

A COMMENDABLE CONGREGATION

I. **A growing faith (2 Thessalonians 1:3).**

- A. The Thessalonians were a group that faced persecution from the beginning (Acts 17:5-9).
- B. The letters to the Thessalonians are believed to have been the first two inspired letters written by Paul.
- C. These brethren were in the midst of difficult circumstances and they are commended for the growth of their faith.
- D. Hopefully we know what Romans 10:17 says.
 - 1. The only way faith can grow is through a study of God's revealed word.
 - 2. The Thessalonians, despite the persecution they faced, studied what God had revealed to them and it caused their faith to grow.
- E. Could West Walker be commended for her members having a growing faith?
- F. There have been ample opportunities to hear the gospel here this year.
 - 1. We have had special days, gospel meetings and our VBS at which we could hear the gospel.
 - 2. We have worshiped every Lord's Day.
 - 3. We also have Bible classes that could be attended by all ages.
- G. These are all wonderful ways to grow in faith, but there is no greater way than to let God's word speak to us daily.
 - 1. Could it be said of us that we read something from or about God's word every day?
 - 2. What about five or six days out of the week?
- H. Paul commanded us to let God's word dwell in us richly.
 - 1. The only way this can take place is by reading God's word.
 - 2. This is what the Thessalonians had done (1 Thessalonians 2:13).
 - a. Notice that it effectually worked in them.
 - b. This means it made them stronger.

II. **Strong brotherly love (2 Thessalonians 1:3).**

- A. In this same verse, the Thessalonians were commended by Paul for their love for one another abounding.
 - 1. Abounding means increasing.
 - 2. The strength of their love for one another was growing.
- B. Multiple scriptures in the New Testament speak to the need of brotherly love.
 - 1. Jesus said that it is a badge of discipleship (John 13:35).
 - 2. Paul commanded it (Romans 12:10).
 - 3. The Hebrews writer simply stated: "Let brotherly love continue" (13:1).
- C. These brethren had already been commended for this wonderful attribute in Paul's first letter to them (4:9).
- D. Brotherly love is not limited to inside the building.
 - 1. We have many who are sick and hurting and we need to show

them they are loved and remembered.

2. Brotherly love looks out for those who are hurting or sick and reaches out to them.

III. **Support of missionaries (Philippians 1:4-5).**

- A. Paul commended the Philippian congregation for supporting him in his work of preaching the gospel.
- B. This is seen even later in this letter (4:14-16).
- C. It is a great privilege to be able to help support those who are preaching the gospel as missionaries.
 1. These men and women give a great deal of their time and effort in places where the work is difficult.
 2. At times, some even sacrifice their safety to do so.
- D. There are many out there who lack funding but still stay hard at work teaching the gospel to those who are lost.
 1. They spend untold hours learning the local language and customs.
 2. They spend untold hours reaching out to the lost in the area into which they've moved.
- E. It takes money to go to these places, whether it is here in the States or some foreign field, if we have the ability to help.
- F. One of the great things about this congregation is that it has always, at least as long as I've been a part of it, been actively involved in mission work.
 1. I'm thankful to be a part of a congregation that sees the need for this.
 2. This is something that I hope and pray continues on as long as this congregation exists.

IV. **Standing for the truth (Revelation 2:2-3, 6).**

- A. Not everything was right with the congregation at Ephesus when John was inspired to write the words of Christ to them.
 1. They had problems and were told to repent (Revelation 2:4-5).
 2. They had lost their love for God.
- B. However, despite a lack of love, these brethren stood for the truth and would not allow error in their midst.
 1. They could not bear false teachers in their midst.
 2. They tested those who claimed to be apostles and found that they were not such.
 3. They hated the false doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which is not completely understood or revealed by history.
- C. They defended the truth and would not allow it to be tampered with.
- D. We have this same charge today (Jude 3).
- E. We must be those who defend the truth and preach nothing but the truth (2 Timothy 4:2).
- F. It is only the truth that saves so we must not allow it to be contaminated with error (John 17:17).