

March 12

Scriptures: Read 1 Thessalonians 3

Key Verse: “For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?”
(1 Thessalonians 3:9,10)

Overview

Paul is speaking like a loving parent here. He obviously gets a lot of pleasure out of seeing a congregation develop, just like all parents do as their baby becomes a walking, talking wonder. Paul had a very high view of churches generally, and especially of his own. Look at 2:19,20 — “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.” He speaks of his “intense longing” to see them (2:17 NIV) and says “when he could stand it no longer” (3:1,4 NIV) he sent Timothy to Thessalonica to see how the congregation was doing. We often say today, of someone who is committed and caring about a project, that he or she has “a sense of ownership”; that is, they feel responsible and accountable. That’s how Paul felt; although he was a travelling missionary, he had a pastor’s heart.

The local church is still the basic material God uses to communicate His anger at sin and His love in Christ. No church, of course, is perfect — that is why it’s easy to find fault. And let’s face it, for some church members, finding fault is a specialty. I wish these fault-finders could hear themselves. In most cases, they are pointing their finger at themselves — after all, if you want to see a hypocrite, try looking in the mirror.

Constructive criticism, on the other hand, is to be welcomed. Why? Because the critic offers him or herself as an answer to the problem. Seeing what is wrong, they responsibly say, “What can I do about it? How can I help?” In this way, the pastor is assisted in perfecting “what is lacking” in the faith of his congregation.

Prayer

Let us read Paul’s prayer 1 Thess. 3:11-13, and pray it for ourselves as well as for others.