

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

Dear Members and Friends of Desert Hills Lutheran,

I started a new Bible Study today on I Thessalonians. It is Paul's letter to a small church in Thessalonica, a city named after Alexander the Great's half-sister. Paul, Silas, and Timothy started the church there, but it had a rocky beginning. Paul started proclaiming the gospel at the synagogue of the Jews. That was his normal pattern. However, the Jews rejected what Paul was saying about a Messiah who suffered and rose from the dead. They were forced out of town, but the church grew.

Paul later sends a letter to them. The first three verses are: ***1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. 2 We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly 3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.***

First Paul offers grace and peace. He thanks God for them. And then says he prays for them, but it is a specific prayer, a prayer of three things: their work of faith, their labor of love, and their hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. Faith, hope, and love, three pillars of the Christian faith. Paul uses these three words often together. He mentions the three later, in chapter 5.8. He mentions faith, hope, and love in Romans 5.1-5, I Corinthians 13.13, and Galatians 5.5-6.

Every healthy church and every healthy Christian have a strong balance of these three: faith, hope, and love. Paul gives away the one he thinks is the most important in I Corinthians 13.13 "And now faith, hope, and love abide these three, and the greatest of these is love." We falter at times with one or more of them. We can believe our faith is waning, our hope weak, and that we are just not worthy of love. That is when we must snap out of it and turn to God who is the source of all three. We ask God for them and then work and labor to make them gifts to others. On this Wednesday, I pray these three for all who read this: faith, hope, and the greatest of these is love.

Blessings,

Pastor Martin