



YOUR FAITH MATTERS TO OTHERS

Week #14; Sept. 20, 2026, 11AM

Taught at: Ridgeview Classical Schools
1800 S. Lemay Ave., Fort Collins, CO
www.solidbreadcommunity.com

(Announcements about the conference, next Potluck [Oct. 11 – signup and intent])

Review:

- It was two weeks ago that we had our last lesson in **1 Thessalonians**.
- Last Sunday, we had a special Q&A time with three of the speakers from our conference – so today we return to our normal routines.
- I confess it's been a chaotic last week and a half for me. Lots of details swirling around, lots of follow-up and communications, lots of tabs and documents open on my computer, etc. and so I inadvertently submitted the wrong title for this week's lesson.
- This week's title should be **"Your Faith Matters to Others."** The title and lesson details that were in the e-letter this past week are for the lesson *after* this one. My apologies....
- But let's review to bring ourselves up to speed...

NOTE: We learned last time that Paul was deeply concerned about the new Thessalonian believers. Paul himself had to stay in Athens, but his mind and heart were in Thessalonica.

- He was afraid that the persecution and trials of these new Thessalonian Christians might have shaken their faith.
- He knew Satan was opposing the ministry he'd had with these new believers. He knew that because Satan seldom attacks from one point. He often attacks from several.
- Paul was aware of Satan's oppositions in his own life, and so he was naturally concerned for these new believers too.
- Things got to where Paul became so worried that he felt he had to do something, and so he decided to send Timothy back to check up on this new little church.
- Today, we see that Timothy returns to Paul with good news: these new believers in Thessalonica are standing firm. They are holding up well under trial.
- This report doesn't just relieve Paul's anxiety; it gives him a whole new burst of life, energy, and joy (**READ: 1 Thess. 3:6-8**).

NOTE: As I said, this lesson is called “**Your Faith Matters to Others,**” and so the FOUR main points of this lesson are about ways our faith has a role to play in the faith of others. They are:

1. A true faith brings encouragement
2. A strong faith endures hardship
3. A report of faith provides comfort
4. A firm faith inspires joy

A. A true faith brings encouragement –

NOTE: Let’s recall the context here. Paul was concerned, worried, and he confesses in **vs. 5** that he was even “*afraid*.” So, Paul’s been waiting with great anxiety for Timothy’s report.

1. Timothy returns to Paul with the good news that these new believers’ faith and love have endured - - and Paul is greatly encouraged.
 - The effect of Timothy’s report reminds us of what King Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 25:25**, “*Like cold water to a weary soul, so is good news from a distant land.*”
 - This good news that Timothy gives to Paul – this report that the Thessalonians’ faith had not collapsed under severe testing – this report that they were standing firm in their salvation and in their convictions – it was THIS good news that convinced Paul their faith was genuine.
 - It was at THIS point that Paul knew they indeed were God’s **elect**, and that’s why he wrote them with assurance back in **Ch. 1:4**, “*For we know. brothers loved by God, that **He has chosen you.***”
2. As we’ve had reinforced to us before, a **true** faith shows up when it needs to. A **true** faith is one that continues to flourish under pressure.
 - A **true** faith is one that does not abandon the essentials of a walk with Christ when it is tested.
 - This is why we learned Paul had been ‘*afraid*’ in our last lesson. He knew a **true** faith is measured by its tenacity under trial.
 - Not knowing what was going on with these new Thessalonian believers, not knowing how they were holding up under all their persecution, Paul sent Timothy in **vs. 5** to “***find out about your faith.***”
 - We’ve mentioned **James 1:2-4** many times over the years in SBC. The principles of this passage are straightforward:
 - Severe tests of our faith will come.
 - Our attitude in those times should be ‘joy’ (that’s a conscious and willful thankfulness that we have an opportunity to see if our faith is ‘the real deal’).
 - Our **true** faith – when it’s tested under trial – responds the right way: it develops perseverance, maturity, and completeness in us.

(**NOTE:** Let me remind you of Josh Sullivan’s own words in his prayer request to each of you in this week’s e-letter after he was suddenly diagnosed with Stage 4 colon cancer, *“We ask that beyond prayers for healing, that God’s will and righteous plan be the focus - that we are able to rest in His love and glory and be comforted through this difficult time.”*)

- Those are not the words of one whose faith is collapsing under severe trial. Those are words which understand the greater purpose of this test.
 - Those are words which show peace, and a faith that is fixed on the things which are most important.
 - (And if I might say so....) those are words which circle back to this point of this lesson: **“a true faith brings encouragement.”**
3. I urge you to look with fresh eyes at what Paul is saying here: “The faithfulness of other believers strengthens us and encourages us, even when we ourselves - for whatever reasons - are discouraged, worried, weighed down.....and even afraid.
- That’s why Paul says in **vs. 5**, *“I was afraid,”* and then he says in **vs. 6**, *“BUT NOW...”* (something’s changed here): *“But now when Timothy came to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love....”*
 - Timothy’s report had to things that Paul desperately wanted to hear:
 - **#1** - They had a **true** faith – they had not abandoned Jesus Christ because of the pressures and trials they were facing.
 - Instead, in the words of **James Ch. 1**, they were *“holding up with conscious joy; they were persevering, maturing, and becoming complete in their faith.”*
 - **#2** – These new Thessalonian Christians continued to love Paul and their fellow believers.

NOTE: Paul knew that - in addition to the importance that faith holds up under trial - this kind of love is one of the clearest evidences that a body of believers is spiritually healthy.

- This love by the Thessalonians was clear: it was expressed and it was demonstrated.
- This is why Paul wrote back in **Ch. 1:3** about these new believers’ *“work of faith and labor of love.”*
- It’s why Paul wrote to the church in Galatia in **Galatians 5:6**, *“faith which worketh by love.”*
- (And it’s why John wrote in **John 13:35**): Jesus Christ’s followers – those who have **true** faith – are **KNOWN** by their love. It’s more than words. It’s action.

B. A strong faith endures hardship –

NOTE: This point overlaps with several things I brought up in the last point – particularly the issues from **James 1:2-4**.

1. The straightforward takeaway here is this: hardship will come. Tests will come.

- Those challenges are not optional; they are guaranteed. It's why Paul says to his protégé, Timothy, in **2 Timothy 3:12**, *"....all who live Godly will suffer persecution."*
 - I've known many people in my life who just 'talk the talk.' I've watched as they chimed in on a discussion and talked about faith.
 - I've listened as they jumped into conversations and contributed what they know. They want to be perceived as 'knowledgeable.'
 - I've observed as they dressed nice on Sundays – laughed, smiled, and enjoyed the routines of cultural and institutional 'church.'
 - I've listened as they casually and easily talk about 'faith **under** fire' or 'faith **in** the fire..."
 - And then - - - and **then**, I've grimaced as they totally collapsed in rage, as they wallowed in self-entitlement, as they abandoned all self-control, or as they screamed "Unfair!" to God – when they face their OWN challenges and tests.
 - The bottom line is it's easy to appear to be one thing to everyone else, when **in fact** you are quite another thing to God.
 - People like this do not endure when tests and trials come their way. Tests expose them. Their trials prove they've just been putting on an act.
 - These things are not signs of a **strong** faith, but of weak faith. As this point says, '**a strong faith endures hardship.**' Real faith shows up.
 - A big part of that endurance is HOW we conduct ourselves, and WHAT we say when we are tested, because *"out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"* (**Cf. Luke 6:45**).
 - If there is a weak foundation of faith in our lives, that will show up in our actions and words when we face trials.
 - (And) if there is a **strong** foundation of faith in our lives, that – too! – will show up in our actions and words when we face trials.
- Notice another thing here - - Paul was not encouraged because these new Thessalonian believers had **escaped** hardship. He was encouraged because they were **enduring** hardship.
 - A **strong** faith is not demonstrated in the absence of trouble and difficulty.
 - A **strong** faith is demonstrated in the MIDDLE of trouble and difficulty.
 - Persecution TESTS true faith, but it does not DEFEAT it.

C. (Here's our next point): A report of faith provides comfort –

NOTE: Paul says in **vs. 7**, *"....we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith."*

1. I find this quite remarkable – Paul is in distress; he is suffering in his own ways, and he is enduring through his own trials. He admits this.

- But the message that these new believers' faith was enduring during THEIR trials became a vital source of comfort to him. It's because....
 - Paul was not fixated on himself - he was preoccupied with others.
 - He was not striving for temporary achievements – he was pursuing eternal rewards.
 - He was not living by the parameters and definitions of this earth – he was living as a citizen of heaven.
- I think there is a powerful lesson for each of us here:
 - You may not realize it, but YOUR faithfulness under trial – your **report of faith provides comfort** and encouragement to others.
 - It's because you are an example. You are showing others "It CAN be done!" (and) you are showing them HOW to do it.
 - You are inspiring others to have courage, and to live out their faith the same way as you are....
 - You may be going through a test. You may be hurting. You may privately be experiencing fear and anxiety - - but it's not just about YOU.
 - Others are watching how you are coping and how you are staying faithful. Others are adjusting their own attitudes and views because of your example.
 - You may not know it, but you are providing a good report when you persevere in your trials with a Godly attitude, with Godly words, and with Godly actions.
 - And you are **comforting** others, and you are inspiring them to learn from what you're dealing with. And God Himself will **reward** you for that....

D. (and here's my last point) A firm faith inspires joy –

NOTE: This 'joy' is based on things that matter the most...

1. Paul says in **vs. 8**, *"...for now we really live since you are standing firm in the Lord."*
 - Paul's joy is restored. The steadfast faith of these believers breathed new life into him.
 - Their spiritual life mattered to Paul. He had invested into them, he loved them, he was concerned for them - - and when he learned of their **firm faith, it inspired his joy.**
2. When you say you are ministering to others, when you say you want to be used by God, that is *MUCH* more than just giving people the truth—it is about loving people enough to **care** whether they **continue** walking in that truth.
 - This is something we see in Paul's example. He taught these new believers the truth. He gave them the Word of God.
 - But now Paul is deeply concerned whether they are continuing to **STAY** in that truth. Are they still walking in it? He cares that **their faith is firm.**

- Paul knows it's easy to SAY one thing - - but it's a different matter to BE it, especially when the going gets tough.
- And this is why the Thessalonian believers' **firm faith inspired Paul's joy**. This is why he said, '*now he really lives.*'
- It's Paul basically celebrating, "Life is worth living!" His purpose for being on this earth is affirmed.
- He has centered his joy on their spiritual welfare, and he is seeing the fruit of his labor.

NOTE: Let's remember again - Paul has been deeply concerned about these Thessalonians. He's been living with anxiety about them. He feared that persecution and pressure might have disrupted their faith. We learned that last time.

But now Timothy returns with a good report: **they are standing firm**. Nothing is shaking them. Their faith is legit. This report doesn't just relieve Paul's anxiety - - it gives him renewed life and joy. He's found his 'second wind.'

NOTE: Let me start wrapping up by asking some 'application questions,' and I want you to seriously reflect on these. I have **THREE**:

1. "Does YOUR faith inspire other believers?"

- Be honest. As they watch you growing (are you growing?) – as they watch you coping (are you coping?) – and as they watch you living out the things that you claim to believe....are you encouraging them with **your** example?
- I know plenty of people that would rather not think about this question. And if they're forced to, their deflection reply is, "Of course." They don't want to take an honest look in the mirror. I hope this is not your kind of reaction.
- **This is a question that carries a lot of weight:** "Does your faith inspire other believers?"
- Don't evaluate yourself by the standards and institutions of the greater church today, as illustrated by Laodicea (**Cf. Rev. 3:14-22**).
- Jesus says in **Rev. 3:16** that He will reject this institution, so don't fall for any cultural and institutional ideas that have no basis in God's Word.
- (And) Don't fall into the trap of evaluating yourself by any "safety in numbers" measure.
- Jesus says in **Matt. 7:13** that the way is broad that leads to destruction, so being part of the 'in crowd' is more dangerous than not.
- **Again, be honest.** Does your faith inspire other believers? It OUGHT to. And if it's not – you have some things you need to get right with God.

2. (Here's another question): "Would someone else's faith be strengthened by watching how YOU respond to adversity?"

- Again – no 'knee-jerk' answers here just because you don't want to admit the right answer.

- We live in a ‘me first’ society. Our cultural processes are crafted to encourage self-entitlement, a ‘victim mindset,’ and zero personal responsibility.
- It’s easy to let the secular world impact our faith rather than the other way around.
- Adversity **WILL** come to you. Chances are it will take several forms at once. One kind of adversity usually sets up others.
- So, are you going to strengthen others’ faith by how you respond - - or will that test become another means to expose the **real** you? Will your faith be shown to others as ‘just an act?’
- Tough times are coming. Things are going to get harder, not easier. It’s why we need to fix our eyes and heart on our ‘*blessed hope*’ (**Cf. Titus 2:13**).
- Jesus said in **John 16:33**, “*In this world you will have trouble.*” Tests and trials are a certainty. No insurance policy prevents them.
- When you respond to adversity the right way, when your faith shows **up** under trial, you will strengthen others who are on that narrow path with you.

3. (Then lastly) “Are **YOU** a source of encouragement or discouragement to the people around you?”

- Let me clear about this one. I know people I don’t want to be around. You may wince when you hear me say that, but you could say the same thing. I’m just being more honest than you.
- Why do I know people that I don’t want to be around? Because, frankly, they sap my energy. They are depressing to my faith.
- They live defeated, angry, resentful, depressed, and grumpy - - and they are focused on themselves. And so, they drag me down – they never lift me up. They are “constant Eeyores.”
- When life throws them a curve ball, I hear about it four ways: phone call, email, text, and in-person.
- They **WANT** me to know they’re not coping well. I get it! We all face tough battles. Some of us routinely use our struggles to gain some sort of personal attention; others of us keep our struggles very private.
- But here’s the operative question we all need to face considering what God’s Word tells us, “Are you a source of discouragement or encouragement to other people around you?”
- I hope and pray you are an encouragement. There is **NO PLACE** in the faithful believer’s life to be a discouragement to others.
- Your faithfulness to Christ is never supposed to be just about **you**. Your steadfastness, and your endurance under testing, is meant to become someone else’s encouragement, and to become their comfort and joy.

NEXT TIME: Paul outlines what having a right heart for fellow believers looks like. It's a heart of love. That love should show up **in our prayers**. We will learn 'how' to pray for those we fellowship with.



**SOLID
BREAD**

Solid Bread Community was started with a passion to teach the truth of God's Word – every part of it, as it was divinely inspired to be understood.

The rules are simple. First, teach what IS there. Don't pretend the Bible is not saying what it is saying.

Second, don't teach what is NOT there. Don't force a passage to mean something it really doesn't.

And – number three, if the Bible states it plainly, we should too.

Solid Bread Community, PO Box 431, Windsor, CO 80550

Website: www.solidbreadcommunity.com

Email: connect@solidbreadcommunity.com

Please follow Solid Bread Community on Facebook and subscribe to our YouTube channel.