

**BRIDE****FAITHFUL UNDER PRESSURE**

1 Thessalonians 2:17 – 3:13

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**MESSAGE NOTES**

The marks of a church that thrives even while facing hardship:

1. Commitment to relationships even though relating is always harder than isolating from the needs of others. (2:17 – 20)

*It is not God's intention that we should be in ourselves adequate to our tasks. Rather, He wants that we should be inadequate ... The church is always in a crisis and always will be. There will be difficulties, limitations, insoluble problems, lack of people and money, a menacing outlook, endless misunderstandings and misrepresentations. We are not only to do our work despite these things; they are precisely the conditions requisite for the doing of it. — Tim Keller, sermon notes*

2. Awareness of the very real spiritual battle being waged, even though most people are focused on material pursuits. (3:1 – 5)

*Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. — 1 Peter 5:8 – 9*

*War is not just one among many themes in the Bible. It is the backdrop for the whole Story, the context for everything else. And what is He fighting for? Our freedom and restoration. The glory of God is man fully alive. In the meantime, Paul says, arm yourselves, and the first piece of equipment he urges us to don is the belt of truth (Ephesians 6:10 – 18). We arm ourselves by getting a good, solid grip on our situation, by getting some clarity on the battle over our lives. God's intentions toward us are life and those intentions are resolutely opposed. Let me say this again: the story of your life is the story of the long and brutal assault on your heart by the one who knows what you could be and fears it. — John Eldredge, *The Ransomed Heart**

*Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. — 1 Peter 4:12 – 14*

3. Determination to do everything possible to help each other stand strong even though that requires sacrifice. (3:6 – 10)

*Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear. — Philippians 1:12 – 14*

4. Praying constantly with and for each other even though it is easier to become absorbed in our own difficulties. (3:11 – 13)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What impacted you from ENCOUNTER on the weekend?
- As you read back over 1 Thessalonians 2:17 – 3:13 what is the overarching impression you get from this part of the letter? How have the Thessalonians been faithful even under pressure?
- What kinds of things in Paul's own background would have made him feel real compassion for these people as they were being persecuted?
- How did Paul show his compassion in practical terms? How would this have impacted these new believers? What are some strategic ways we can encourage new believers at ENCOUNTER?
- What concerns does Paul have for these people in light of his being away? Who is behind the opposition they're feeling?
- What sort of opposition do you face in your own journey of faith?
- What sort of defenses do we have against our enemy? (Consider having various group members answer that question based on these passages: Ephesians 6, Psalm 119:11, Psalm 25:15, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Proverbs 4:14,15, Matthew 5:29, Colossians 3:2).
- What sort of things is Paul praying about for the Thessalonians?
- How do you think God could use you in the days to come to be a greater encouragement to others in the body of Christ?
- What is one very practical way you could incorporate Paul's example into your own life this week?