

The Beloved Community

2 Thess 2:13-3:5



Background: God is love: a community of perfect love, flowing between Father and Son through the Spirit. In generosity he shares his love in creation and in redemption. When we respond to the gospel in faith we enter the Beloved Community. The Thessalonian Christians were a local chapter. They were the Lord's beloved, and they were beloved of Paul. Their present suffering did not indicate that God did not love them. Paul prayed that they be drawn more fully into God's love. On this Valentine's Day, do you feel part of the Beloved Community?

Sermon Text: 2 Thess 2:13-3:5 (NIV)

¹³ But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴ He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁵ So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

¹⁶ May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, ¹⁷ encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

¹ As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. ² And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith. ³ But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. ⁴ We have confidence in the Lord that you are

doing and will continue to do the things we command. ⁵ *May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.*

Discussion Questions

1. Preparation

- a. As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out to you most?
- b. What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- c. What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?

2. Sermon questions (pick 3)

- a. What good news did you hear from the service Sunday?
- b. If we did a word association game and someone said "God," what is the first word that would come to mind? Is it love, or judgment, or something else? Why?
- c. Do you tend to doubt God's love for you? Why or why not? What could help you remember God's love for you? In the sermon, Bernard talked about reading scripture. Maybe a good exercise is to find a Psalm that speaks of God's love and say it throughout this week. My favorite one is this:
 - *Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever* (Ps 136:1).
- d. The creeds are another way to remember God's love and remember that He is for us. Do you find life in saying the creeds or are they rote repetition for you? Why or why not?
- e. Respond to this statement about suffering and tragedy:
 - "Don't allow questions that you can't understand to distract you from the glorious certainties you already know." – A quote from a pastor after a tragic car accident during Bernard's childhood.
- f. Bernard said that suffering is a part of being a follower of Jesus. But, we can endure together as the beloved community, like the Thessalonians.
 - Is this an encouragement to you? Why or why not?
 - Are you finding it difficult to stand firm in your faith during the pandemic? Why or why not?