

**Conversations on  
1 Thessalonians  
3:9–13**

*Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.*

*Idea!* Listen together to “Hope” by Royal Tailor. Discuss: When have you felt hopeless like the situations described in this song? In what ways does this song connect with the message about hope found in 1 Thessalonians 3:9–13?

### WHAT is important to know?

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. (*Allen Hilton*)

- ✪ To what might Paul be responding to in this portion of his letter to the church in Thessalonica?
- ✪ In what way does this Scripture passage create an eschatological moment”?
- ✪ Where are words of assurance present in this Scripture passage?

### WHERE is God in these words?

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. (*James H. Evans Jr.*)

- ✪ How is the theme of hope portrayed in this Scripture passage?
- ✪ What are the implications of hope moving “from the foreground to the background in doctrinal reflection”?
- ✪ How does hope draw “love and faith into maturity”?

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

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. (*Philip E. Campbell*)

- ✪ How does the theme of hope resonate in your life during this season of Advent?
- ✪ How can “faithful preparation and expectant living” help you face tragedies and calamities?

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

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. (*Joseph R. Jeter*)

- ✪ In what ways do you live your life as a life that is pleasing to God?
- ✪ How do Christ’s love and mercy affect how you live your life?
- ✪ In what ways does our congregation “abound in love for one another and for all” (v. 12)?

*God of hope, as we begin this season of Advent, help us live lives that are pleasing to you. Amen.*