

THE BASICS OF FAITH  
First Thessalonians  
Banska Bystrica, 20th March 2016

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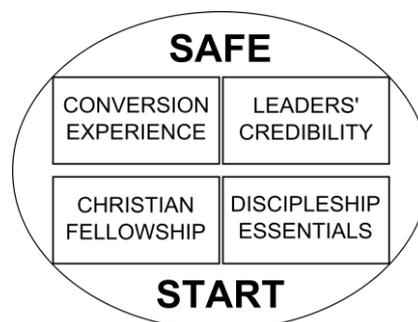
**4. TO REMEMBER**

**0. INTRODUCTION: FAITH & SUFFERING**

- reminder: method of exposition: theme “clusters”

**0.1. REVIEWING THE PREVIOUS LESSON**

- faith & action:
- (1) the source of faith → the Word; (2) the content of faith → Jesus, the gospel; (3) the form of faith → joy, followership; (4) the effects of faith → protection, witnessing, encouragement



- → impossible to distinguish sharply...

**0.2. FAITH IN CHRISTIAN LIFE**

- faith... (1) ...& fellowship, (2) ...& discipleship essentials, (3) ...& leaders, (4) ...& conversion
- the three fundamental elements of the Christian life: (1) faith, (2) love, (3) hope → (1) ἔργον, (2) κόπος, (3) ὑπομονή. (genitives of origin [AUBERLEN & RIGGENBACH])

### 0.3. FAITH IN THE 1<sup>ST</sup> THESSALONIANS [TEXT]

- **1:3** remembering **before our God and Father** your work of faith... (ἔργον τῆς πίστεως)
- **1:5** because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction (οὐκ ἐγενήθη εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν λόγῳ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν δυνάμει καὶ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ [ἐν] πληροφορία πολλῇ,)
- **1:6-8** And you became imitators (μιμηταὶ) of us and of the Lord, for you received (δέχομαι) the word in much affliction (θλίψις), with the joy (χαρά) of the Holy Spirit, <sup>7</sup> so that you became an example (τύπος) to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. <sup>8</sup> For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you (ἀφ' ὑμῶν γὰρ ἐξήχηται ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου) in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God (ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν ἢ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν) has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.
- **2:13-16** And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us (παραλαβόντες λόγον ἀκοῆς παρ' ἡμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ [λόγον] ἐδέξασθε οὐ λόγον ἀνθρώπων), you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God (καθὼς ἐστὶν ἀληθῶς λόγον θεοῦ), which is at work in you (ἐνεργεῖται ἐν ὑμῖν) believers. <sup>14</sup> For you, brothers, became imitators (μιμηταὶ ἐγενήθητε) of the churches (ἐκκλησία) of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things (τὰ αὐτὰ ἐπάθετε) from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, <sup>15</sup> who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets (τὸν κύριον ἀποκτείναντων Ἰησοῦν καὶ τοὺς προφήτας), and drove us out, and displease God (θεῷ μὴ ἀρεσκόντων) and oppose all mankind (πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἐναντίων,) <sup>16</sup> by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved – so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last!
- **3:3** we are destined for this. (τὸ μηδένα σαίνεσθαι ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν ταύταις. αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα.)
- **3:4-5** For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand (προελέγομεν ὑμῖν) that we were to suffer affliction, (μέλλομεν θλίβεσθαι) just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. <sup>5</sup> For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith (εἰς τὸ γινῶναι τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν), ~~for~~ fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you (μὴ πως ἐπειράσεν ὑμᾶς ὁ πειράζων) and our labor would be in vain (εἰς κενὸν γένηται ὁ κόπος ἡμῶν).
- **3:7** ...for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith (παρεκλήθημεν, ἀδελφοί, ἐφ' ὑμῖν ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ ἀνάγκῃ καὶ θλίψει ἡμῶν διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν πίστεως).
- **4:14** For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep (εἰ γὰρ πιστεύομεν ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη, οὕτως καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς κοιμηθέντας διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἄξει σὺν αὐτῷ).
- **5:8-10** But since we belong to the day, let us be sober (νήφωμεν), having put on the breastplate of faith (ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως) and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup> For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him (ὅτι οὐκ ἔθετο ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ <sup>10</sup> τοῦ ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ἵνα εἴτε γρηγορῶμεν εἴτε καθεύδωμεν ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ζήσωμεν).

### 0.4. SUFFERING IN CHRISTIAN LIFE

- What was the nature of their affliction (thlipsis)? Luke tells the story about the opposition faced by both the missionaries and the believers in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-9). Information in the Thessalonian letters is quite general. On the basis of Stoic and Cynic parallels, Malherbe argues that this affliction was internal in nature: It is reasonable to understand thlipsis in 1:6 as the distress and anguish of heart experienced by persons who broke with their past as they received the gospel. (Malherbe, 1987:48)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ELIAS, J. W. *1&2 Thessalonians*, Scottdale : Herald Press, 1995, p. 45

### 0.4.1. SUFFERING SHOULD BE EXPECTED

- [3:4] “normal” Christian life → told beforehand
- [2:14b-16] reasons: temptation in the world conflict
  - (anti-semitism???)

### 0.4.2. DANGEROUS FOR THE FAITH

- [3:5] temptation → our labor would be in vain
- [3:7] ...in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you

## 1. A TEST OF FAITH

- **1Thes 3:3** ...no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. (τὸ μηδένα σαίνεσθαι ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν ταύταις. αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα·)
- [3:4] we kept telling you beforehand (προελέγομεν ὑμῖν) that we were to suffer affliction,
  - → **Acts 14:21-22** When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, <sup>22</sup> strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.
  - **2Tim 3:12** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
  - **John 16:33** In the world you will have tribulation (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ θλίψιν ἔχετε). But take heart; I have overcome the world."
- [3:5] somehow the tempter had tempted you
  - → ...lead us not into temptation...

### 1.1. GENUINNESS OF FAITH

- **1Pt 1:6-7** In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, as was necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the tested genuineness of your faith (τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως) – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

### 1.2. PURIFICATION

- **1Pt 4:1-2** Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, (ὁ παθὼν σαρκὶ πέπαυται ἀμαρτίας) <sup>2</sup> so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.
  - → Rom 6 our death with Christ allows us to live in the power of His resurrected life...

## 2. THE UNIVERSAL CONFLICT

- 2:14-16 ... you suffered the same things... oppose all mankind... killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets ...God's wrath has come upon them at last!

### 2.1. THE SPIRITUAL WAR

- → your worldview! (*Monism? Determinism?*)

### 2.2. THE NATURE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

- → hated by the wicked (enmity between God and Satan)
  - **Ps 11:2** For behold, **the wicked** bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart;

## 3. IDENTIFICATION WITH JESUS AND THE CHURCH

- [5:10] ...who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him
- **4:14** For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus...
- 1:6 you received (δέχομαι) the word in much affliction (θλίψις), with the joy (χαρά) of the Holy

Spirit,

- 2:14-16 ... you suffered the same things...

### 3.1. FAITH AND LOVE

- **Gal 5:6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love
- **Phil 3:10** I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death

### 3.2. LOVE AND JOY

- → heroism
- [DENNEY] “This combination of affliction and spiritual joy, this original, paradoxical experience, is the token of election.<sup>2</sup>
- **Heb 12:2** ...Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,...

## 4. TO REMEMBER

- Be realistic (sober) in your expectations from this life.
- Your faith in Jesus is to be tested for genuineness.
- By suffering accepted in love and submission to Jesus we are set free from sinful attitudes.

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<sup>2</sup> DENNEY, J. *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, London : Hodder and Stoughton, 1906, p. 45.