



+ This week at MRC we looked at Paul's longing to return to Thessalonica to support the Christians there through difficult trials. **(2:17-3:9)** As Paul continues to defend his ministry, he expresses his desire to be one who strengthens and encourages fellow brothers and sisters through the daily testing of faith. But as he does this he too is then encouraged as he hears from Timothy's report that they are standing firm in their faith.

How do we as a church be brothers and sisters who nurture one another in the maturing of our faith through trials?

Testing of Faith. 2:17-18; 3:4-5

Paul had warned the Thessalonians that they would face persecution 3:4. He himself had faced it wherever he went. Paul expresses his intense longing to return to them, not wanting to have left. He was afraid that they might fall away from their faith in Jesus due to the opposition they face from the jealous Jews (Acts 17:5)

Nurturing of Faith 2:19-3:3

The Thessalonians are very precious to Paul. He calls them his glory and Joy. In his mission to preach the gospel God has blessed him with fruit in the lives of people like the Thessalonians. When Paul stands before God on the final day he sees them as evidence of his labour. Paul sends Timothy who is a co-worker and a brother He is sent to strengthen and encourage.

Maturing of Faith 3:6-9

Timothy brings back a good report of the faith and love that the Thessalonian have and are showing. Paul is encouraged, able to breathe a sigh of relief that God is upholding them. He gives thanks to God for the joy he gives him in the presence of God.

As always here are a few questions to start off your group discussion.

1 Thessalonians 2:17-18; 3:4-5

- What do you remember about the relationship between Paul and the Thessalonians from Acts 17 as well as 1 Thessalonians so far?
- How does Paul describe his feelings about the situation he and the Thessalonians are facing? What does this tell us about Paul's relationship with them?
- What were some of the accusations we can presume people were making about Paul and his ministry? How does he defend them in this passage?
- Why was there an expectation of suffering and persecution and does that expectation exist for us today?
- What is your understanding of Satan and his tactics in hindering Christian mission? Do you have any examples of how he tries to stop mission today?
- What trials and temptations in your faith do you have? How do they affect your faith in God? Are there times when you struggling trusting Jesus when life is tough?

1 Thessalonians 2:19-3:3

- How does Paul view the Thessalonians in verses 19-20? What these verses mean? Is Paul trusting in the Thessalonians more than in God's grace?
 - How does Paul overcome his problem of not being able to get to Thessalonica? What does this show of his commitment to the church there?
 - Do you have a love for other Christians like Paul? How are you challenged to view others in the church has those who bring us joy and hope?
- How can we play our part in strengthening and encouraging one another in the growth of faith? How are we doing this as a home group? What other ideas do you have?

1 Thessalonians 3:6-9

- How was Paul encouraged by Timothy's report in 3:6-9? Where have we heard these things before?
- What difference did this encouragement make to Paul and his present work?
- What difference do encouragements of God at work make to you and your faith? Encourage one another now by sharing some examples of what God is doing to grow people's faith?
- Pray that as a home group you would be people who with God's help nurture one another and give thanks and rejoice together when you see maturity