

Persistent Faith

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[0:00] Take your Bibles this morning to 1 Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians again as we pick up here in chapter 3 as we continue looking at faith.!

Faith must persist. It must develop because faith, as we've seen as we've gone through the book of 1 Thessalonians, that faith is what sustains us when the trials and troubles of this life seem just to overwhelm.

And we see in the Apostle Paul's life that he needed faith and his faith continued to grow and to endure and to develop in his life.

Because sometimes we get the perception in our mind, I think, that faith is, okay, now that I'm saved, everything just becomes static. But faith for salvation is the beginning point, and God wants our faith to continue to move forward, to endure, to persist, and to continue to do and accomplish in our life.

And so this morning we're going to see this report that Timothy, because remember Paul sent Timothy to get a report about the faith of those in Thessalonica.

[1:31] You know, because he knew that they had faced some challenges, and he returned with a report about the church at Thessalonica, and it's something that encouraged and strengthened Paul's faith also.

You know, we're going to see here this morning, as Paul was here in Corinth now, facing some challenges, and Timothy returns to him, with what the Bible says, good tidings from the church in Thessalonica.

So let's take a look here this morning, as if you found 1 Thessalonians chapter 3, let's stand together in honor of the reading of the Word of God here this morning, as we take a look here at this faith that persists and the impact of it.

And it says, But now when Timotheus came from you unto us and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, that you have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us as we also to see you.

Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our afflictions and distressed by your faith. For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

[2:42] For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your stakes before our God? Night and day, praying exceedingly that we might see your face and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith.

Now God Himself and our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way unto you, and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.

To the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we take a few moments this morning, as we look at this idea and concept of faith and the impact that it has, Lord, that faith is not static, but Lord, faith is something that not only sustains, but it needs to grow.

It needs to mature that understanding of who you are and what you've done, Lord, and how it impacts our lives. Lord, help us to have a persistent faith, a faith that sticks, a faith that grows, a faith that matures in our life.

[3 : 57] And Lord, we pray just have your hand upon each one today. Lord, you know each heart, each life, the burdens, the struggles, the trials, Lord, even the tests of our faith.

And Lord, we pray we might be encouraged to know that we can trust you as we walk through and the impact that faith has upon us and upon those around us.

And Lord, we just give you all the praise in Jesus' name. Amen. May be seated. You know, as we see here, as Timothy's report came, it was an encouragement to Paul.

You know, now we need to remember when Timothy came unto him, we find this in Acts chapter 18, is when Paul was in Corinth. He went from Athens over to Corinth, and he had started a work there and began to preach and to teach and face some opposition.

And now Timothy comes with a report that says, hey, those at Thessalonica who had been challenged, had been persecuted, they had faced great opposition, are standing fast in the faith, and they're not listening to the falsehoods that are being proclaimed.

[5 : 06] You know, whenever the gospel's being proclaimed, the one thing you need to always keep in mind, there's going to be some falsehoods that the devil follows up with it. You know, there's always going to be falsehoods or deceptions or questions to try to deceive or to draw away people from the truth of the gospel.

The devil always does that. And we find that Paul had been there at Corinth, and he was raising in the synagogue, it tells us every Sabbath day, with the Jews and the Greeks, and which was opposed by many in the synagogue.

And as you read through in Acts chapter 18, you'll find that Paul at this point was discouraged. You know, I want you to understand that sometimes life and what happens in life discourages us.

You know, we just say, Lord, what is going on? But, you know, I want you to see here, what Timothy brought in his report was an encouragement to Paul.

And we're going to look at these things here this morning, the encouragement that was needed and the things that encouraged him and why they did.

[6 : 21] But we see here, as he was facing this opposition, Timothy comes and brought a report that refreshed the need to continue preaching and proclaiming the gospel and teaching the doctrines of Christ.

You know, because sometimes we say, is this even doing any good? You know, today in America, sometimes you ask the question, is the gospel really impacting lives? Because we don't see some of the things we saw in the past.

You know, we saw many lives impacted through generations and suddenly it gets a little stagnant or you get opposition. Today in America, we have great opposition to the truth of the gospel.

You know, even around us. I mean, when you understand that just our neighbors to the north in Canada, you know, a preacher was arrested for just stating what was right.

I want you to understand that there's always going to be that opposition. But we need to encourage ourselves and encourage one another when we see those that stand strong because we see this solid report that Timothy brings to them.

[7 : 33] And we see here the lies and the persecution of those at Thessalonica had caused Paul to wonder, did they stand? Did they withstand all that was going on?

How were they doing? How would it influence their faith and their walk in the Lord? You know, because I want you to see here as Paul begins here in a section here in Thessalonians, he not only ties their faith to their salvation, but he ties their faith directly to their walk, to their persistence of that faith.

How is your faith playing out daily in your life? Because your faith is not a static. Like I said earlier, your faith is not a trophy. Salvation isn't a trophy.

You put in the case and say, I got it. Or it's not a deposit. You put in the bank and say, okay, now that I'm saved, everything's good. We can put that away and go on with life. Paul was encouraged, not because of just their salvation, but the fact that they had continued in life.

They continued walking with the Lord. He had continued those things. And we understand that we're going to face opposition. You know, matter of fact, consider what Peter said.

[8 : 49] You know, in 1 Peter chapter 4, Peter said this, Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you.

You know, that's about, I like that. That's pretty plain for us. Because sometimes, you know what happens? We get a woe is me saying, well, this is unique to me.

Like something strange happened that shouldn't have happened. But you know what Peter says? Don't act like it's something strange. Just understand it's going to happen.

That these things are going to take place in your life. He says this, look at verse 13, But rejoice insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

I want you to see our faith isn't just a present faith. It's a hopeful faith that looks ahead. It looks forward to what's ahead because this life, I hate to tell you, but you know, a lot of people spend a lot of effort on this life.

[9 : 54] But one day the Bible tells us this life is going to pass away. It's but a vapor. The trials and struggles, it seems that they're never ending.

And it's like, how do I get through them? But you know what? Sometimes we need to realize that this life is not all that there is. To keep our eyes on the right thing. And it's not that we ought not to live this life, but we need to live this life in light of eternity.

That's the whole theme of Thessalonians that Paul tells them. Live in light of what Christ has done. Live in light of what Christ has accomplished and what he's going to fulfill when he comes again.

Because what we have today is just not all that there is. You know? You know, we ought to reassure us that it's not just you or your situation that seems insurmountable.

You know, you ought to expect problems. I didn't say welcome problems. I said expect problems. I don't think anybody wants to have problems, doesn't want to have issues in their life.

[11 : 02] But you know what? It ought not to catch you off guard in the sense of saying, why me? Our faith ought to overpower those things. And even Paul here, as you read, it ought to encourage us that Paul needed some encouragement.

Because sometimes when we read through the scripture and over the years, you kind of get the impression sometimes that Paul was superhuman. You know? You see all the things that God did through the apostle Paul, and you say, man, this guy must have been superhuman, nothing impacted.

I want you to understand, Paul felt all the same things you and I feel. He wasn't exempt from it. The Bible tells us here that he was discouraged at Corinth.

You know, you can get discouraged with life, but you know what? There's things that will encourage you. And we ought to be encouraged in the faith. You know, notice what he tells them here.

Look at verse 6, and he says, And Timotheus came from you, unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that you have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us as we also to see you.

[12:18] Notice verse 7, Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our afflictions and distresses by your faith. Now think about that, what Paul is saying there.

He says, guys, he says, knowing that you stood strong, that your faith was real, that you were willing to take a stand for the truth of the word of God, it encouraged others.

Paul said, it encouraged me. You know, we're encouraged by the faith of others to say, hey, this is it. He was comforted. That word there is not to coddle, but it's to encourage.

In other words, his heart was encouraged, it was comforted, that they had stuck by the faith and would withstand and were steadfast in the Lord.

You know, when we see here that what was happening with Paul, you know, take a look over to Acts chapter 18 for a moment. Acts chapter 18 here in verse 4, Paul is, this is recorded about Paul and his ministry in Corinth and he says, and he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks and when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

[13:40] You know what? It invigorated him to keep going. He was pressed in the spirit after this report. In other words, he was encouraged by what was happening to say, hey, you need to keep going.

We're going. Keep going. You know, sometimes I think that's good that we have when we hear missionaries, especially ones we've supported a long time, come and say, hey, this is what God is doing here.

You know what? I don't know about you but it encourages me to keep going because sometimes we get so short-sighted about what's right in front of us we lose sight of what God is doing every place.

You know, God is bigger than Lincoln, Nebraska. He's bigger than your address. God's doing things all over and we see the reality of it and we can be encouraged by it that God is still working.

You know, when we understand, he notices, he says that he was good tidings of your faith and charity and it says that they were comforted over you in your afflictions, you know, that they had joy.

[14:51] You know, think about that for a moment, that they had joy. Now look down at verse 9, it says, for what thanks can we render to God again for you for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God.

I want you to see here, it not only encouraged them but it caused them to have joy and gratitude, to be thankful to see what God was doing. The report that Timothy brought brought joy to Paul and those with him renewing his focus to stay the course.

You know, I want you to see here something practically we need to understand when it comes to faith. A growing faith, a persistent faith, not only impacts you, it impacts others.

It impacts others. Practically, we need to understand that your faith in the Lord has an impact upon others. You don't live your faith in a bubble.

You're not there and it affects others also. You're not by yourself. You know, that's the other reason it's important that we be together with other believers. You know, that's the reason God tells us very clearly to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

[16:00] You know what? We need encouragement from one another. Part of walking faithfully and walking in the faith is being where God instructed us to be and that's in the Lord's house on Sunday.

To meet together with believers. To be a part, to be connected, to be there, to be present. You know, it's important to understand that your presence is important not only for you but for others.

You know, sometimes we forget that. Well, who's going to miss me at church? You know what? You're just as big of investment here as anybody else and you all impact one another. You all impact the preacher.

You know what? The preacher's encouraged when people come. Your presence is an encouragement. Your absence is the opposite. It's a discouragement.

But you know what? We need that encouragement to keep going because there's always going to be discouragement. The importance and the impact we have on one another, the consistency that is needful in that.

[17:06] And we see here that your faith is important that the steadfast consistency of the believers at Thessalonica helped Paul face the challenges before him.

I want you to simply understand this. Your faith impacts others. Your faith has an impact. You say, well, what am I doing? Your presence, your consistency, your steadfastness, makes a difference.

It encourages others. It encourages to keep going, to move forward. You know, the faith of the believers at Thessalonica had endured through persecution and we looked at the false accounts that they had accused Paul of.

But I want you to understand that it wasn't Paul's preaching that they had faith in. Paul was encouraged because their faith was not in what he said. Their faith was what in God said.

What God had said is where their faith lied. That's our commonality is the Word of God. Our commonality of faith is not in creeds or doctrinal statements.

[18:17] You know, there's a lot of people today whose faith is tied up in a creed. Now, I want you to understand a creed is nothing but stating what somebody believes but your faith isn't in what somebody else said. Your faith needs to be in what God has said.

to what God has declared because people are going to add all sorts of things but we need to understand what does God say about it? To have our faith in him. That's what encouraged Paul.

It wasn't that they just kept sticking around or that they stuck with it but that their faith was in the Word of God that was preached unto them. That it wasn't built upon what Paul said or what somebody else said.

You know, I think that's one of the dangers today. It's amazing to me as I talk to people how many people build their theology because of what this theologian said or that theologian said or this one over here.

Now, I want you to understand there's nothing wrong with reading what people have to say about it but I want you to understand that all needs to be filtered back through the Word of God. Don't just take somebody's word for it.

[19:19] Filter it back because everybody's going to have some flaws. Some misunderstandings. You know why? Because your faith needs to grow and mature.

What you understand a year from now about God ought to be different than what you understand about Him today. It ought to be more mature. A better understanding of who God is and what He's done.

Because, you know, the day... Think in your mind for a moment. Hopefully this morning you can think in your mind back to the moment when you called upon the Lord to save you. You know the good thing about that? You needed to understand some very basic simple doctrines in order to be saved.

You didn't have to be able to write a big thesis about who God is or how God interacts with mankind. All you need to understand is that you're a sinner, that Christ came and paid the complete full price that was required for you to be redeemed.

and the only thing you needed to do was receive and accept by faith and when you do that that's just not taking in it's understanding that yes, He is the Savior.

[20 : 35] You didn't have to understand about the Trinity. You didn't have to understand all the things of how Jesus was both 100% God and 100% man. You didn't need to understand all those things in order to be saved.

But from salvation, the basic understanding of what our need is, of who God is and what He's done for you, your faith needs to grow. It needs to mature.

It needs to develop. Because Paul is encouraged because of what they did. That persistent faith is a product of what is received.

It was the Word of God not the Word of men. And that persistent faith produced a stability, a stable faith. You know, secondly here this morning we see Timothy had encouraged Paul by the report that brought him from the church at Thessalonica and they had maintained their faith and noticed that being seen in the charity they had one for another along with others in their community.

Look back up here in verse 6 it says, and brought unto us good tidings of your faith and charity. Now that word charity there isn't how much they gave. That word charity there is love.

[21 : 45] That unconditional love that you do because it's an obligation. I want you to understand there's different types of love in the scripture. As a believer I'll give you a little information you have an obligation to love one another.

We'll get to that in a minute. Most people don't consider that that you have an obligation before God as a believer to love one another. It's an obligation that was there. You know they had maintained their faith they'd seen their charity that they had one for another along with others in the community around them.

Look here at verse 6 because it says this and have a great remembrance of us always desiring to see you as we also to see you. And as we go on here we find that it puts a direct dynamic in their life.

You know look down in verse 12 and it says and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men even as we do towards you.

In other words this is incorporating idea and concept of love. You know why did this happen? Because they were persuaded that what the scripture said was true.

[23 : 04] They were persuaded that God is just in his assessment. of mankind. They understood some things it transformed their life but they needed to continue in that to persist that persistence of faith the consistency of their faith was seen through their love one for another.

You know gathering together in a love one for another produces a stable faith. You know the one thing I've seen over the years is people who are not consistent in church are unstable in their faith.

they come and go but those who set a consistency to be where God instructed not only for their benefit they don't even realize when they show up they benefit from others. They benefit from serving the Lord together they benefit they're encouraged and they might not even realize the encouragement sits there because there's a bond there's a love that is brought together.

Look back in John chapter 13 for a moment Jesus here tells his disciples and he's getting ready to go to the cross and he says this he says a new commandment down in verse 34 he says a new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another as I have loved you and ye also love one another notice something here he says guys I can just imagine Jesus talking to his disciples in my mind sometimes I'm thinking about Jesus he's got them all sat down there and they're talking and he says guys listen to me you need to love one another you need to love one another as I have loved you now that puts some context on it because you know what Jesus is saying I loved you even when you were unlovable when you were sinful I love you when you do things that you shouldn't do when you say things you shouldn't say I mean how many times did Peter put his foot in his mouth I mean you think about that Jesus loved

Peter even when Peter told him Jesus you don't know what you're talking about he says love one another as I have loved you now look at the last part of this the next verse by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another now I want you to understand the importance of this that this is a command that plays out practically in our fellowship one with another you know oftentimes a love that a church has towards one another is developed not by sitting in the pew but by serving together you know part of the misconception being in church is good but it's not the objective the objective is what happens when we're together under the preaching of the word of God as we serve God on Sunday and throughout the week no matter what capacity it is that's what builds that love one for another that's what gives opportunity to display that one to another to build a commonality together to be encouraged in the persistent faith you know because there's always going to be things that cause disruptions in our life and we need that encouragement practically it means you need to be a part of a gathering of believers that are bound together in a common faith and practice

[26 : 26] I want you to understand we're bound by a common faith a common belief but also a common practice how do we put that faith into action that concept and idea is important and Paul's encouraged because those at Thessalonica didn't just say I trust God they said I live trusting God I live for one another I encourage one another we're still together working for that you know notice that through their faith though their faith was strong it was yet still not fully developed look at verse 10 for a moment notice what Paul says he says night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face and might perfect that which is what in your faith you know that causes us to ask a question if their faith has been persistent their faith has had some consistency you might ask what are they lacking they're lacking a continued maturity of growing up in the things of

Lord of the Lord you know what when you mature in the faith things quit blowing you around so much let me put this practically when somebody offends you you don't get all they didn't do what I wanted them to do they didn't do what I expected you know a strong mature faith isn't dependent upon somebody else but a strong mature faith impacts somebody else our faith is built and dependent upon the choice that we make towards God and what God has said and that ought to mature it needs to grow a stable faith grows and matures you know look over to Luke 17 for a moment because this is a concept that even Jesus taught his disciples you know in Luke 17 we find here that the apostles asked Jesus a question what they ask increase our what faith give us more faith how do we get more faith how does our faith grow notice what

Jesus said and the Lord said if you had faith as a grain of a mustard seed you might say unto the sycamore tree be thou plucked up by the root and be thou planted in the sea and it should obey you now I want you to hear Jesus here is using some illustrations here for them but he uses something that's very small the grain of a mustard seed the Bible tells us it's very small what he's referring to later on he describes this same mustard seed as expanding and growing you know look up over to Luke chapter 13 for a moment notice what it says here down in verse 19 because a mustard seed grows and matures into something that's beneficial it says this it is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and cast it into his garden and it grew and waxed a great tree and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it I want you to see here what he's talking about here is your faith needs to grow there needs to be a maturity now I want you to understand he uses these illustrations and even though these illustrations are not directly connected to faith especially in 13 he's talking about some other things but it gives us that same application it gives us understanding of this idea of a mustard seed it helps us understand that it's something that has an expectation of growth an expectation that becomes beneficial an expectation that doesn't stay stagnant you know I'm not a master gardener but the one thing I know that if a seed isn't put in the ground it doesn't do you any good a seed in the in the little paper container it comes in in the shed will not produce you anything because it's not a trophy to be put on a shelf or something to be stored it's something to be put in to action to be planted to put forth that which is required so it might grow faith is the same in your life it needs to be put forth to do that and we see that their faith had even though there was a persistent faith I mean you look through all the way the different chapters that we've looked at Paul talks about their faith and the greatness of their faith you know chapter 1 opens up he says remember without ceasing your work of faith your labor of love your patience of hope in our

Lord Jesus Christ you know you look down at verse 7 he talks about the example of their faith to those around the world there we find in chapter 2 in verse 13 it was something that was effectually working in them it was something that was functional and now we find in verse 6 here it was that faith and charity he gives him accommodations for it but his desire was to give what they were yet lacking he wanted them to grow and mature Paul's prayer was that God would allow him to see them again to speak personally building on what they lacked but until that time they needed to continue to persevere trusting that which they had heard and received from the word of God our faith needs to continue to grow I want to let you know anybody that thinks their faith has completely matured has a problem because the reality is this

I don't think we'll even begin to grasp when we get to glory I think we're going to have a totally different perception of a lot of things it's going to be that light bulb moment that we have sometimes like oh that's how that works even the greatest theologians are going to be looking and going man I got that wrong or I didn't understand how that fit together or you know there's passages in the Bible that we don't understand a lot of speculation about them but one day it's going to become clear you know there was a lot of things said in the Old Testament with the Old Testament prophets the people of their day didn't understand but people of future generations looked back and said yes now I see exactly what God was talking about let me give you an example in the Garden of Eden when God came to Adam and Eve and told them that her seed was going to crush the head of the serpent I don't think Adam and Eve totally understood everything pertaining to that there's some things been revealed to us and we see these pictures and we understand but he says in the meanwhile while your faith is maturing there is something to apply in your life notice here in verse 12 he says and the Lord make you to what increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men even as we do towards you to increase and abound because a persistent stable faith grows also in love now when we say love we need to define things what love are we talking about are we talking about what the world defines as love well you don't love me you know that's an emotional sensual attachment of love that type of love is not our example you know look over to 1st John chapter 4 1st John chapter 4 it says this in verse 7 beloved let us love one another for love is of God and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth

[34:01] God I want you to understand that when Paul talks about them increasing in love it's the love that God has displayed the love that God has revealed to us knowing a dynamic when it comes to love love impacts one another it impacts our relationship it impacts how we encourage one another because you know it's interesting look over to 1st Peter chapter 4 1st Peter chapter 4 and look at verse 8 it says and above all things have fervent charity that is love among yourselves for charity shall cover the multitude of sins you know what when believers as a body learn to love one another it helps us deal with offenses that come the right way it allows you to forgive it allows you to move through circumstances and situations it builds a bond together that dynamic of maturity it's needed as we mature in faith and knowledge of God it also allows us to love one another in light of our

Savior's love for us I want you to see a persistent faith grows and mature and will increase in love and builds a firm foundation to walk blamelessly before God notice that the object here is for every believer to be persistent in faith so that they might walk correctly before the one that redeemed them because we see here look down at verse 13 he ends this chapter here with this thought notice this thought it's important to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God even our father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints you know what it tells us we ought to have a maturing walk and we're going to talk about that when we get into chapter four of what a mature walk looks like because it's one thing to say something it's another to say what does it look like how many learn from seeing something done you know there's a difference between reading something and seeing something it sticks with us most if we read and we see and it puts together that's part of education it's the information and then the application we need to see that application that's that maturing among one another why because he's coming again you know no truth establishes the believer faster or better than this truth in the midst of our trials and testings these believers could be assured and encourage themselves with the promise of his coming when temptations came their way as they did daily all around them

I mean temptations come in our life today you know you can't walk down the street without temptation facing you you can't turn on any type of media without temptation taking you our whole advertising culture is about tempting you to do something because you need this you have to have it you can't live without it but I want you to see here they wanted to keep themselves clean and remembering that Christ might come that very day you know when we get tired and weary!

and we say well Lord this isn't working the way that we think it ought to work you know what when we keep our eyes on the fact he's coming again and we need to be faithful to him it changes our perspective and we're going to see here Paul wants them to mature in their walk not just to have a strong faith and a love one for another but it's to keep our eyes on eternity you know as you read through Luke 12 we don't have time to go through that this morning but you can read through that when we lose sight of his return our hope and our faith and our love will stagnant and cease to grow and mature because we lose sight of the expectation that he's coming Paul wanted their faith to continue to grow even though it encouraged him he says it can't stay where it is it needs to mature I don't think there's any greater truth in the Bible that has a bigger impact on a believer's heart and our mind than the truth that

Christ is coming again it's important I think sometimes we lose sight of that we get caught up in the craziness of life and lose sight that today could be the day because a persistent faith is one that reveals itself in our thoughts that's our heart and our walk that's blameless and holiness when we realize the importance of a faith that needs to be persistent but a persistent faith needs to be revealed in how we think and what we do and it impacts not only you but those around you you know this morning we need a persistent faith that continues to grow and to mature you know this morning is your faith growing has your understanding of God increased of who he is and what he's done is your love growing is your walk maturing because these are the results of a persistent faith that begins the moment you call upon the

[39 : 19] Lord as your savior it's the beginning of a walk with him that grows and matures through a persistent faith where's your faith this morning what's going on with it how is it impacting others is it growing is it maturing or is it stagnant as heads are bowed and eyes are closed this morning what about you today maybe the things of life have distracted you your faith has been stagnant instead of growing persistent faith heavenly fathers we just come before you this morning Lord you know each heart each life here today Lord I pray just have your hand upon each one Lord help us to understand the importance of not just a steadfast faith but a maturing faith a faith that changes grows and draws us closer to you through the truth of your word