

October 24th 2004: Perth Chinese Church: 1 Thess 3:6-13
Also Oct 31st 2004 Craigie 1 Thess 3:1-13

The passage of Scripture that we are looking at today (1 Thess 3:6-13) is mainly a prayer.

A prayer for a group of Christians who Paul loves dearly, and thinks very highly of.

The letter itself...arises out a great concern on Paul's part....

If you read Acts 17.....account of the beginnings....and u will see that Paul He had left their town very quickly because of persecution

Since that time

often wondered howfaring in a place where Christians were often oppressed.....

Those of you using TWFT devotional.....been reading.....

Would no doubt have picked up that concern

For instance 2:1-2 2:17-18.....

But even as such concerns were going through his mind ... interrupted by the return of Timothy whom he had sent to Thessalonica to strengthen and encourage them in their faith....3:1-3....

Timothy brings back wonderful news of the strong faith and love of the believers there, & Paul is just so thrilled and excited about this.

Look with me again at what he writes in verses 6-10.....

As a Pastor I have ministered in several different churches for a good few years in each church. I well remember how I felt in 1986 when I left the church in Bunbury after 7 and a half years to be the Pastor of the Como Baptist church. In those early weeks at Como I often wondered how the church at Bunbury was going. Were the numbers still strong at Sunday worship. Were the leaders leading well? Were they dealing with the problems and difficulties ? I was a little scared to find out in case they were doing badly. I felt about the church at Bunbury what Paul felt about the church at Thessalonica when he wrote in 3:5 "I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless."

Then after some time I was visited by someone from Bunbury with glowing news about how well the church there was going. How the people were getting even more involved and growing in their faith. And I felt so happy and relieved. It was really great to hear such good news.

And that's what Paul says here.

Timothy has just come and brought.....good news to us about you.

And its this good news ...causes Paul to turn to God in prayer on their behalf
We find that prayer in verses 11 to 13.

Its a prayer in three parts ... each beginning with the word "may " in the NIV
11-13.....

In the first part he prays for what he, that is Paul, wants. V11....

. He passionately wanted to see them again and to help them grow in Jesus
Look with me at verse 10.....

That expression, supply what is lacking, means to make complete your faith.
It's a Greek word used for mending nets suggesting ...although they are going well as Christians, there are a few holes in what they believe... way that they live as believers.... need attention.

Now in Acts 17 we read that on his previous visit there Paul had nearly been lynched

. He had to flee at night **Yet here** he yearns to go back to that hostile town....
because he wants to help fellow believers grow in Jesus.

Paul cares for them so much that he asks God to help him visit them,
so that he can help them grow further in Jesus.

How far are you prepared to go to help fellow Christians grow in Jesus?

David and Shirley Dean....

I know myself that on some Sundays I even have to push myself to walk across the other side of the church to encourage another Christian, or welcome a new person.

**Is there someone that you should be visiting, phoning, writing a letter to?
Is there a struggling Christian that God has been laying on your heart?
Will you pray that God will make it possible for you to help them grow in Jesus ?**

In the second part of this prayer Paul prays for what these Christians need. Verse 12....

These Christians already had love for God and others. Look at v6.....
But love is just so important that it must keep on growing.

Paul said in 1 Cor 13:1 “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.”

And what those Christians needed then we need so much today.
Love that increases and overflows for each other.....

Once love overflows it goes beyond measuring.....

God wants us to overflow with love, but do we want that for ourselves enough to ask God to make it happen?.....For its only God the Spirit.....who can cause us to overflow like that

To one another and to others.....

We can have all the teaching on love.....

But unless we allow the Spirit of God to touch
It stays as theory.....It doesn't translate into action

A man was trying to read a serious book, but his little boy kept interrupting him. He would lean against his knees and say Daddy, I love you. The father would give him a pat and say rather absently, Yes son, I love you too, and he would kind of give him a little push away so he could keep on reading. But this didn't

satisfy the boy, and finally he jumped up on his fathers lap, said I love you Daddy, and threw his arms around him and gave him a big squeeze explaining, And I've just got to DO something about it!

That's it—as we grow in love we aren't content with small-talk love or pat-on-the-head love. We want to get involved and do something about it.

(I was really fascinated recently.....report about the danger of overheating water microwave

The Spirit's touch.....is what causes the teaching to break forth into action.....to overflow)

(Michael Frost writes.....Aust Stories For the soul.....p55..)

Thats type of love...God wants to overflow in us to others...Christians and.. IT's The type of love that Jesus revealed for us on a cross at Calvary.
Costly love

Bruce Thielemann tells the story of a church elder who showed that type of love. It seems that a terrible ice storm had hit Pittsburgh making travel almost impossible.

At the height of the storm a church family called their Pastor about their little boy who had leukemia and needed to get to the hospital straight away. He had suffered a relapse and the hospital said to get him there fast but they had no ambulance to send and the family did not own a car.

The Pastors car was out of action so he called his church elder who straight away volunteered to make the treacherous journey. The brakes in his car were nearly useless. It was so slick that he could not stop for stop signs or traffic lights. He had three minor accidents on the way to the house.

When he reached their home the parents brought out their little boy wrapped in a blanket. His mother got in the front seat with her son and her husband sat in the rear. Ever so slowly they drove to the hospital. They came to the bottom of a hill and as they managed to skid to a stop, the Elder tried to decide which was the best way to go. As he was thinking about this he chanced to look to the right

and he saw the face of the little boy, eyes wide with fever and fear. To comfort the child he reached over and rubbed his hair.

Then it was that the little boy said to him, Mister, are you Jesus ?

Do you know that in that moment he could have said yes.

For him to live was Jesus

And the Spirit had motivated him to overflow with practical love to this family

Without concern over the potential cost.....

Loving as Jesus loved requires courage, risk taking and sacrifice.

Then in the third part Paul prays that they will be what God wants them to be

Verse 13 reads.....

There is an ongoing work that Jesus needs to do in my heart and your heart ... so that we will be blameless and holy when our Lord returns.

It's a work in our hearts.

The Pharisees in Jesus day looked blameless on the outside... very good at keeping all the rules. But their hearts were far from right with God.

Others see you from the outside this morning but God sees inside your heart.

The good news is that our hearts can be blameless because of Jesus.

When we confess our wrongsHe is faithful.....

Our hearts and lives can also be holy, because holy means given over to God.

In every area where the choice is God's way or our way.....chose His way

God wants you to give control over every part of your life to Him.

To let Him guide you in every area.

To trust Him with your time, your relationships, your money, your attitudes and ambitions.

To seek purity in word...act.....thought

Are you holding back just one area from God's control today?

God wants to be in charge there too. Trust Him with it.

This being holy and blameless begins only when we ask Jesus to be our Saviour. If you have never yet invited Jesus into your heart then you need to do so now because the signs are clear that Jesus will return soon.

It is imperative for your eternal future that on that day.... find you waiting for Him.

Growing daily in your relationship with Him.

In Out of Africa, Isak Dinesen tells this story about her Kenyan cook Kamante:

One night after midnight, Kamante suddenly walked into my bedroom with a lamp in his hand. He spoke to me very solemnly.....I think that you had better get up. I think that God is coming.

When I heard this I did get up and asked why he thought so. He gravely led me into the dinning room which looked west toward the hills. From the window I now saw a strange phenomenon. There was a big grass fire going on out in the hills, and the grass was burning all the way from the hill-top to the plain: when seen from the house it was nearly a vertical line. It did indeed look as if some gigantic figure was moving and coming towards us. I stood for some time and looked at it with Kamante watching by my side, then I began to explain the thing to him.....But the explanation did not seem to make much impression on him one way or the other; he clearly took his mission to have been fulfilled when he had called me.

Well yes, he said, it may be so. But I thought that you had better get up in case it was God coming.

Just in case, be ready. Just in case, be awake.

People have been wrong in the past about when He would come, but make no mistake, one day He is coming.

On that day Jesus wants to find each of us

Overflowing in love.....to God...one another.....others

And seeking by His strength....to live lives.....holy and blameless

Given over completely to Him

