

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 3/6/94  
I Thessalonians 1:3 "Faith, Hope, and Love"

**Intro (of service):**

It's fascinating to look at the New Testament church. Not that it was without its share of problems. But we can see what God intended the church to be, and do.

Key Text: Acts 2:42 "And they continued..."

1. Apostle's Doctrine (=teaching)
2. Fellowship
3. Breaking of Bread
4. Prayer

This evening, we want to allow those 4 activities to determine the structure of this service.

1. Doctrine (through a study of God's Word)
2. Fellowship (through testimony and singing)
3. Breaking of bread (through communion)
4. Prayer (through prayer groups)

**Intro (of message):** Doctrine. Some are frightened by the word. Yet the early church devoted itself to the apostles' doctrine.

What is the apostles' doctrine? No doubt, the apostles' doctrine centered on the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. It has to do with 3 key words highlighted throughout the NT.

I Cor 13:13 "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

Col 1:3-5 "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...since we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints; For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven..."

Eph 1:15, 16, 18 "Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you...that ye may know the hope of His calling..."

Faith, love, and hope. These 3 words sum up the essence of the Christian life.

There was one particular church that had a grip on these three doctrinal truths. Don't misunderstand me. They had their share of problems: Some in the church were confused about the second coming of Christ (4:13); Some were struggling with the temptation to relapse into immoral living (4:3-8); A few were slandering the apostle Paul, saying he preached for personal profit (2:5, 9); And apparently, they had their share of interpersonal problems (5:13).

Yes, this church had problems. All churches do!

Yet it was a going church. Here's what Paul said about it, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers."

What church was it? The church at Thessalonica.

For our study tonight, let's turn to I Th 1:3.

Why was Paul thankful for the Thessalonian church?

They had a grip on the three key virtues--Faith, love, and hope.

V 3 "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith..."

Here was a going church! They had a handle on doctrine! The apostles' doctrine made a practical difference in their lives.

Let's take a brief look at v 3. Notice first the three virtues, and then the product that virtue produced in their behavior.

## **I. Faith**

We toss the word "faith" around rather loosely. "Have faith." "I guess I need more faith." But what is faith?

Faith must have an object. We have faith IN someone or something. In fact, faith is only as good as its object. The Christian life begins when we place our faith and confidence in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

Eph 2:8-9 "For by grace are you saved through faith."

Saving faith is a gift from God. It's the result of the supernatural working of the Spirit. It's also the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:23).

We are saved by faith. We are called to live by faith (Gal 3:11).

The Thessalonians did just that. They were known for their faith. God was real in their lives. They trusted in Jesus Christ.

How can we tell? What evidence did their faith have on their lives?

"WORK of faith"

Paul said he remembered without ceasing the work which sprang from their faith. What kind of work? We're not told here. Perhaps caring for the sick, or comforting the hurting. Or no doubt the bold proclamation of the gospel in a community where it was dangerous to do so.

They were known for a faith that works.

Caution: True faith works. When a person claims to believe in Christ, yet fails to give evidence of the work of Christ in and through him, he shows that his faith is deficient. Or possibly imitation.

Tran: Faith is exhibited towards God--our vertical relationship. The second virtue is horizontal.

## **II. Love**

Love towards one another. Agape love. Selfless, Christlike, love.

The Thessalonians were known as a group of people that loved each other.

What evidence did their love have?  
"LABOR of love"

The word "labor" indicates strenuous toil, intense exertion. One thing's for sure. True love is more than a feeling. It takes effort. Love demands great personal sacrifice.

Let's be honest. It's easy to love some people. Beautiful people, intelligent people, rich people, people that see eye to eye with us. Loving them comes naturally. Why? Because we get something out of it!

But agape love has nothing to do with getting something. It's a choice I make to give, unconditionally.

Illust:

That's the way the Thessalonians loved.

### **III. Hope**

Faith towards God. Love towards one another.

What's the focus of biblical hope? The Return of Jesus Christ. The second coming of Christ is a great doctrine. Sadly, in the church today, we're prone to get sidetracked. We either don't think about His coming enough. Or we debate when it's going to happen.

And both responses miss the point.

What effect ought this hope to produce in our lives?

"PATIENCE of hope"

The word "patience" lit. means "to remain under." It has to do with endurance and steadfastness. That's exactly what these believers had exhibited. They faced intense hostility from non-Christians. It was not popular to be a Christian in Thessalonica. They faced persecution.

And these believers chose to remain under the persecution. Why?

Because of their Hope.

Hope is not hype. It's not just an emotion. It's based on a Person--"hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." Hope is the confident expectation that Jesus will do what He said He will do! That keeps us going!

### **Challenge:**

We've seen 3 reasons Paul was thankful for the church at Thessalonica. Jesus Christ was real in their lives. You could see it in their faith, love, and hope.

That's the kind of church we must strive to be, more and more.

To make it personal, let's take inventory.

1. How's your faith? Is Jesus Christ real in your life?
2. How's your love? Are you involved in meeting needs in other's lives?
3. How's your hope? How often do you think about the second coming of Christ?

**Communion:**

The communion service is like a "check-up." It gives us the opportunity to remember what we're all about. We are a people of faith, love, and hope. We are what we are because of what Jesus Christ has done for us.

**Prayer Groups:**

\*six groups, divided according to deacon care groups

\*share prayer requests, have 3 or 4 pray

Group Leaders:

Don Boggs

Jack Branon

Kevin Pierpont

Brad Brandt

Dan Edwards?

Dave Purrington?