**In Chapter 2 of his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul expresses his genuine love for them. This pastoral love has many dimensions – Paul uses both the nurturing love of a mother for her baby and the instructing love of a father for his children as examples. In doing so, Paul makes an important point: new (or “baby”) Christians need tender loving care from their pastor and church; maturing (or growing) Christians need encouragement, instruction and (occasionally) correction. LOVE must be the foundation for every interaction between pastor and people if the church is to grow, both spiritually and numerically.**

**Like Jesus, the pastor should keep in mind the ultimate goal of their work – the glorified church, gathered in the presence of the Lord, at His second coming. Paul concludes the second chapter with this glorious vision.**

**In the third chapter, Paul writes the church concerning Timothy’s visit. Recall that Paul and Silas were “kicked out” of Thessalonica by non-Christians who accused them of rebellion against Roman rule (Acts 17:5-8). Paul wanted badly to go back to Thessalonica, but Satan had kept him from returning to carry on his pastoral work, so Paul sent his “son in the faith”, Timothy. In this chapter, we learn some important truths about living as a Christian in times like those, that may help us “in times like these”.**

1. **Read I Thessalonians 3:1-5. What did Paul and Silas decide to do with Timothy, and why? (v.1-2)**
2. **How did Paul describe Timothy? (v.2) Do pastors need people like Timothy today? (See also Philippians 2:19-23; I Timothy 1:1-4)**
3. **“Prosperity theology” (also called the prosperity gospel, health and wealth gospel, seed faith, or the gospel of success) is a belief among many Christians that physical well-being and financial blessing are ALWAYS God’s will for the church, especially for those who give generously. Is this teaching consistent with Paul’s message to the Thessalonians? (v.3-4; see also John 15:18-21; John 16:33; Mark 4:16-17; II Corinthians 4:16-18)**
4. **Why would God allow or permit afflictions to come on His people? (v. 4; see also Deuteronomy 8:1-5; Hebrews 12:5-11; Psalm 34:17-19; Psalm 119:71, 75, 153; Hosea 5:13-15)**
5. **What was Paul’s greatest concern about the Thessalonians, as they endured afflictions? (v. 5) Answer: He was concerned that the would have successfully them to give up their faith. Who is the “tempter”? What should all Christians learn from this? (Read Acts 5:1-4; I Peter 5:8-10; II Corinthians 2:9-11; Revelation 2:8-10)**
6. **Read verses 6-10. What “report” did Timothy bring back from his visit to the church at Thessalonica? (v. 6) Answer: Timothy brought back of their and . (See Psalm 133:1; III John 1:1-4)**
7. **When a pastor gets a “good report” about members of the church, what effect does it have on their morale? (v. 7-8)**
8. **What did Paul and the others with him do when they heard the good report? (v. 9) Answer: They gave to . How important is an “attitude of gratitude”? (See Psalm 92:1-4; Psalm 100; Psalm 105:1-4; Ephesians 5:1-4, 18-20; Revelation 11:16-17)**
9. **What TWO things were Paul and his friends doing “night and day”? (v.10) What does this imply about the importance of prayer? Do churches (as a whole) devote enough time to prayer today? Why or why not? (Read Acts 1:12-14; 2:41-42; 4:23-31; 6:1-4; 9:8-12, 36-42; 10:1-6; 11:1-6; 12:1-5; 13:1-3. I could go on!)**
10. **Read verses 11-13. This passage concludes the chapter and shows what Paul was praying for “night and day”. First, what does Paul want for himself and Silas? (v. 11) Answer: He wants the Lord to “direct unto you.”**
11. **Next, what does Paul want to “increase and abound” in the church? (v.12) (See also John 13:34-35; II Peter 1:5-11) Answer:**
12. **What is the glorious “end” of every Christian’s spiritual growth and development? (v. 13) (Read Revelation 19:6-9) Answer:**

**Conclusion**

**Paul could not return to Thessalonica at this time. He was “hindered” by Satan (Chapter 2 verse 19). So, he sent Timothy. Effective pastoral care requires the assistance of others who are dedicated to the work, as Timothy was. Recall that Paul chose Timothy to assist him. It is unwise for any pastor or ministry leader to think that they can “do it all” (See Exodus 18:13-26). Leadership development is an important part of pastoral ministry.**

**Timothy’s good news about the church was a great source of comfort and thanksgiving for Paul. He knew that these believers were being tested, and that their faith, though genuine, was incomplete. As this chapter ends, he prays for their continued growth.**

**Starting in the Chapter 4, Paul encourages their growth by exhortation, encouragement, and comfort. This chapter addresses the Christian way of life; it also deals with the reality of physical death and contains one of the most well-known passages of Scripture on that subject. The same passage gives us a vision of the Lord’s glorious return for His church – an event called the “Rapture”.**