

1 Thessalonians Series 3

Standing Firm in the Lord

February 19, 2016

I. WELCOME, 15 mins.

Prepare a couple of simple, fun and delightful icebreakers to help your group warm up. Help your cell group members to lay aside their busyness and tiredness and prepare their hearts to come before God.

II. WORSHIP, 20 mins.

Prayerfully choose a few songs to lead the cell group members to worship God. The worship leader would encourage members to come before the throne of God to seek God's face, and lead them into God's presence. During this time, the cell group leader will also lead the group to pray aloud for the following prayer items:

A. **MISSION ORGANIZATION:** _____, and their needs are: _____

(Please contact the church if you don't know the needs of the mission organization.)

B. CHURCH MINISTRY:

- 2/20 ISI Global Discipleship Training @ 8:30am-4pm
- 2/21 Healing Team Training.
- 3/4 TB test for Community Service @ 6:30-7:30pm. \$10 (valid for 2yrs)
- 3/4 Worship Night @ 7:30pm in Fellowship Hall
- 3/13 & 3/20 Christ-Centered Scriptural Reading Class

C. New comer: _____ Confirm new comers' name before the meeting.

For sick members, friends or relatives: _____ Please discuss how you may show your care to them.

III. WORD, 45 mins.

Through sharing and discussing God's word, the group applies it to their daily life.

A. **Sharing the message from last Sunday's sermon:** (It would be helpful if you could listen on-line once again)

1. What is the key message from last Sunday's sermon? How did God speak to you through the message?
2. How would you respond to the message? What action will you take after listening to the message?

B. Topic of the week: Standing Firm in the Lord

Verses: 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

Memorizing Verses: Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 3:7-8)

Preface:

When the believers in Thessalonica suffered from persecutions, Paul was anxious and worried because he did not know whether they would be able to withstand it. In order to know whether they could preserve their faith and love in Christ, Paul tried to go back to Thessalonica but was blocked by enemies. He could no longer bear it, so he sent Timothy to greet them and find out the believers' condition. Thank God that from Timothy's report Paul knew that the believers in Thessalonica were still retaining the love and faith in Christ. They were standing firm in the Lord even when facing attacks from the enemy.

1. Paul deeply hoped that the believers stand firm in the Lord (1 Thessalonians 2 : 17-20)

A. Paul loved the believers and was longing to see them (17-18):

(1) Paul loved them and worried about them. At that time, Paul and Silas were forced to leave the Thessalonians under the uncontrollable circumstance of persecution. Even though Paul was not able to live with them, they were always on his heart. He was worrying about whether they could stand firm in their sufferings.

(2) Satan blocked Paul: When Paul left Thessalonica his heart was torn apart because he loved them like a mother who could give up their life for them. Moreover, they were still spiritual babies in need of leadership and edification. Even though Paul and his co-workers tried to return to Thessalonica a couple of times, but Satan blocked their way.

B. Paul hoped that the believers could stand firm by relying on the Lord (19-20): When the Lord Jesus returns, he will certainly be pleased and praise the Thessalonians who stood firmly by relying on the Lord. They were still loving the Lord and people

with their unwavering faith and fervently preaching the Gospel in an environment that is filled with persecution. As a result, they became an example to the other churches. This was the reward for Paul for teaching them like a parent. It was his glory and joy and Paul could testify for them. Similarly, when we preach the Gospel and serve our brothers and sisters, and we see them faithfully relying on the Lord and become the Lord's vessels as a result. Isn't this also our joy and glory?

2. Paul sent Timothy to strengthen the believers (1 Thessalonians 3:1-5): Paul was worried about the believers but was blocked by Satan. He couldn't stand it any longer and, therefore, he sent Timothy to visit and teach the believers in Thessalonica.

A. Won't let Satan lure the believers away from God with persecutions (1-2, 5):

(1). Paul wanted to conserve the fruit of the Gospel: Persecution is commonly used by Satan to lure away believers from God. Paul wouldn't allow Satan's sabotages to cause any loss of the fruit of the Gospel. However, he couldn't go there personally and had to send Timothy to strengthen them by telling them what he wanted to tell them.

(2). Timothy was a coworker with Paul: Paul intentionally called Timothy "brother" and mentioned that he is a minister of the gospel of Christ to show that Timothy could teach them instead of Paul.

B. The Believers' faith was strengthened through trials (3-4):

It is common when believers go through trials, that they become unsettled, which causes their faith to be shaken. Paul reminded them that those who follow the Lord will have trials. Paul encouraged them with his own example: he said in the past that he would be afflicted and persecuted and it all came true, and yet he stood firm in the Lord. This is very important to us because as we follow God's road, we will be met with trials and attacks from the enemies. But we still have to stand firm and rely on God. In the end, God will make us victorious (Please see James 1:2-4).

3. Paul was encouraged by the Thessalonians' strengthened faith (3:6-13): Timothy came back with the report of the Thessalonians' endurance amidst the persecutions. It not only cleared away Paul's worries but also encouraged him and filled him with joy.

A. Thessalonians' faith and love (6-9): (1). The believers' love and faith comforted Paul (6-7): Paul had a profound connection with the Thessalonians in the Lord. On the one hand, Paul loved them and they loved Paul and longed to see Paul come back. On the other hand, Paul was deeply concerned about whether they could stand firm in the Lord while being attacked by the enemy. Yes, they did! They upheld the faith and overcame the difficult environment they were facing. This brought great comfort to Paul. (2). Paul really lived because the believers were standing firm (8): The Thessalonians met Paul's expectations for them when they stood firm in the Lord amidst persecution. The joy it brought to Paul was immeasurable and it surpassed everything. Paul's life was enriched and more meaningful because of it. (3). Paul thanked God for the Thessalonians (9): When the believers stood firm in the Lord amidst the persecutions and allowed God to lead them, God started to work in their lives and strengthened them to overcome all attacks. Paul thanked God for leading the Thessalonians.

B. Paul prayed for the Thessalonians for faith, hope, and love (10-13): Although the Thessalonians had enough faith to overcome the trials they were currently facing, Paul was still hoping to go back. He wanted to teach them and strengthen their faith further so that they will be prepared for stronger attacks in the future. He prayed day and night for God to remove all the obstacles and let the road for him to return to the city of Thessalonica be unobstructed. Paul also prayed for God to help them so they could not only love each other but also the local people and preach the Gospel to them, just like how Paul had loved them and preached the Gospel to them. Finally, he prayed for them so that they could live out a life that glorifies God before the second coming of Jesus, and that God would help them to live a holy life that was pleasing to God.

Discussion (please choose the topic according to the needs of the members):

1. What is the thing that you want the most for people that you cared for to do for you?
2. How do we know Paul loved the Thessalonians? How would you describe the relationship between Paul and the Thessalonians?
3. What did Paul long for the most? Why was this so important to the believers? (hint: 1 Thessalonians 2:19)
4. How do we stand firm in trials? Please list a few examples from your life (God's Word, other people's examples, not stopping fellowship, etc.)
5. Please share one testimony in your life about love, faith, and hope.

Prayer:

Dear Abba Father, we thank you and praise you. Thank you for using the example of the Thessalonians standing firm in their trials and persecutions to encourage us. Oh Lord, you are our strength and help. During the trials please give us the heart to endure the persecutions so that we can bravely stand out to glorify you. We pray that Lord you would help us in our daily lives to live out the testimony of loving you and people. We pray day and night not only for the brothers and sisters in the church, but we also continue to pray for our families and friends who do not know you to turn to you. Our prayer and thanksgiving are in the precious and holy name of the Lord Jesus, Amen!

4. WORK (Pray for each other), 10 mins.

Please break into group of 2 or 3 to pray for each other's needs.