

## Focus on 1 Thessalonians 3:9–13

### WHAT is important to know?

—From *"Exegetical Perspective,"* Allen Hilton

Consolation does not exhaust Paul's purpose for his eschatological moment. He will not have these Thessalonians sitting on their rooftops. Rather, he chases his words of assurance with a strong call to vigilance and right living in the meantime. Because the longed-for Son will come "like a thief in the night," the Thessalonians should be constantly ready for his coming—by living as children of light, embodying faith and love. And this watchful, awake way of living is not a private or isolated undertaking, but involves the work of mutual edification. The day of reunion will come. The meantime is full of mundane preparations for it.

### WHERE is God in these words?

—From *"Theological Perspective,"* James H. Evans Jr.

The major Christian doctrine illuminated by this text is Christian hope. It is significant that this earliest of Paul's letters would center on hope. As the church dealt with the delayed Parousia, the notion of hope moved from the foreground to the background in doctrinal reflection. It is hope that draws both love and faith into maturity. Because this text rests on the foundation of hope, Paul's prayer in verse 12—"And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you"—can be understood as an exhortation and testimony to imperfect people pursuing a perfect love.

### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From *"Pastoral Perspective,"*  
Philip E. Campbell

On the First Sunday of Advent many congregations light the hope candle. A vision of "the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints" can encourage hope, regardless of how or when it occurs, whether the hearer conceives of this coming literally in history or metaphorically in the experiences of individuals and communities. To be ready for the "coming of our Lord Jesus" is a faithful way of living not dependent on predictions as to when. Endings and beginnings abound. Personal tragedy or world calamity can intrude at any time. Faithful preparation and expectant living can help us face whatever comes.

### NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

—From *"Homiletical Perspective,"*  
Joseph R. Jeter

We are called to do the best we can to live lives pleasing to God. And though we will surely fail to live up to the high standards of perfection, we can be grateful for those things we have done for God and live in hopeful confidence that the love and mercy of the risen Christ will not let us go. As Tennyson wrote of his faith, "Not one life shall be destroyed, or cast as rubbish to the void." And there is more. Remember, when Jesus comes, he will bring with him those who have gone before, those whom we have loved and lost a while.