

Explore the Bible: March 27

Encouraged • I Thessalonians 3:4-13

By Cyndi Grace



Grace

Technology amazes me. I have a love/hate relationship with it. Recently, our daughter put our immediate family on an app called, "Life 360." This app, using our cell phones, allows each family member to see where the others are located at all times. It even includes a "crash" component which will indicate if one of us has had a wreck.

I reluctantly admit that it has brought some peace of mind to my mama heart. We all travel, so when the app tells me one of my babies is home, I breathe a sigh of relief. The Apostle Paul could have benefited from such a tool. We read at the beginning of chapter three that Paul had been "worried sick" about the Thessalonian church.

When Paul was forced to leave Thessalonica, the situation was dire. There was great opposition and persecution coming from those against the Gospel, so it was not surprising that Paul wondered if the church had survived or even if the members were still alive.

We all have been there at one time or another, in concern for a loved one. At this writing, we appreciate any news concerning the Ukrainian churches because they are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul finally sent his

protégée, Timothy, back to Thessalonica and check on them.

When Timothy returned with good news, Paul sent this letter to the Thessalonian Christians to rejoice that the church was doing amazingly well amid the afflictions they were encountering.

Verses seven and eight express it this way: *Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and affliction, we were encouraged about you through your faith. For now we live, if you stand firm in the Lord (CSB).*

These verses are vital to believers today in our ever-darkening world. I don't want to be a Debbie-downer, but unless God intervenes in a miraculous way the world is not going to get any better. The church has two choices: curl up in a ball and give up in despair, or stand firmly in our faith.

Let's look at the last phrase: *For now we live, if you stand firm in the Lord.* The "we" means the Gospel, not Paul and Silas. It was the most important thing to Paul and should be the most important thing to any of us. The Word of God must continue. We all hope that doesn't come from any more buildings full of people falling down, but from the salvation that Jesus gives. So, how do we accomplish such a task?

It comes when we "stand!" The Greek word for "stand" in this verse is the word *steko* and means to "persevere or to persist." We find this same word in I Corinthians 16:13-14 "Be alert, *stand* firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong. Do everything in love" (CSB).

Perseverance means "steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose, a state, etc., especially in spite of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement."

If the church ever needed to stand, it is now. We cannot afford to become spiritual wimps in these times. There is too

much riding on our persistence in telling the world the truth of the Gospel.

When life becomes hard, the world often looks to Believers for a way to survive. When persecution comes, the world looks to see if our deeds match the words we have said so many times – but there is a qualifier in our Corinthians passage: *Do everything in love.*

Paul's passion for the Gospel came from his extreme love for the people. He had been one of the "lost" but now that he knew the truth, he had a drive in his soul to tell others for no other reason except their salvation. People were not projects to Paul. They were living beings going to an eternal death without the Gospel.

Are we that passionate about standing for this truth? Are we willing to be courageous in the face of opposition so that others will live?

Things are not going to get better, but God knew we would be living in the world situation in which we are now living. He placed us here with all the tools we need to fight this battle. Could it be that today's church and Queen Esther are in a similar position? Could it be that we have been placed here for such a time as this?

Will we stand, no matter what? Today, let your answer be, "Yes, and amen!"

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