

A Body of Encouragement

1 Thessalonians 3:1 – 13

I. Intro

- A. Continue look at 1 Thessalonians; first – holy living, practical steps towards holy living individually – holiness in the church begins with holiness in the lives of its members
- B. Last few weeks – the body of Christ, the church; mentioned my last messages here want to be an encouragement to this body; today – body of encouragement
- C. Everyone needs encouragement; Andre Crouch song – *He looked beyond my faults and saw my need*; as humans we find it easier to point out faults of others instead of seeing their need
- D. Today – father’s day; if there is a group of people in our society today that need encouragement it’s men – especially fathers
- E. For decades, men in our nation have been attacked, berated, denigrated, and discouraged; no wonder men have shunned their responsibilities to their families, their children
- F. It’s now time for our nation, especially time for churches (speaking mainly to women), to start looking beyond the faults of men and fathers and start seeking how we can minister to their needs
- G. Reminder of words of scripture:
 - i. Ephesians 5:1–2 (ESV)
 - ¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.
 - ²And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
 - ii. Ephesians 5:22–24 (ESV)
 - ²²Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. **(not as a unwilling/controlled slave, but a service out of love, respect, devotion)**
 - ²³For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. **(headship comes with a requirement of sacrifice on part of husband)**
 - ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.
 - iii. Ephesians 6:1–2 (ESV)
 - ¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
 - ²“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise),
- H. **Question:** So how can we as body of Christ do better at being an encouragement to one another, and to the men and fathers who are part of this body? Paul, an encourager to new believers in Thessalonica,

genuine concern not just for their safety in the midst of affliction, but concerned for their spiritual growth

I. We can be a body of encouragement by ...

II. 1 – Being concerned for one another

A. **READ 1 Thessalonians 3:1 – 4**

B. Paul knew these new believers in Christ were going to face temptation and persecution

C. Fact today that as time moves on we too as believers in Christ will face more temptation to stray from our faith because of persecution; we all need to continue to strengthen our resolve to remain steadfast in our convictions and labors for the Lord – men especially, need to be that example to our families of this resolve

D. Because Paul was prevented from returning to Thessalonica because of danger it posed to these new believers, he would send Timothy to them – Timothy was to be Paul's instrument of encouragement to these people; **REFER v. 2b, 3**

E. It's sad to say that even in the church you find people who are more concerned about themselves than they are their brothers/sisters in Christ

F. **Question:** What if that were true in our own personal families – that we were more concerned about ourselves than we were our spouses/children/parents etc.? For many families, it is true and we can see what the results have been

III. 2 – Doing Something instead of Just Talking

A. **READ 1 Thessalonians 3:5**

B. **Question:** What steps did Paul take in order to encourage the Thessalonians when he couldn't physically be with them?

C. Just being concerned about someone's physical, emotional, and spiritual condition isn't enough – our concern must lead us to action

D. Paul didn't just sit around in Athens and just worry how these believers in Thessalonica were getting along; he did the best thing he could do at the time and sent a co-minister, someone he trusted to be able to encourage these people just as he would

E. It's easy to sit around and be concerned about people, it's even easy to just simply express that concern, but it's more challenging to actually do something about it

F. Couple weeks ago, spoke about the church being a body of action – three essential requirements in order to this to be true – everyone must be an example in their love/compassion for the body, and in their service to the body; all of our actions in the body are about living out the Gospel in our lives and sharing the Gospel with others (being evangelistic), we must look

to the Spirit within us for the eagerness and energy to serve the body and to serve others

- G. Not only did Paul send Timothy to be an encouragement to the Thessalonians, but Paul himself needed encouraging that these new believers were persevering through their struggles and growing in their faith

IV. **3** – Through words of encouragement

A. **READ 1 Thessalonians 3:6 – 8**

B. Most of the time, if someone is doing a good job, we neglect to tell them so

C. **Question:** When is the last time you expressed appreciation to a deacon? When's the last time you expressed appreciation to your Sunday School teacher? When's the last time you expressed appreciation to those who tirelessly work with our children/young people?

D. (Make it more personal) **Question:** Husbands, when's the last time you expressed appreciation to your wife? Wives, the last time you expressed appreciation to your husbands? Parents, the last time you expressed appreciation to your children? Children, the last time you expressed appreciation to your parents or those who care and provide for you everyday?

E. Of course, if we do something wrong, or not to someone else's satisfaction, we're always going to hear about it

F. Whenever we have a problem with someone personally, we need to tell them personally not anybody else; whenever we are thankful, grateful, appreciate someone personally, we not only need to tell them personally but we need to tell everyone

V. **4** – Praying for one another

A. **READ 1 Thessalonians 3:9 - 13**

B. Talking with some members this week going through a very difficult time, even though it "sounds" so insignificant, the best thing you can do for them in those times is pray for them

C. Once you tell them and they know you're praying for them, then you can ask the question, "*Is there anything else that I can do for you?*"

D. Paul prayed 3 specific things for the Thessalonian believers (stress how important it is to be specific in our prayers for each other)

i. **1** – (v. 10) ... *we may supply what is lacking in your faith*; faith would be strengthened and mature; he prayed that personal relationship with Jesus Christ wouldn't become stagnant, but would become abundantly fruitful

ii. **2** – (v. 12) ... *may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all*; love for one another and others would grow;

times of struggles and difficulty often become times of selfishness; a natural outflow of our faith in God should be a love for everyone
iii. **3 – (v. 13)** ... *that He may establish your hearts in holiness*

VI. Close

- A.** As Laura and I will be moving on in just a couple weeks to another avenue of ministry, I can think of no better prayers we can pray for you, this body – your faith in the Lord wouldn't become stale, but would produce an abundance of spiritual fruit, your love for each other and this community would continue to increase, and that Christ would continue to do a work in your lives and *establish your hearts in holiness*
- B.** Specifically to the fathers, and all the men of this church, continue to show concern for your fellow believers in this body, continue to be men of action when it comes to meeting the needs of this body individually and corporately, always offer words of encouragement not discouragement, and finally pray for your brothers and sisters in the body
- C.** Those are my words of encouragement to all of you as your Pastor, and your brother in Christ
- D.** One single encouraging person can be the difference between someone becoming what God has called them to be and someone just giving up