

How to Develop Your Faith

1 Thessalonians 3

INTRO:

- Discuss: What do we mean when we refer to someone's "faith?"
- Discuss: How do we grow our faith?
- Discuss: What is the balance between personal & church responsibility for an individual's faith development?
- In chapter 3, Paul addresses this issue – specifically the responsibility that a church has in the faith development of its members.

BIBLE STUDY:

1. Elements that **Block** Growth (vs. 1-5, 10).
 - a. Paul places a great deal of emphasis on spiritual development, but he is clear in his teaching that the development of one's faith is not automatic.
 - b. Paul starts by pointing out the hindrances to faith's development, and specifically addresses three areas we should be aware of.
 - c. The first element that blocks the development of faith is **suffering** (vs. 1-4).
 - i. Note Paul's specific purpose: that no man should be moved by these afflictions.
 - ii. Paul's concern is the Thessalonians not allow afflictions to jerk them uncontrollably back and forth.
 - iii. Instead, suffering is part of God's maturity for His children.
 - iv. Discuss: What do you see as more common when Christians suffer: Does it draw them closer to God or drive the further away?
 - d. The second element which block's faith's development is **Satan** (vs. 5).
 - i. Satan tempts us to hinder our growth in faith.
 - ii. Reminder: Satan cannot get our soul if we are saved, but he will attempt to damage our testimony and to stunt our spiritual growth.
 - e. The third element that blocks the development of faith is **short-comings** (vs. 10).
 - i. Paul uses the term translated "lacking" which carries the idea of deficiency.
 - ii. In other words, there are some things which can be added to faith (cf. 1 Peter 1:5-8).
 - iii. Discuss: This implies some personal responsibility to grow our faith. We can't just blame the church for our lack of spiritual growth. What could we be doing to grow our faith more consistently?
2. Elements that **Benefit** Growth (vs. 5-13, 1).
 - a. Paul now looks to the positive. He gives two essential ingredients of an adequate church "faith building" program.
 - b. First, a powerful **preacher** was sent to them (vs. 1-2). Paul had earlier sent to them Timothy to bless this congregation. God uses men to help Christians grow their faith (cf. Ephesians 4:11-13). Two clear characteristics defined Timothy's role:
 - i. First, Timothy was a man of God.
 1. He was their "brother."
 2. He was a "minister" (servant).
 3. He was a "fellow-laborer."
 - ii. Second, Timothy has a clearly defined responsibility (vs. 6-9).

1. Paul's concern was centered on the reality that the Thessalonians stood "fast in the Lord."
 2. This happened through the preaching of the Word of God. Without the Word, faith simply cannot grow.
- c. Secondly, passionate **prayer** was offered for them (vs. 11-13).
- i. Prayer is heaven's way to "establish" and to "strengthen" God's people.
 - ii. Prayer is a key ingredient in the spiritual life of every congregation. The pastor and the congregation should be serious about prayer.
 - iii. We are no stronger than our prayers.
- d. Discuss: On a scale of 1-10 – with 1 the lowest – what would accurately reflect the passion for prayer you possess in your spiritual life?
- i. How can you be involved in the prayer life of the church?
 - ii. Discuss: Personal prayers; Wednesday night prayer service; monthly day of prayer (coming up).

APPLICATION:

- Did you notice the two key elements to a balanced church program? The Word of God and Prayer.
 - When was the last time you saw a church emphasize these aspects of their ministry? Often, churches are no different from the world in their approach to marketing in their attempt to attract a crowd.
- How important are prayer and the Word of God to you? Does your schedule reflect that? What can you do to make this a reality?

TO DO: Study 1 Thessalonians 4