

1 Thessalonians Ch3v1-10 - Looks Like Love: Brothers And Sisters In Christ

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 March 2025

Preacher: Sam Ross

[0 : 00] The psalm says you get to hear from me again, so we're going to read from 1 Thessalonians chapter 3. If you have your church Bibles, it's on page 1187.

If you bring your own Bible, you're familiar, and you'll find 1 Thessalonians in the New Testament. So we're going to read from 1 Thessalonians chapter 3 in verses 1 to 10. Page 1187. 1 Thessalonians 3 and verse 1.

So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For you know quite well that we are destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.

[1 : 21] For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain.

But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought us good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us just as we also long to see you.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution, we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

Amen. Thanks, Lord. Thanks a million, Ralph.

[2 : 41] Good morning, everybody. Why don't we pray just to start? Lord, I need your help.

We all need your help this morning. Amen. To hear what your word has to say to us as a church family. Give us a vision of how glorious Jesus is.

And show us the privilege that it is to help and strengthen one another in our faith. In Jesus' name we pray this. Amen.

Amen. Well, to start, I want to ask you a very profound question. One which philosophers throughout the centuries have wrestled with.

Here it is. How are you doing? How are you doing? Okay. Every time I go up to Calum and ask him, how are you doing?

[3 : 47] He answers me, Asher, you know yourself. Now, of course, I don't know how Calum is doing. I can't read his mind. So I say, how are you really doing, Calum?

And then he'll tell me something. But if you were to ask me that question this morning, how are you doing? I'd probably say something along the lines of, you know, how my weekend is going.

Been a busy week with work. I'm tired. Something I'm looking forward to. Maybe the rugby later on. Okay. But in essence, I'm going to tell you about me.

My health. My job. My weekend. But the interesting thing is this. If you were to meet Paul, the apostle, the writer of this letter, on the streets of Corinth 2,000 years ago, and if you were to say, Paul, how are you doing?

You'd get a very surprising answer. Because in this text, we see that Paul cannot separate his own well-being from that of his brothers and sisters in Christ.

[5 : 00] His answer would show that he is only doing as well as his church family is doing. If they suffer, he hurts. If they stray from the Lord, he fears for them.

If they make progress, he rejoices. Now, for people like us in an individualistic society, that kind of love and care is just odd.

Right? It's a little bit over the top. You know? Surely God doesn't want us to love each other that much. And that's why we really need to hear this text this morning.

Because when you trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord, you don't just get forgiveness, the gift of the Holy Spirit, eternity in heaven.

And these are all wonderful benefits. But actually, what you get is Christ himself. And along with him, all of those who have also put their faith in Christ.

[6:07] You get a family. And in this passage, Paul actually shows us what it looks like to love our family in Christ.

And where we get the power to do that. He's going to show us what an awesome privilege it is to help one another on the journey with Christ through this world.

It's not a chore. It's a privilege. So we need to pay attention. Two simple things we're going to see today are that love cares deeply.

That's like the feeling of love. And secondly, love acts sacrificially. That's what love does. Okay, so firstly, love cares deeply. Here are a few things that we should feel in our relationships with one another.

And the first one is a longing to be together. Now, here's the context of this letter of Thessalonians. Paul and Silas had traveled to Thessalonica and many people had believed in Christ.

[7:14] But, as many of you know, after only three weeks, they had to flee the town because a mob broke out against them. Now, here's the thing. Did Paul just move on to the next church planting project and slowly forget about the believers back in Thessalonica?

In some ways, no one would blame him. He was so busy. But look back at chapter 2, verse 17. And halfway down through that verse, it actually says, Paul says, Out of our intense longing, we made every effort to see you.

And then look down at chapter 3, verse 5. He says, So a love that cares deeply is a love which longs to be with your family in Christ.

To do life with them. And not just having a polite chat on a Sunday morning and saying, I'll be praying for you this week. That's good, but Paul demonstrates a whole life approach here.

Which says, I long to do life alongside you. How does that compare to your attitude and mine? Do we seek out opportunities to walk alongside each other in life?

[8:48] Or is it just a Sunday thing? Or a Wednesday thing? Longing to be together is one sign of a love that cares deeply.

Here's the second. Fearing for their spiritual well-being. Does it ever frighten you? That your brother or sister could be in danger from walking away from Jesus?

Look at what Paul says in verse 5. Halfway down through the verse, he says, I was afraid that in some way, the tempter, Satan, had tempted you.

And that our labors might have been in vain. See there, Paul's first concern was not their health or finances or physical safety. He was afraid they were drift away from the beauty and eternal safety of Christ.

That's the worst thing that could possibly happen to them. And Paul was gripped with fear that it would. And that's real love.

[10:03] You don't really love someone if you're not afraid for them when they're in danger. This might be a silly example, but imagine if your friend started chatting online to someone every day.

And next thing they say, oh, my online friend has asked me to meet up in town at the weekend. I think I'm going to go. I'm looking forward to it. What would you say?

Would you not tell them? You feared for their safety if you were a good friend to them? I remember when I was a teenager.

You know when you're a teenager, you go through all these sorts of phases? Maybe you still do when you're an adult. But anyway, one of these phases as a teenager, I got into this kind of dark rock music.

I was a Christian at the time, but I had this older, wiser Christian friend. His name was Jono. And he cared about me. He cared about my walk with Jesus. But in my enthusiasm about this music, I sent it on to Jono, and I was like, Jono, you've got to listen to this.

[11 : 18] This is class. And he got back to me a few days later by email, and he said, Sam, this music isn't good for your heart.

He said, I'm worried if you get deeper and deeper into this music, it'll slowly lead you away from Jesus. And I was miffed.

I did not like him saying that. How dare he criticize my taste in music? And I was so excited to tell him. But it planted the seed in my mind.

And within a few weeks, I had actually seen that what Jono said was right. I had replaced it with music that actually helped me to grow closer to Jesus.

It was good for my heart. And you know what? Reflecting on that, Jono actually cared enough for me to worry about my spiritual health because he saw there was danger. He cared enough to have that awkward conversation as well.

[12 : 27] And just thinking about each other, right, I think we can tend to miss the spiritual dangers in each other's lives. Or if we see them, we don't want to have that awkward conversation.

Because in Ireland, we don't really, you know, confront each other on those things. Well, actually, that's not living in accord with what God's word tells us to do.

Your brothers and sisters sitting around you are engaged in a spiritual battle. And Satan is trying to pull us as far away as possible from Jesus.

Paul knew for the Thessalonians, Satan was going to try and use persecution to try and tempt them away. It's not worth it.

It's not worth the following Jesus. For us, it might be some relational suffering or some illness that's just not going away and Satan is tempting us. He's telling us, God isn't good.

[13 : 24] He's not strong enough. For others of us, it's success and health and everything just going really well. And Satan's telling us, you don't need God.

Oh, you're fine on your own. Why do you need a savior? All of us are engaged in a spiritual battle. Let's not be naive. The question is this. Do we ever fear that our brothers and sisters might give in to those lies?

Paul shows us that if we care deeply enough, we will. Number one, we're going to long to be with them and number two, we will fear for their spiritual well-being when we see that they are in spiritual danger.

But here's the bit that really blew me away when I read this text first. And I don't know, when Ralph was reading it out, did you notice this also? Because Paul is telling us what happened.

[14 : 29] You see, he sent Timothy out to the church in Thessalonica to see how they were doing, to find out. And then Timothy comes back with a good report of their faith.

And look at the effect this has on Paul in verse 8. I love this. He says this. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.

Now we really live. Is that not extraordinary? Paul is claiming that when he didn't know if his brothers and sisters were still walking with the Lord, he was only half alive.

The not knowing was killing him. That is next level love. How can we care like that? Enough that we could genuinely say, I'm only doing as well as my brothers and sisters are doing.

Back in 2010, a mining accident rocked the globe. I think most of you were alive at that point and might be able to remember it.

[15 : 46] 33 men had driven down into this copper mine in Chile when the mountain caved in behind them. I want you to imagine that your brother was trapped in the mine and your family are all there, right?

Huddled together by that mine shaft as the rescue teams are working around you. I just want to ask, what are you feeling as two, three days pass?

Five, six days, still no news. Ten, eleven days, still nothing from the drilling. Fifteen, sixteen days, you're beginning to lose hope.

now, if a news reporter came over to you and asked you that profound question again, how are you doing? What would you say?

You might be perfectly healthy. You might have a nice house and a good job and everything else going well, but none of that would matter in that moment, would it? you would say, I'm in agony because my brother is down there and I don't know if he's safe or not.

[17 : 13] You see, in that moment, you're only doing as well as your brother is doing. nothing else matters if they aren't safe and that's a picture of how Paul feels about his family in Christ.

That's how we should feel about ours too. He was in agony over them, not knowing if they were safe in Christ and then when he hears the good news that they are safe, what does he say? He says, now we really live and in his very next breath, in verse 9. Just look at that. He says, how can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?

Again, we often think love for each other means a pleasant chat on a Sunday morning and I'll be praying for you during the week. That's great. We should do that. But if that's all we're doing, we're falling so, so short of God's vision for us as a church family.

Paul shows us a whole life model of care. We need to grow in this. Yes, we should be all over the practical needs when someone's sick or lonely or needing help, but the most important thing we will care about is this.

[18 : 38] Brother, sister, are you walking with the Lord? Lord, what is more important than that? what else is going to last forever? That's real love for your brothers and sisters.

Love that cares deeply. Now, maybe you, like me, are sitting there and thinking, do you know what? It doesn't really match up with my life so well.

Maybe you're convicted, like I am, that you fall short of this. And I think it's natural in some ways because our sinful hearts generally tend to put ourselves first, right?

How do we grow these sort of affections of love for one another in the church family? Well, the answer is in verse 12.

If you have a look down at that, chapter 3, verse 12, and Paul prays for his brothers and sisters and he says this, may the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else just as ours does for you.

[19 : 52] I am so thankful God inspired Paul to put that prayer there because it's only the Lord who can make our love increase and overflow for each other.

That's the key. This is not a try-harder situation. This is a lean-closer-into-Jesus thing.

The only person who ever perfectly lived this out. Now remember, it is only Jesus. We look at Paul here and say, this is amazing. Just remember Paul's past.

His life mission originally was picking off the Christians one by one. He was out to get them. Then he met Jesus and his heart got transformed completely.

And so also, we look to Jesus. It's actually through our union with Jesus that we begin to care like he does.

[21 : 00] and if Christ's spirit lives in us, the closer we walk with him, the more the fruits of that spirit will grow naturally.

And he gives us new desires to actually want to love like this, to see it as something we get to do, not a chore to take off. We begin to see how privileged we are to invest in what's going to last forever, that is, one another.

So that's the first point. Love cares deeply. And walking closer with Jesus, we begin to feel that kind of love for each other.

But we don't just see how love feels in this text, we also see how love acts sacrificially. And Paul shows us some of these actions that naturally flow out of that heart of love.

And we're going to go through three of them really quick. It says, the first one's found in verse two. If you look there, Paul says that he sent Timothy to strengthen and encourage them in their faith.

[22 : 08] Now, if God gives you a heart to care for your brothers and sisters, you will begin to move towards them in love. And you will ask, how can I encourage my brother or sister to walk with the Lord?

During the week, as you pray for them, you might ask, what's a verse that the Lord's put in my heart to share with them? Maybe that might mean texting and asking if we can meet up for lunch or for coffee.

How can I be an encouragement to you? In verse three, we find the reason why Paul sent Timothy to strengthen their faith.

Verse three says, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials, for you know quite well that we are destined for them. Trials are coming in each other's lives.

That's why we need to strengthen each other. Really simple. And when we do strengthen each other, when those trials come, we will be able to stand firm in Jesus.

[23 : 16] Here's the second way that love acts sacrificially. In verse five, we read how Paul sent Timothy to inquire about the church's faith. So when we reach out to encourage someone in their faith, that's not just a once-off thing.

Take that off the list. Now this kind of deep love makes us want to keep reaching out to hear how they are doing in their faith.

And Paul says why we should do that in verse five. He says, because Satan is going to tempt.

We've already talked about that this morning, how we are all engaged in a spiritual battle.

And if we do nothing to help each other, Satan will try and tempt us away. So don't just ask about someone's health, or their job, or their school.

That's good. But also ask them, how are those things affecting your faith? How are you meeting the Lord in those contexts? Or ask, how is your Bible reading going?

[24 : 26] Do you get time to pray during your day? And if someone asks you those questions, that's not them being nosy. That's them actually caring for you enough to support you against Satan's attacks.

Here's a third thing. one more act of love, and we do need to be careful how we interpret this one.

Have a look at it in verse 10. Paul says, night and day, we pray most earnestly that we may see you again, and supply what is lacking in your faith.

Now, what does this mean? Is Paul saying that their saving faith in Christ is incomplete? Well, no. We know that because he's already addressed them in this letter as those who are loved by God and chosen by him.

So, let's just get this clear. If your faith is in Christ alone, that is all you need to be safe in him.

Okay? It's not the size of your faith that matters. it's who your faith is placed in. But Paul is making a point here that these believers in Christ have their weaknesses.

[25 : 56] And in the rest of this letter, he's actually going to address these head on, from sexual sin to idleness to taking revenge. And we all know the areas in our lives, too, where we struggle.

Right? We struggle with sin. We struggle with suffering and sadness. We struggle to be faithful to God. Now, that doesn't mean we're outside of Christ because we struggle.

No, the very fact that we're not okay with our sin shows the new heart we have in Christ. But what God is calling us to do is to supply what is lacking in each other's faith.

so, for instance, my experience in dealing with anger might help somebody else in the church family who's struggling with that now, too.

Your experience in dealing with jealousy might help someone like me who's dealing with that. Your experience in fighting lust might help someone else in the middle of that battle.

[27 : 06] can you see how we can support one another and supply what is lacking in each other's faith? We just need to be honest and open about our own struggles and unafraid to ask others about theirs, too.

What a privilege it is to supply what is lacking in each other's faith. love. It's God's beautiful design for love in the church.

But as we finish, I want to bring you back to that mining accident in Chile. For 16 days, the rescue teams drilled and drilled without success.

But on the 17th day, they found a note stuck onto one of the drill bits with insulating tape. after pulling it back up 700 meters out of the mountain.

And here's the actual note on the screen. Now, this is the part where me, as someone who has never studied Spanish, need someone to help me to read this. Is there anyone here who...

[28 : 20] Go on, Katrina. going to go on, going to go on, Katrina. We're going to go on, Katrina. We're going to go on, Katrina.

We're going to go on, Katrina. Well done. That matches with my little English translation I have here. All 33 of us are fighting the shelter. Well done, Katrina. Monica was my next bet there to help me out.

But yeah, what an incredible note to receive. On the 17th day, the crowds erupted into shouts of joy, all on national television, all screens throughout the world.

Everyone was overwhelmed with relief. Knowing that their loved ones were safe meant the families could really live again.

Now, it took 52 days to execute the rescue mission. So they had to bore this new tunnel right down to where the miners were. But after digging that new tunnel, all 33 of the miners were lifted to safety

to meet their families.

[29 : 33] Now, can you imagine what that hug felt like? Welcoming back your brother, having wondered would he ever make it?

Imagine the joy of that reunion. I wish I was there to see it, don't you? But do you know what the wonderful thing is? That reunion is just a foretaste of a far greater reunion to come.

One day, we who have trusted in Christ will witness the completion of a far surpassing rescue mission. There is a day coming when we will be delivered out of this world of sin into the glorious light of God's new heavens and earth.

All our sin, sadness, and suffering behind us. And all that will fill our minds in that moment will be wonder and praise for the Father's plan and the Son's sacrifice which saved us.

and as we gaze upon his beauty and glory, we will know in an instant this is what I was made for.

[30 : 54] To be with Christ forever. But then we will notice people standing around us in spotless robes whom God is also rescued.

And I do believe we will see and recognize each other there. What a reunion that is going to be. We are going to run into each other's arms.

We will laugh. Tears of joy will stream down our cheeks. We will sing for joy to our Savior together. We will look in each other's eyes and know that every act of love was worth it just to see you here.

And if God had us to play some small part in helping each other on the journey, we will say what a privilege that was. One I never deserved.

we will know in that moment what truly mattered on our lives back on earth. Now it wasn't how much money we had.

[32 : 15] It wasn't where we lived or where we traveled or what job we had or anything like that. All that will matter is how we loved God and loved his people.

that's it. That's all that's going to last forever. Can you get a vision of that day in the future? Can you see it?

Let it motivate you for the days that we have left here. We don't know how many we have. But we do know that Jesus frees us from living for ourselves and he gives us the desire and the power to love one another deeply, to help each other on the journey with Christ.

May the Lord fill us with that vision of the day we will meet around the throne in heaven. And may the Lord captivate our hearts with the privilege and joy that it is to strengthen and encourage one another along the journey.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. In the silence let's bring our own confession to God.

[33 : 49] Maybe you're convicted about your lack of love. Maybe you see all this as a chore, not a privilege.

Let's ask God to help us to love like he does. to help us to love like he does. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 2.19, he says, What is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes?

Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy. Lord, forgive us.

Fill us with power now to love one another like this. Change us. Let us not go home thinking we've got to try harder.

Let us go home leaning closer into Jesus, the one who truly loved us and showed up by giving up his life for us on the cross.

[35 : 37] Help us, Lord, to love as he did. I pray that out of this today that there will be an outpouring of love towards one another in this church family.

And give us the heart to do that. May actions flow out of that heart for one another. For your glory and for our good, we pray.

Amen. If the musicians could come up, we're going to sing one last song. And it's a song called Beneath the Cross of Jesus.

And it's an opportunity for us to remember what Jesus did at the cross to rescue us. And think about the family that he's brought us into.

So, let's stand together as we sing this. Thank you. I think about the sons of Jesus.

[37 : 11] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

Please remain standing for a moment. And thank you all for being here today. And we're going to continue our time together over tea and coffee. I think I saw cake, actually, when I was out there earlier.

That's good, too. We've been thinking about what it means to love one another deeply and from the heart. How to strengthen one another in our faith. So let's take that opportunity, start doing that now over tea and coffee, to ask about each other's faith and see how we could be a real encouragement to one another today and during the week as well.

[40 : 11] We're going to pray the prayer which was at the end of the passage today. And it's on the screen here. So could we all pray it together out loud? Let's do that.

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

May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

Amen. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.