITUAL CHECKUP. In doing so, we are asking several relevant questions:

QUESTION #1:

DID YOU MAKE THE RIGHT START? - by entering into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ by faith?

QUESTION #2:

ARE YOU A PHONY? - or are you honest and transparent?

QUESTION #3:

HAS SATAN HINDERED YOU? - it is his desire to hinder, to deceive and to tempt.

QUESTION #4:

ARE YOU DISCOURAGED BY THE PROBLEMS? - as believers we are destined for this. Suffering is a part of the divine curriculum to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ.

That brings us now to:

QUESTION #5:

ARE YOU AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO OTHERS IN YOUR WALK WITH THE LORD?

v. 6 But now Timothy, having come to us from you, also brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you are having a kindly remembrance of us always, eagerly desiring to see us as also we are eagerly desiring to see you,

"BUT [immediately forms a contrast], we were concerned for you and wondering if you might not have succumbed to the temptations of Satan and have become discouraged with all of your afflictions and problems to the point that you were overwhelmed."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

"But" contrasts Paul's previous anxiety with his present relief.

Horne says:

"But now" introduces a new section suggesting that this first epistle was written shortly after Timothy had made his report. Note the general characterization of his report: "good tidings." This is the only place in the New Testament where the term is used to refer to a message other than the saving grace of God in Christ. From this we learn how profoundly Paul was affected by Timothy's news.

"BUT NOW TIMOTHY, HAVING COME TO US FROM YOU, ALSO BROUGHT US GOOD NEWS OF YOUR FAITH AND LOVE."

"BUT NOW TIMOTHY" has come with a wonderful report.

Hendricksen says:

The expression "Timothy has come to us from you" is much more cordial and intimate than the formal "Timothy returned" would have been. It is as if Paul were writing, "Timothy was our representative to you. Now he has become your representative to us, revealing to us your very heart."

p. 87

Ryrie says:

When Timothy returned from Thessalonica he brought with him a good report of the steadfastness of the believers. This meant so much to Paul that he called it good news, literally, "a gospel." It concerned the Thessalonians' faith (toward God) and love (toward man). Particularly, their love for Paul himself had not waned in his absence. That remembrance of him was good, that is, kindly or well-disposed; it was continuous--always; and it was reciprocal. Again we see Paul's tender love and concern for his converts.

pp. 46-47

The "GOOD NEWS" that Paul heard from Timothy was so welcome and so good that it reminded Paul of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. He uses the same word here for GOSPEL to describe Timothy's report.

Timothy brings "GOOD NEWS" in 3 AREAS:

1. First of all, their faith which is standing strong,
2. then of their love for the ministers,
3. and they're having many fond memories of the time that they were with them.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Their faith was bearing fruit in love. They were strong in faith toward God and love toward the apostles.

The words "YOUR FAITH" occur 3 TIMES here in these verses:

1. in verse 6,
2. in verse 7,
3. in verse 10.

(Healing and Holiness by C. Samuel Storms)

When the Bible speaks of faith, it means an attitude of humility and self-renunciation. Faith says, "Lord, I am nothing and you are everything; I entrust myself to your care, regardless of the outcome." Faith isn't a weapon by which we demand things from God; it is the way in which we deny ourselves. Faith says, "Lord, you don't owe me anything; I, on the other hand, owe you everything." When we exercise our faith in God we submissively and sincerely acquiesce to God and his will, whatever that will may be. Faith does not dictate what God's will is. The spiritual posture of the child of God is one of quiet expectancy, ready to receive from God whatever he in his infinite wisdom and mercy deigns to give, or for that matter, to withhold.

p. 31

Dave Hunt has suggested that this notion of faith has more in common with sorcery than it does with the Bible. He describes it as follows:

Many sincere Christians have been influenced by the sorcerer's gospel to imagine that faith has some power in itself. Once again, to them faith is not placed in God but is a power directed at God, which forces Him to do for us what we have believed He will do. At the very least this makes God subject to alleged "laws" that we can activate by "faith"; at worst it eliminates God from the process altogether, putting everything in our own hands and thus turning us into gods who can make anything happen by our "power of belief." If everything works according to such "law," then God is no longer sovereign and there is no place for grace. All one needs to do is to exercise this "power of belief." That is the basic idea behind sorcery.

When we pray to God for healing, it is by faith in the power of God, not by faith in the power of faith. What we believe is not that God will do what suits our understanding of his will, but that he will do what is compatible with his character as revealed in Scripture. He is loving and therefore always has our ultimate spiritual best in mind, which may or may not involve our physical healing.
p. 32

"BUT NOW TIMOTHY, HAVING COME TO US FROM YOU, ALSO BROUGHT US GOOD NEWS OF YOUR FAITH AND LOVE."

John 13:34, 35

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

They could well have said, "Good riddance to bad rubbish," but instead they have a real love for each other.

We see this in the last part of verse 6:

"AND THAT YOU ARE HAVING A KINDLY REMEMBRANCE OF US ALWAYS, EAGERLY DESIRING TO SEE US AS ALSO WE ARE EAGERLY DESIRING TO SEE YOU."

1 Corinthians 12:26, 27

And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

2 John 12

Having many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that your joy may be made full.

The love of the Thessalonians was just as great as the love of the apostle was for them, for they were as "EAGERLY DESIRING" to see Paul as he was wanting to see them.

Everything seemed so dark and gloomy, and now, how invigorating is the report which comes. What an encouragement it must have been!

Stedman says:

To Paul's great relief, his work had not been in vain. It stood solid and secure. The faith of his followers was intact. Their love was evident, and, best of all, their trust in God was secure. They held cherished memories of the apostle and longed to see him. He was filled with thankfulness and joy at this "good news"--always the effect upon a father's heart when he receives good reports of his children in the faith. John, too, wrote of this in his third letter, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."

Barnes points out:

Probably they showed their remembrance of Paul by obeying his precepts and by cherishing an affectionate regard for him, notwithstanding all the efforts which had been made to alienate their affections from him.

Lange points out:

Who is like Paul who regards the salvation of his neighbors as his own--Feeling toward all as the body toward its members? What love to the sheep that good news of them could so vivify him? So does the shepherd's love identify him with the flock. This is the difference between the shepherd and the hireling. Jacob revives on hearing that Joseph is alive. Still more blessed is his joy who has a faculty for hearing good in the highest sense of another.

Genesis 45:27

But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived.

v. 7 because of this we were encouraged, brethren, about you in all our calamities and afflictions through your faith;

"WE WERE ENCOURAGED" to keep hanging in there by this good report.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This was sweet relief to anxious missionaries. They were brethren bound together by life in Christ and the bonds of love for one another.

Paul now tells of the results of the "GOOD NEWS." He says:

"WE WERE ENCOURAGED"

He calls them "BRETHREN" once again.

In the midst of their calamities and afflictions, the strong faith of these new converts had really been a help and encouragement to them at this time.

It is not difficult to imagine the opposite feelings on the part of the apostle and his team when they receive the report of the problems in the Galatian churches.

Barnes says:

The sense here is that their steadfastness was a great source of comfort to him in his trials. It was an instance where the holy lives and the fidelity of a people did much, as will always be the case, to lighten the burdens and cheer the heart of a minister of the gospel.

Ryrie observes:

Their faith, love, and longing comforted the apostle. The word comfort means more than soothing, it means "strengthening," and it came to Paul at a time when he needed it, for he was in the midst of the pressure of affliction and distress. Both words imply trouble from without--"affliction" meaning "choking, pressing care," and "distress" signifying the crushing kind of trouble. It is easy to see why he speaks of his situation in such terms, for he was at Athens alone and had just suffered four successive experiences of apparent defeat since he set foot in Europe.

p. 47

Lenski says:

Paul does not often give us a glimpse into what oppressed him in his labors. We have such a glimpse here. When one sits in a comfortable study and reads this short phrase, he may wonder at the fervor with which the apostle writes about the comfort the Thessalonian firmness and loyalty afforded him. If one could sit for awhile in Aquilla's shop where these lines were written, he would rather wonder how Paul could write with so much restraint and would catch something of the mighty spirit throbbing in Paul's great heart.

In studying this 7th verse, it would be good to focus on the PREPOSITIONS:

"BECAUSE OF THIS WE WERE ENCOURAGED, BRETHREN:

1. "ABOUT you"
2. "IN all our calamities and afflictions"
3. "THROUGH your faith."

I am sure Paul had some real second thoughts about whether or not he did in fact hear in a vision a man from Macedonia saying, "Come over and help us":

1. Their first point of ministry in Philippi ended with them being publicly beaten and thrown into prison.
2. They went down the road to Thessalonica and stirred up such a furor that several were arrested.
3. They went on to Berea and the Jews who stirred up all the trouble followed them down there.
4. And so Paul went on to Athens, literally overcome by this city that is given over to idolatry. He argued and discoursed with the philosophers there but there never was a church formed in Athens.
5. And now it is on to Corinth and this looks like it is going to be the same song, 5th verse, a little bit louder and a whole lot worse.

Acts 18:6-11

And when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean. From now on I shall go to the Gentiles." And he departed from there and went to the house of a certain man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue. And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city." And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

2 Corinthians 7:5

For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted in every side: conflicts without, fears within.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28

Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches.

This is our KEY VERSE for this particular study.

ARE YOU AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO OTHERS IN YOUR WALK WITH THE LORD?

So many times in our thinking when we speak of "ENCOURAGEMENT" we think of:

our LIPS and not our LIVES.

our CREED rather than our CONDUCT,

our WORDS rather than our WORKS.

We do the same thing when we think of our WITNESS:

It is more what we say than what we do.

Really, if the truth were known, it is what you are that gets across a greater message than what you say.

The wonderful thing about it all is you can be an encouragement both by your LIFE and your LIP.

How can you be an ENCOURAGEMENT?

1.becoming a SERVANT and giving yourself unselfishly to others

2.SACRIFICES that you are willing to make for the sake of the comfort of others

Philippians 2:17

But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.

3.by being STEADFAST

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

4.by your STUDY

2 Timothy 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

5.SHARE your struggles

2 Corinthians 1:8

For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;

When we are consistent in our walk with the Lord and pursuing the disciplines of Bible study, prayer, scripture memory, sharing our faith and living a Christlike life in faithfulness and perseverance, we encourage others to continue on in their walk with the Lord.

Hebrews 12:3

For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.

(Bringing Out the Best in People by Alan Loy McGinnis)

Scudder N. Parker once said, "People have a way of becoming what you encourage them to be--not what you nag them to be." It is a very basic human need--the need to have someone encourage us and spur us on to higher things.

p. 89

To appreciate the power of the motivator one need only picture the families of Britain as they gathered in their living rooms and listened to Churchill thunder out from their radios:

The Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us on this island or lose the war. . . .

Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say: "This was their finest hour."

pp. 17-18

(I Want to Grow Hair, I Want to Grow Up, I Want to Go to Boise by Erma Bombeck)

One of the most unusual stories I heard about friendship involved a cancer patient in Milwaukee who returned home after a bout with cancer and chemotherapy. He was apprehensive about how his friends and neighbors would handle his baldness.

He arrived home to a houseful of fifty relatives and friends who had shaved their heads so he wouldn't feel so alone.

Another incident of friendship involved a young camp counselor who found herself in the woods with two very small, very homesick boys who missed their mothers and were afraid of night noises. She suggested they both crawl in her sleeping bag where she hugged them and alleviated their fears. Toward morning the bag started to feel warm and very wet. Her reaction? "Isn't this great! They feel so at ease and safe with me that one of the boys didn't even bother to get up and go potty."

pp. 81-82

(Fire in Your Heart by Sammy Tippit)

One evening I was in West Berlin with a group of friends, preparing to go the next day to the national travel agency in East Berlin to get a visa to travel in East Germany. My friends and I were praying when the Lord spoke one word to my heart: Availability. I knew that God wanted my availability more than He wanted my ability to preach and to serve.

I began to discover what God can do with us when we are simply making our lives available to the Holy Spirit to manifest the life of Jesus in and through us. Jesus is the joy giver. He is the greatest soul winner ever. We need simply to let Jesus be Jesus in us.

p. 44

(Simple Faith by Charles R. Swindoll)

If I read verse 33 correctly, all the stuff you once worried about and fretted over will fall into place. As you care more and more about giving Him first priority, you will care less and less about the things that once "strangled" you emotionally and spiritually, thereby stealing your peace. Furthermore, who's to say that things are as bad as they may seem? I usually discover later on that good things were happening even when it seemed nothing was working out right.

That statement is illustrated perfectly in a story I heard recently that made me smile. It's about a farmer who wanted to breed his three sows. He had a friend who owned a few boars, so they made arrangements to get the sows and boars together. One afternoon the farmer loaded the sows into his pickup truck and hauled them over to the nearby farm. While the pigs were getting very well acquainted, he asked his friend how he would know if his pigs were pregnant.

"That's easy," said the man. "They wallow in the grass when it takes, but they wallow in the mud when it doesn't."

Early the next morning the farmer awoke, glanced out the window of his bedroom, and noticed all three sows wallowing in the mud. So he loaded them back into his pickup and took them for a second round with the boars. Next morning . . . same result. All three were wallowing in the mud. Disappointed but determined, the farmer once again took them back, hoping the third time would be the charm.

The following morning the farmer had to be away from the farm on business, so he anxiously phoned his wife, "Are they wallowing in the grass or the mud, dear?"

"Neither," she replied. "But two of them are in the back of your pickup and the

third one's up front honking the horn!"

Maybe the farmer was worried about not getting his way, but the pigs were having the time of their lives. Things are seldom as bad as we think.
pp. 184-85

YOU CAN STAND!

An English naval officer told how he was saved from dishonor in his first experience in battle. He was a young midshipman, just 14 years of age. The enemy's volley of fire was so heavy that he was seized with fright, and he almost fainted. His superior officer, seeing his plight, immediately rushed to his side, and putting his hand on the midshipman's, said, "Courage, my boy! You will recover in a minute or two. I was like you when I went into my first battle." The young man said later, "It was as if an angel had come to my side and put new strength in me."

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

"KEEP ON SWIMMING!"

The following bit of humorous verse conveys a lesson about the reward of perseverance.

Two frogs fell into a deep cream bowl;
The one was wise, and a cheery soul.
The other one took a gloomy view
And bade his friend a sad adieu.
Said the other frog with a merry grin,
"I can't get out, but I won't give in;
I'll swim around till my strength is spent,
Then I will die the more content."
And as he swam, though ever it seemed,
His struggling began to churn the cream
Until on top of pure butter he stopped,
And out of the bowl he quickly hopped.
The moral, you ask? Oh, it's easily found!
If you can't get out, keep swimming around.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

Hebrews 10:23-25

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.

v. 8 because now we are living, if you are standing firm in the Lord.

Paul's life is so intertwined with these new converts he has characterized his relationship to them as:

"a nursing mother,"

or "a father."

He was made an "orphan" when he parted from them,

and because of this his emotions are also involved.

Paul has been on a roll when it comes to stirring up calamities and afflictions in response to his preaching and teaching ministry. It lifts his spirits and gives him great encouragement of heart when he realizes he is not alone. These Thessalonian believers have responded and are standing firm in the Lord.

Paul says that they were not only encouraged by the report that they had heard, but now he says:

"WE ARE LIVING, IF YOU ARE STANDING FIRM IN THE LORD."

Ephesians 6:10, 11

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

1 Corinthians 16:13

Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

Because of the fact that Paul was a "nursing mother" and a "father" and had great love for the Thessalonians, he could not help but be affected by the way they acted. These, after all, were to be:

his HOPE,

his JOY,

and his CROWN OF GLORYING at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lenski points out:

Before the good news came there was a deadness. We might picture it as a leaden weight. The heart seemed to have no life.

What Paul is saying here is, "We really enjoy life when we know that you are standing firm in the Lord."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Nothing filled the apostles with joy like news that their converts were standing firm in the Lord.

2 Thessalonians 2:15

So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

It strengthens you to withstand the storms of life when you realize that in the midst of those storms you are not alone.

Joseph Parker inverts the 8th verse:

For now if you do not stand fast in the Lord, we shall die. If we hear that your faith is given away, our life will give way too.

Because we are members of the body of Christ, what happens to one part of the body affects the rest of the body, and this is essentially what he is telling us here.

Lenski says:

Now, in consequence of the good news, there is once more life with all that this means to the writers in their arduous work. The implication is that, if the faith of the Thessalonians had failed, if the church had broken up, it would have been a deathblow to the writers.
p. 291

Lange says:

The steadfastness of others strengthens ourselves. In God's gift and work we find life.

Ryrie says:

Surely he was in afflictions and distress, and this news meant strength and life to him. It brought to him a revival of energy which was not a passing thing but a continual source of inspiration. Note the present tense of the verb "we live" in verse 8.

Barnes puts it this way:

This is equivalent to saying, "My life and comfort depend on your stability in the faith and your correct Christian walk."

Hendricksen says:

This is the utterance of profound and overpowering emotion. Paul's heart is on fire for the Lord, and at the same time is filled with tender affection for the believers at Thessalonica who have made possible Timothy's favorable report. The thoughts crowd each other, so that verse 8 is actually a combination of 2 IDEAS:

1. "we live if you stand fast in the Lord,"
2. and "now we live seeing that you are standing fast in the Lord."

Paul is saying, therefore, that whenever the Thessalonians stand fast in the Lord, rooted in him, trusting in him, loving him, hoping in him, those who brought them the gospel really live, being filled with joy and gratitude; and that such a climax of blessedness has now arrived.

Hogg and Vine, in commenting on the phrase "BECAUSE NOW WE ARE LIVING," say:

This means to enjoy life. It is a vivid rhetorical description of the contrast between his state of apprehension when he was in ignorance of their welfare, and the comfort and ease of mind produced by Timothy's good news.

Walvoord says:

More expressively translated it states: "Now we are really living if you are standing fast in the faith!" In other words, his whole spiritual joy and happiness is linked with the experience of victory in this Thessalonian church. Consider for a moment the background of this statement. How interested and how concerned would we be if we had been in Paul's position? Paul had been there just a few weeks and had led these few souls to Christ. But now, it seems, that his very life depended upon the success and the prosperity of this church. His whole heart was wrapped up in the spiritual prosperity of these his children in the faith. What a challenge this should be to us that we may have that same sensitivity of the soul, that we may have that passion, that love which was in the heart of Christ himself for the sheep, for the people of God. In the Bible, men of God, men who really served God, had a heart for the needs of souls.

J. Vernon McGee, in speaking on the phrase "WE ARE LIVING," says:

This means that as believers we enjoy life. "If" should really be translated "since." "Since you are standing fast in the Lord." Even in trouble you can enjoy it. That's not always easy to do, my friend. This is what Peter writes: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed you may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12, 13).

You cannot lose as a Christian. Even if you have trouble, it is going to work out for your good. You can always be sure of that.

(The Power of Optimism by Alan Loy McGinnis)

They respond to children with enthusiasm, they are profoundly connected to their families, they respond to people in trouble, they touch a lot and make love a lot. This ability to admire and enjoy others is a powerful force that helps account for their optimism.

So characteristic number nine is:

Optimists build lots of love into their lives.

It is not original with me to observe that love is found not so much by those who are good-looking or witty or who have charismatic personalities, but rather by those who devote attention to love, who value it when they find it, and who nurture its growth in long-standing relationships. "Love never dies of a natural death," Anais Nin once wrote. "It dies because we don't know how to replenish its source; it dies of blindness and errors and betrayals. It dies of illness and wounds; it dies of weariness, of witherings, of tarnishings." And the author Robert Anderson says of love in marriage: "In every marriage more than a week old, there are grounds for divorce. The trick is to find, and continue to find, grounds for marriage."

p. 113

(Men & Women: Enjoying the Difference by Larry Crabb)

It is, of course, entirely right to ask God for such things as comfort and guidance, but only with an attitude of humble, joyful appreciation for his redeeming grace. And this attitude can only grow when we take a long, honest look at ourselves and recognize the self-centeredness beneath both our best efforts to obey and our fondest desire for developing our potential to the fullest.

p. 54

(Why Christians Sin: Avoiding the Dangers of an Uncommitted Life by J. Kirk Johnston)

Anne Orland in her book, Children Are Wet Cement, told of shopping with her son Nels for a shirt and finding one they liked that said "Shrink Resistant" on the collar. Nels asked the young clerk what that term meant, and the clerk said, "I think it means that the shirt does shrink, but it doesn't want to."

That is how true Christians are much of the time, but when they get discouraged about a lack of results in their Christian lives, they become vulnerable to temptation from either the world, the flesh, or the Devil.

The world, the flesh, and the Devil do try to influence, seduce, and tempt Christians to sin. It is only when Christians are discouraged with fellow believers or the Christian life that they are willing to listen and give in.

p. 36

(Yes, Lord, I Have Sinned, But I Have Several Excellent Excuses by James W. Moore)

In Fiddler on the Roof, there is a poignant scene in which Tevye keeps asking his wife, "Do you love me?" She keeps pushing the question aside, talking of how she has lived with him for so many years.

But Tevye persists, "Do you love me?" She says that she has worked side by side with him and kept the house. Again Tevye asks, "But do you love me?" And again she sidesteps it by reminding him that she has borne his children and raised them.

But Tevye is not satisfied. He sees his daughters growing up, courting, marrying, and now suddenly the feeling of love runs strongly within him. He wants to hear it, he needs to hear it. He wants her to say it out loud. He needs reassurance; he wants to know that it is still the same with them. He needs to hear the words "I love you."

It's presumptuous of us to assume that people know we love them and appreciate them, if we never tell them. Husband and wife live together day in and day out; surely they love each other, but has it been said lately? Father and son, mother and daughter, sister and brother, live together under the same roof. Surely they love one another, but how long has it been since it was said?

Christian friends live near each other, serve in the same church, share the same pew, sing in the same choir, study in the same Sunday school class. Surely they love each other, but has it been said, has it been expressed, has it been verbalized?
p. 83

Psalm 112:7, 8

He will have no fear of bad news;
his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.
His heart is secure, he will have no fear;
in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.

v. 9 For what thanks are we able to return to God concerning you for all the joy with which we are rejoicing on account of you in the presence of our God,

Paul in chapter 1 is giving thanks to God:

for their "work of faith,"
their "labor of love,"
and their "perseverance of hope."

In chapter 2 he is giving thanks to God:

for their reception of the word.

Here in chapter 3 he is giving thanks to God:

for their steadfast faith and the joy which is theirs because of it.

"FOR WHAT THANKS ARE WE ABLE TO RETURN TO GOD CONCERNING YOU."

Paul recognizes that the joy and the thrill that he is experiencing at this moment over the good report from

Timothy is a direct result of God being at work.

1 Samuel 12:23, 24

As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you.

Isaiah 26:12

Lord, you establish peace for us;
all that we have accomplished you have done for us.

Even in the midst of afflictions and calamities there can be an overwhelming joy flooding from our hearts produced by the Spirit of God within us.

It is God's work that has gone on in the lives of the Thessalonians, and, as a result, brought joy to His servants who have been made aware of this.

Philippians 2:13

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

1 Corinthians 15:57

but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life
by Barbara Johnson)

A SMILE IS A WRINKLE
THAT SHOULDN'T BE REMOVED.

* * * * *

A SMILE IS THE LIGHTING SYSTEM OF THE FACE
AND THE HEATING SYSTEM OF THE HEART.

* * * * *

A SMILE IS A LIGHT IN THE WINDOW OF YOUR FACE
THAT SHOWS THAT YOUR HEART IS AT HOME.

p. 22

To All Parents

"I'll lend you for a little time a child of Mine," He said,
"For you to love the while she lives and mourn for when she's dead.
It may be six or seven years, or twenty-two or three,
But will you, till I call her back, take care of her for Me?
She'll bring her charms to gladden you, and shall her stay be brief
You'll have her lovely memories as solace for your grief.

"I cannot promise she will stay, since all from earth return,
But there are lessons taught down there I want this child to learn.
I've looked the wide world over in my search for teachers true
And from the throngs that crowd life's lanes I have selected you.
Now will you give her all your love, nor think the labor vain,
Nor hate Me when I come to call to take her back again?"

I fancied that I heard them say: "Dear Lord, Thy will be done!
For all the joy Thy child shall bring, the risk of grief we'll run.
We'll shelter her with tenderness, we'll love her while we may,
And for the happiness we've known forever grateful stay;
But shall the angels call for her much sooner than we've planned,
We'll brave the bitter grief that comes and try to understand."

Edgar A. Guest

pp. 45-46

William Barclay says:

There is joy. Paul is glad that his converts were standing fast. He had the joy of one who had created something which would stand the tests and temptations of time. There is no joy like that of the parent who can point to a child who has done well.

Nehemiah 8:10

Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Ellicott, in his commentary, observes:

We live I say for what sufficient thanks can be rendered to God for our plenitude of joy on your account.

Further definition of the pure nature of the joy: It was such as could bear the scrutiny of the eye of God.

Barnes says of this verse:

That is, what expression of thanksgiving can we render to God that shall be an equivalent for the joy which your holy walk has furnished, or which will suitably express our gratitude for it.
p. 36

Lenski points out:

Paul views everything as coming from God. His first reaction is, "Thank God!" But how can any thanks be commensurate with the gift of joy he and his assistants have received.

J. Vernon McGee says:

Joy is associated with life, and sorrow is associated with death. However, sorrow increases the capacity of the heart for joy. Paul wants the Thessalonians to know how to rejoice. Being a Christian is a wonderful thing.

Paul is singing that great old hymn by Fanny J. Crosby:

"To God Be the Glory"

To God be the glory, great things He hath done.
 So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
 Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
 And opened the lifegate that all may go in.

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
 To every believer the promise of God.
 The vilest offender who truly believes
 That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,
 And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son.
 But purer and higher and greater will be
 Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see!

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
 Let the earth hear His voice.
 Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
 Let the people rejoice.
 O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
 And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.

Verse 10 will be a continuation of verse 9 and complete the question that Paul is raising.

The joy which they are experiencing now is the joy of answered prayer for the Thessalonians.

v.10 night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith?

Back in chapter 2:9 Paul tells us that he worked "night and day in order that he might not put a burden on any of the Thessalonians while he proclaimed to them the gospel of God."

And now here in chapter 3:10 we see that also "NIGHT AND DAY" he spent time "PRAYING AS EARNESTLY AS POSSIBLE."

There are 2 THINGS that he is praying for:

- 1.He is praying that he might "SEE [THEIR] FACE,"
- 2.He might "COMPLETE WHAT IS LACKING IN [THEIR] FAITH."

This is the KEY PHRASE to the entire epistle.

If we are having spiritual problems, it is probably due to the need for some adjustments in the relationship. We might have the need to grow in our understanding of the relationship in specific areas, or perhaps, it is some blind spot that is keeping us from the blessing that the Lord would like to shower upon us.

In making a SPIRITUAL CHECKUP we are raising questions in these studies in order that we might find these areas of deficiency and be able to deal with them so we might be effective, vibrant Christians, similar to what we read about with regard to the Thessalonians in chapter 1.

Actually, Paul spends the rest of this epistle dealing with some of these areas of need.

He had to hurry out of Thessalonica prematurely because of the persecution that was taking place, and he was not able to go back to Thessalonica because Satan had hindered him. But God the Father has a greater plan. That greater plan is to write a letter that will not only affect the Thessalonians but will touch the church universal for the rest of its history.

"NIGHT AND DAY PRAYING AS EARNESTLY AS POSSIBLE THAT WE MIGHT SEE YOUR FACE."

From Paul's perspective it was necessary for him to be on location to accomplish this task in the lives of the Thessalonian believers.

Isaiah 55:8, 9

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"
declares the Lord.
"As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

One thing we must always remember, and that is: God is sovereign. He has the big picture, and He certainly knows how to deploy His servants as they allow Him to work in their lives.

Proverbs 3:5, 6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.

Ephesians 3:20

Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think,
according to the power that works within us,

"NIGHT AND DAY PRAYING AS EARNESTLY AS POSSIBLE THAT WE MIGHT":

1. "SEE YOUR FACE,"
2. "COMPLETE WHAT IS LACKING IN YOUR FAITH?"

There are 2 WORDS that we want to focus on in this last phrase:

1. "COMPLETE"
2. "LACKING"

The word Paul uses here in verse 10 for "COMPLETE" is very interesting:

It was used of "reconciling factions."

MEDICALLY, it was used for "setting of bones."

In the MILITARY SENSE, it was used for the "supply of provisions."

For those who were in the FISHING INDUSTRY, it was used for the "mending of nets."

Paul is most likely using the MILITARY SENSE here of "supplying the provisions."

There are a number of things that needed attention. As we mentioned before, Paul touches on some of these things in the last 2 chapters of this letter.

S. Lewis Johnson says:

Paul wants to come and fit them for their conflict and journey. He is not so much concerned with correcting them as he is with outfitting them properly to be effective Christians.

Taking an overview of the word "COMPLETE" we would see that it is used as:

1. "reconciling factions"
2. "fitting together"
3. "setting bones"
4. "military preparations and outfitting"
5. "mending nets"

It is also used in Galatians 6:1 where we are dealing with the subject of RESTORATION:

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Paul's purpose in coming to Thessalonica is: He wants to come and outfit them for their conflict and their journey in the Christian life.

He is not so concerned about correcting them as he is outfitting them.

There were a lot of loose ends that had been left unattended by their quick departure from Thessalonica.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary observes:

The Thessalonians needed more instruction and growth. They were like tender, young plants. Their tender roots held but they still needed to grow and mature. These deficiencies are going to be treated in chapters 4 and 5.

Ephesians 4:12

for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

Hebrews 13:20, 21

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 5:10

And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

Lenski observes:

The work that had been done in Thessalonica was incomplete. It is a wonder that so much thorough work had been accomplished with such permanent results. The last man to be satisfied to leave any lack was Paul, and Silas and Timothy were like him in this respect. They burned with desire to make everything "complete" (from which we have "artisan"), like good, skilled artisans to finish their tasks shipshape.

Barnes points out:

The meaning here is that whatever was deficient in their views of religious doctrine, the apostle desired to supply. It is to be remembered that he was with them a comparatively short time before he was compelled to depart to Berea and it is reasonable to suppose that there were many subjects on which he would be glad to have an opportunity to instruct them more fully.

Walvoord says:

It is a tragedy that in our hearts there can be such coldness and such a lack of response to spiritual need. What a challenge Paul is! In his own spiritual experience his heart is overflowing in praise to God for hearing his prayer. It was not just a few minutes or a few sentences of prayer, but he tells us here he spent hours, day and night, praying to God for the continuance and faithfulness of this little band of Christians. If we had prayer like that and if our hearts were stirred like Paul's, we would have a spiritual revival such as this nation has never seen. What we need is revival first of all in the hearts of the people of God.

p. 42

Hogg and Vine conjecture:

The principle things lacking, apparently, concerned their conduct, their hope, and their mutual relationships in the church, for instruction on these points occupies the remainder of the Epistle.

p. 102

Hendricksen says:

Note how Paul, though working at a trade by night and by day, still finds time to pray--and this also by night and by day.

The verb "to supply" has the primary meaning:

"to knit together,"

"to unite."

The idea of "knitting together" by an easy transition has become:

"to make whole,"

"to round out,"

or, as here:

"TO [SUPPLY] WHAT IS STILL LACKING."

Deficiencies had to be supplied or made up.

Ryrie says:

But, though Paul is grateful, he is not satisfied, for he continually made supplication (which is a stronger word than the simple to pray) in order that he might see them again and have a part in their spiritual growth.
p. 48

The Thessalonians needed this ministry in order to "[SUPPLY] THAT WHICH WAS LACKING IN THEIR FAITH." Paul did not consider that the great commission had been fulfilled when people were saved. He realized that there also had to be the work of building them up so that their faith would not be defective in any way. The great pastor's heart shows itself again in this verse.

Horne points out:

The apostle decided to revisit these saints, not simply in order to pass the time of day in trivial conversation, but in order to further assist them in their growth toward spiritual maturity. There were certain lacks or spiritual deficiencies in their faith which needed attention. The apostle as a true leader under God was aware not only of their successes but also of their failures, and it was his desire to remedy these.

Stedman points out:

He did not get down beside the bed at night and glibly say, "Bless my friends in Thessalonica." Many people pray like the man who said, "Bless me and my wife, our son John and his wife, us four and no more." But Paul considered seriously what these people were going through. He set the problem before God and reminded him of his promises. He took time to meditate on their needs. Paul prayed frequently, night and day, morning and evening; while he was working on his tents; while he was walking the streets of the city. His prayers float out of a heart of concern and love. The believers of Thessalonica were seldom out of his thoughts, and whenever he thought of them, he prayed.

Lange summarizes by saying:

The more prosperous the beginning, with so much the greater zeal prosecute the work. Along with joy over a good condition, 2 things are always needed to save us from falling into conceit, ostentation, presumption, self-sufficiency and vainglorying in men: that the honor be given to God, and that we do not lose the recollection of actual deficiencies. Even those, who are far ahead of others, are still far from having reached the goal. No standing still; faith would be, not merely once established, but ever newly cherished and promoted.
p. 59

Philippians 3:12-14

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

(Don't Just Stand There, Pray Something: The Incredible Power of Intercessory Prayer by Ronald Dunn)

The pain of childbirth is two fold: There is the pain of bringing the child into the world, and there is the pain of bringing the child up in the world. And the latter is greater. The physical pain of bearing a child is great but usually lasts only a few hours. The pain of rearing that same child lasts a lifetime and never subsides. Lewis Smedes says, "When you conceive a child, you covenant to suffer."
p. 98

"NIGHT AND DAY PRAYING AS EARNESTLY AS POSSIBLE THAT WE MIGHT SEE YOUR FACE AND COMPLETE WHAT IS LACKING IN YOUR FAITH."

The question we ask at this point is:

"WHAT IS LACKING IN YOUR FAITH?"

Colossians 1:24

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

What is "LACKING" with the Thessalonians involves:

1. ROOTING
2. FRUITING.

1.ROOTING:Colossians 2:6, 7

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

Ephesians 3:16-19

that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man
 who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
 or stand in the way of sinners
 or sit in the seat of mockers.
 But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
 and on his law he meditates day and night.
 He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
 which yields its fruit in season
 and whose leaf does not wither.
 Whatever he does prospers.

First there is the ROOTING,

and then there is the FRUITING.

2. FRUITING:

Hebrews 12:11

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Galatians 5:22, 23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

John 15:4, 5

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Jeremiah 17:7, 8

But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,
 whose confidence is in him.
 He will be like a tree planted by the water
 that sends out its roots by the stream.
 It does not fear when heat comes;
 Its leaves are always green.
 It has no worries in a year of drought
 and never fails to bear fruit.

GOOD ROOTING TAKES TIME

Warren Wiersbe tells of a popular entertainer who immediately after his conversion formed his own evangelistic organization and achieved quick "success." But he wasn't spiritually equipped to carry the burdens of his task. He neglected his family and gradually lost his testimony. Today he is totally ineffective in his witness. His pastor said of him, "His branches went out farther than his roots; and when this happens, you eventually topple."

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

(Charismatic Chaos by John F. MacArthur, Jr.)

Aesop told of a dog who was crossing a bridge with a bone in his mouth. He looked over the edge and saw his reflection in the clear stream. The bone in the water looked better than the one in his mouth; so he gave up the reality for the reflection. My great fear is that there are many Christians who, with great zeal but lacking knowledge, are doing the very same thing.
pp. 262-63

(Why Christians Sin: Avoiding the Dangers of an Uncommitted Life by J. Kirk Johnston)

These folks need assurance from the very beginning.

During WW II, the Germans forced many twelve- and thirteen-year-old boys into the Junior Gestapo. These boys were treated very severely and given inhumane jobs to perform. When the war ended these boys wandered without food, shelter, or parents. As part of an aid program to post-war Germany, many of these boys were placed in tent cities. Here doctors and psychologists worked with these boys in an attempt to restore their mental and physical health.

One doctor had an idea and after feeding the boys a large meal, he put them to bed with a piece of bread in their hands which they were not allowed to eat. The boys slept soundly because after so many years of hunger they had a piece of bread in their hands and assurance of food in the morning.

Just as assurance of food in the morning was crucial to the physical well-being of those boys, assurance of salvation is very important to the spiritual well-being and growth of most Christians, and especially for all new Christians.
pp. 80-81

"NIGHT AND DAY PRAYING AS EARNESTLY AS POSSIBLE THAT WE MIGHT SEE YOUR FACE AND COMPLETE WHAT IS LACKING IN YOUR FAITH."

Barclay makes this interesting observation:

It is told that once a servant-girl became a member of a Church. She was asked what Christian work she did. She said that she had not the opportunity to do much because her duties were so constant, but, she said, "When I go to bed I take the morning newspaper to my bed with me; and I read the notices of the births and I pray for all the little babies; and I read the notices of marriage and I pray that those who have been married may be happy; and I read the announcements of death and I pray that the sorrowing may be comforted." No man can ever tell what tides of grace flowed from that attic bedroom.

p. 228

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Paul's deep love and involvement in the lives of his young converts is a real inspiration.

LESSON #2: Our faithful walk with the Lord can be a real encouragement to other believers.

LESSON #3: We can use our life and our lips to be an encouragement to our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

LESSON #4: Calamities and afflictions are part and parcel of the Christian experience.

LESSON #5: Paul was so intimately involved with his young converts in Thessalonica that their "standing firm" affected his joy in living.

LESSON #6: Joy is the result in the lives of leaders who have seen God bear fruit through them.

LESSON #7: Paul prays earnestly when he prays.

LESSON #8: Many times our thoughts are not His thoughts and our ways are not His ways.

LESSON #9: Paul's desire to return to Thessalonica was to outfit them for their conflict in the rest of the journey.

LESSON #10: It was rooting and fruiting that was lacking in their faith.

Walvoord raises the question:

What does Paul say to us in this passage? He is saying that if we are really committed to the Lord--if we are really letting the Holy Spirit rule supremely in our hearts and lives--that there should be the evidence of the love of the Spirit and the compassion of the Spirit toward our fellow Christians as well as toward those who do not know the Lord Jesus. The challenge of this passage is to let the Spirit of God transform our hearts and make them tender, that we may not follow the pattern of this careless and indifferent generation which is unmindful of the spiritual needs of those about us.

Are we really concerned about souls? Do we pray for the salvation of that neighbor in the next apartment or in the next house? Are we concerned in our churches about the backsliders and the indifferent who are not serving the Lord as they should? Paul tells us that the secret is to pray. If we have a real burden of prayer we will have Paul's experience of the joy of answered prayer. Certainly these are important and most practical verses.
pp. 42-43

(Why Christians Sin: Avoiding the Dangers of an Uncommitted Life by J. Kirk Johnston)

At a college summer retreat out in the mountains of California soon after World War II, among those present were a young man who had flown in Hitler's Luftwaffe, another who had flown with the Japanese, and a third who had been in the US Air Force and had bombed the cities of Germany. None of these knew that the others were present at the retreat, nor did they know each other, and none was a Christian. At the final meeting, any person who chose to accept Christ and give his life to serve the Savior tossed a stick of wood on a bonfire, symbolizing that his life would now be given to burn for Christ. First, the German stood to accept Christ, walked to the fire and threw a stick in; a few moments later, the Japanese; then following him, the American pilot, all receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. Then the three exwar pilots, with their arms around each other and tears streaming down their faces, sang with all those present, "Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love."
p. 155

(Molder of Dreams by Guy Rice Doud)

"I looked at the line of kids waiting to sit on my lap. I grabbed the first little girl in line and set her on my right knee. She had her list in her hand. It even included her name and address and telephone number. I guess if I couldn't bring what she wanted I was supposed to call."

I explained some of the different requests Santa had heard. The students listened well, no doubt remembering a time not all that long ago when they, too, were children on Santa's lap.

"A little girl in a white fur coat jumped up on my lap. Many children were hesitant about sitting on my lap. Many could never get out a word, but this little princess started right in: 'I want an Easy Bake oven. A Barbie and Ken doll set. Clothes for them. Dishes. A new bike like my sister's. A mini-snowmobile . . .' She went on and on. 'I told her I would see what I could do."

"She jumped off my lap, and I noticed the next two children in line. They stood holding hands, a sharp contrast to the little girl in the fur coat. The boy's coat was torn and dirty. The girl, obviously his sister, wore a coat that was once pink. I noticed the holes in the boy's tennis shoes and wondered why he wasn't wearing boots.

"Do you want to come sit on Santa's lap?" I asked.

"They nodded. I lifted the girl and put her on my left leg, and the boy I put on the right.

"What do you want for Christmas?" I asked.

"They exchanged looks. Both had sad brown eyes. 'You tell him,' said the boy to his sister.

"No. You tell him,' replied the girl."

I looked at the class.

I continued slowly, "The boy looked at me with his big brown eyes and said, 'We want our daddy to come home for Christmas.'

"Oh, where is your daddy?" I asked."

I saw some of my students look down at their desks.

"The little girl looked at me and said, 'Our daddy is in prison.'"

I paused, allowing the moment to sink in, before I admitted to my sophomores that Santa's eyes had filled with tears. I looked around my classroom.

"Did those kids get to see their father?" asked the girl who had asked me what I wanted for Christmas.

"I don't know. I don't think so."

I paused long before continuing: "But that's why I say I want something for Christmas that money can't buy. It's something we've already been given. It's what was given at Christmas to begin with. It's the gift of love, and it's what Christmas is all about."

pp. 143-44

STUDY #5 - 1 Thessalonians

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Paul's deep love and involvement in the lives of his young converts is a real inspiration.

LESSON #2: Our faithful walk with the Lord can be a real encouragement to other believers.

LESSON #3: We can use our life and our lips to be an encouragement to our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

LESSON #4: Calamities and afflictions are part and parcel of the Christian experience.

LESSON #5: Paul was so intimately involved with his young converts in Thessalonica that their "standing firm" affected his joy in living.

LESSON #6: Joy is the result in the lives of leaders who have seen God bear fruit through them.

LESSON #7: Paul prays earnestly when he prays.

LESSON #8: Many times our thoughts are not His thoughts and our ways are not His ways.

LESSON #9: Paul's desire to return to Thessalonica was to outfit them for their conflict in the rest of the journey.

LESSON #10: It was rooting and fruiting that was lacking in their faith.