

In the Sight of God

1 Thessalonians 1:2 – 3

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~ Our Spiritual Safari laid a comprehensive introduction in our previous report to this first epistle that Paul the apostle wrote in his ministry. This first letter Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica is a response to questions they asked. It deals primarily with the rapture of the church. I know there are many today who deny the rapture of the church; and they always want to argue about pre-millennialism, and all manner of prophecy, but they never study it in an educated, systematic, competent manner. It's truly unfortunate for them for several reasons; but primarily because rapture-deniers aren't looking for our Blessed Hope, the Lord Jesus Christ. They're looking for something else. No, friends, if you do not understand the truth of the rapture, then you are looking for antichrist – because antichrist is your god. Also, to deny the rapture of the church is to flatly reject *ALL* of the writings of *ALL* of the prophets – we just saw that undeniably in Isaiah. So, by de facto, denying the pre-tribulation rapture reveals a wholly illiterate condition concerning the Word of God, and places you squarely in the realm of unbelief. Make no mistake: it simply cannot be otherwise....

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

~ Paul prayed for all of the churches he founded; so, he must have had quite and impressive prayer list! Paul was particularly thankful for this church in Thessalonica because they were a model church in many regards. If you are responsible for founding a Bible-believing and Bible teaching church, then you have something to be very thankful for, too. Naturally, Paul was thankful for *ALL* of the churches that the Spirit of God had led him to establish; but the church in Philippi, and this church in Thessalonica,

were the examples for the others, to be sure. Paul should also be an example for each of us to make a prayer list of individuals, churches, organizations and even nations, and regularly pray for them. Prayer is the single-most effective ministry there is.

Alright, the number three is significant in Scripture. Most people focus on seven; but, of course, three signifies, first and foremost, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit as the Holy Trinity. As with the rapture, many people deny the teaching of the Trinity in the Bible. Well, the Trinity is an enigmatic mystery that is almost impossible to explain; so, considering their refusal to properly study the Bible, I fully understand their confusion. The word "Trinity" isn't in the Bible, but the Bible teaches the Trinity. Unfortunately, explanation is not conducive to this "*instant*" age. It cannot be explained in just a few moments or few short sentences. Most so-called Christians are so half-witted that they cannot even sit still through a report like these safari reports. They never show up at Bible study. Have you ever heard a sermon on the Trinity? I have only ever heard one; and it was utterly off-base. I won't bore you with the details of that sermon. "*Modal Trinitarianism*" is a total lie, too, by the way. God said, at the Tower of Babel, "... let 'us' go down..." - but Scripture also says "*the Lord*" scattered them at Babel. We have only One God; not three - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – One God - all have the same nature and character. Three Persons – One God.

A few very poor examples of how God exists in the three Persons of the Godhead - are: (1) the same way music is made. There are only three structural tones from which *ALL* music is created: tonic, subdominant and dominant. That's the harmony of Heaven – and the Bible speaks of that harmony – and the Bible has a lot to say about music. (2) Water exists in three states: steam, ice, and flowing liquid. It's all water. Steam is the Holy Spirit because of the power it holds. Ice is the rigidity of the Father, and an uncompromising holiness; and Christ is the Living Water of life which quenches our soul. (3) When we pass light through a prism, we have three primary colors: red, yellow and blue. Push them back through the prism and you get one white light! Without light, there would be no color; in fact, everything is colorless in this world, but we can see colors based on what can or cannot absorb light. (4) Man was made in the likeness of God, and in

His image, and man is also a trinity: body, soul, and spirit. If we actually understood ourselves, then we could better understand the Trinity – but – we don't – so, we can't.

Further, our universe exists in three dimensions: time, space and matter. (1) Time is broken up into only three aspects: past, present and future. (2) Space has but three measurements: length, width and height. (3) Matter exists in three principles: solid, liquid, and gas. Matter may also be stated in three other forms: plasma, Bose-Einstein condensates, and neutron stars. However, any way you slice the atom – there are only three states of matter. Concerning a fourth and fifth dimension – they don't exist in this universe as we comprehend it presently. Alright, I also realize my explanation here is totally and wholly inadequate; but it may put you on the right path concerning the Trinity.

And there's another set of three's found in verse three; and those are the three Christian graces: faith, hope, and love. We examined these carefully in first Corinthians chapter thirteen – and we saw the greatest is love. All of these occurrences of three in Scripture are no coincidence, friends. Further, man himself is a trinity of body, soul, and spirit. I interpret that a little differently than contemporary wisdom – but we'll get to that in chapter five verse twenty-three of this epistle. You may want to go ahead and read that verse now. When Adam and Eve were brought together, God told them that they would become one flesh; and that happened in their children. Two plus one equals three every time. Moreover, if you have ever studied plane geometry, you'll know that three lines always form a complete plane. In Genesis, only three sons of Adam are named to advance the account. I'm sure Adam and Eve had many children – but the only ones mentioned are Cain, Abel and Seth. I could actually carry this out ad infinitum; but I trust you get the point.

The *past* is a work of faith. The *present* is a labor of love. Our *future* is a patience of hope. With that, Paul presents the biography of a Christian. These are the abiding and eternally permanent features of our Christian lives. Of course, I realize these are only comprehended as qualities in the abstract. The concrete principles are way up above me; because I am way down here; and I can only ask, "... *what is faith, what is love and what is*

hope?” Getting those elements out of the realm of theory and into the reality of my life is the entire problem. Maybe that’s not your problem – but it sure is my problem. Only when Paul takes them off of the beautiful Isle of Somewhere and writes them into Holy Writ can I even begin to understand them. Follow along very, very carefully.

Verse nine reads, “... turning to God from idols” — which is the work of faith. “*To serve the true God*” is our labor of love. “*To wait for His Son from Heaven*” is our Blessed Hope.” So, the theme of looking for our Blessed Hope carries out all the way through this epistle – and the entire Bible. This becomes complicated because we have been told that our faith is a gift from God; but here Paul also says it is a work. Well, Paul and James do not contradict each other, because James said, “... *show me your works by your faith and I’ll show you my faith by my works.*” That’s how we prove these things to others. Some people think James wrote to contradict Paul. The problem with that is James wrote his epistle *before* Paul was even converted. To say Paul wrote to contradict James is simply untenable and unsustainable. No, friends, they’re both talking about the same thing.

Faith is the response of the soul to the Word of God. When we respond to Scripture, we will begin to walk by faith. Paul has already said we walk by faith and not by sight. Jesus said, “*this is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent*” - John chapter six verse twenty-nine. So, we don’t come to God by works; we come to God by faith alone. However, a living faith is going to produce works, my friends. If you don’t have those works of faith, then you don’t have faith – because that would be impossible. Remember, the apostles went fishing all night but didn’t catch anything. Jesus told them to go back to fishing again. Simon Peter said, “... *Master, we have toiled all night but we’ve taken nothing.*” Well, that was a declaration of naked truth from an expert fisherman who knew the Sea of Galilee very well. Even so, Simon Peter went on to say, “*nevertheless, at Thy Word I will let down the nets again.*” We need a whole lot more people acting upon the Word of God today; and the work of God is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. When we act on faith, we present a living work that the world can see, touch, hear and understand.

The same principle is illustrated in the life of Cain and Abel. Cain was a sinner by nature, but also by *choice* and acts. We're told that Abel, by *FAITH*, offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous. Well, it wasn't because Abel was some sweet little Sunday school boy. No, Abel was a sinner who believed God – and when he believed God – then he brought the proper sacrifice and responded to the Word of God and was saved. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is our *only* connection to God Almighty; and it communicates His truth to our hearts, causing a response.

Paul didn't suggest, *"I don't think it's a good idea to worship idols."* No, he went and preached the death, burial and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Then, the Holy Spirit did His work in that group of people. Idolatry wasn't repulsive to them – it was their way of life. But they turned to God when Paul presented Christ according to the Word of God. I see so many baby Christians running around acting like an authority on Scripture and saying, *"... you must repent"* - but believing has to come first, or *NO ONE* will ever repent of anything. Indeed, they cannot repent on their own volition. If you tell a lost man to repent, you can count on two things happening: one, they won't – because they can't; and two, you'll never have another chance to witness to that person again – because they won't trust you handling Scripture. Believing God constitutes conversion; and that's the work of faith in a nutshell, my beloved.

Regarding love: God never saved anyone by love. No, God only saves by grace. By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves – it is a gift from God. He chose us. Grace is His love in action. Labor is foreign, contrary to, and wholly opposite of love. The two don't mix. If you love to do something, it isn't laborious. However, love will labor; and, when it does, it's something you *want* to do. Jesus said, *"IF IF IF you love Me keep My commandments..."* That's a pretty BIG *"if"* for most Christian's, my friends. If you don't love Christ, there is no sense trying to keep His commands. And if you do not love Christ Jesus, keeping the commandments won't do you a bit of good. If you look at the faces going to work on Monday morning, as you drive down the freeway, you're going to see a whole bunch of unhappy people. Ninety-seven out of a hundred of those people are tense, anxious, uptight, and driving as fast and furiously as they possibly can to a place they

don't want to be, to perform tasks all day long that they hate. It's wonderful to love what you do. If church work or ministry is a burden to you, then God would say to you, "give it up." You'll never be effective anyways. God doesn't want it like that, and He won't use it. That's the labor of love that should characterize the believer today. Now, I understand we all get weary *IN* the work — but never *OF* the work — and that just happens to make all the difference in the world. Our love for God is expressed in our obedience. The only way we can demonstrate that we love God is through obedience. We can talk all day long about being a dedicated Christian — which I get so tired of hearing — because that crowd never proves it by their obedience.

Patience of hope means we turn from idols to serve the True and Living God — the Lord Jesus Christ. The writer of this Spiritual Safari loves Jesus; you can just write that down. I don't run around shouting how much I love Him because, if it isn't obvious to you, then you don't read these reports anyways — or you just don't understand me. We're waiting in patience and in hope for Christ to return from Heaven. There are so many people in the world who have literally no hope for tomorrow. How tragic. Everything we do in the world should be done in the hope of our Savior returning to call us to meet Him in the air. Without that Blessed Hope, things become hopeless. It happens. Of course, there is a false hope, too; such as mankind erroneously believing that this world is going to get better, and that there will be peace without Christ. Their lives are futile; and one day it all shatters like a burst bubble. So many people follow a pseudo-pied-piper, playing a pious and proud tune. Their end is never pretty, you may be sure. Sophocles, a rank pagan, said, "*... it is hope that maintains most of mankind.*" There is no medicine quite as potent as a living and real hope; one that brings the joy of an expectation of something better tomorrow. Hope springs eternal in the life of a believer. What is your hope today? Is it in a politician? Is it in money? Is it in something man-made? If it is, then may God have mercy on you — because you have no hope. Let's steer our bark with the hope of the Lord Jesus Christ at the bow, and leave our fears astern ~

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