

Strengthening and Encouraging Believers

1 Thessalonians Chapter 3

1 Thessalonians Outlined

Chapters 1-3 Reflections on the Thessalonians (Looking Back)

Ch.1 – A young Church, in a short time, becomes an “Example to All Believers”

Ch.2 – The Church and the apostle Paul share the same “Boldness Amid Opposition”

Ch. 3– Five admonitions for “Strengthening and Encouraging Believers”

Chapters 4-5 Instructions to the Thessalonians (Looking Forward)

2 Thessalonians 2:17-18 Paul remembers that he had to leave Thessalonica abruptly due to persecutions.

As he desired to come back to them Satan hindered him. Chapter 3 verse 1, Paul couldn't take it any longer, so he sent Timothy to them.

1Th 3:1 **1) Have A Proper Attitude About Affliction** vs 1-4

Therefore when we could endure {it} no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone,

1Th 3:2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith,

1Th 3:3 so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been **destined for this**.

1Th 3:4 For indeed when we were with you, we {kept} telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.

- “Strengthen and Encourage” your faith during afflictions was the purpose of sending Timothy back to the Thessalonians.
 - KJV = Establish and Encourage “Encouragement can only come after the heart is established or strengthened”
 - Timothy wasn't coming to spy but to serve “God's fellow worker” “Minister”
 - Paul wanted to make sure these saints were strengthened & encouraged by understanding tribulations / afflictions.
- “We have been destined for”
 - Some Christians believe that as a Christian that we do not suffer afflictions. This is more true in the United states rather than most any other place in the world.
 - Jesus taught us **John 16:33** “*These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.*”
 - Paul taught us **2 Timothy 3:12** “*Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*”
 - Peter taught us **1 Peter 4:12-13** “*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.*”
- This is important because it deals with the here and now as well understanding the future Great Tribulation (see Chapter 4)
- Understanding that Trouble & Hardships are part of the Christian life helps us to be strengthened and established rather than fall away when it comes. (Matt 13:1-23 Parable of the Seed)
- Paul “kept telling” them “in advance” that they were going to suffer. It is interesting that this was an important point that they should know. He was only there three weeks. Wasn't there more important things? Possibly not.

1Th 3:5 **2) Don't Be Pushed Around** vs 5-8

For this reason, when I could endure {it} no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain.

1Th 3:6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you,

1Th 3:7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith;

1Th 3:8 for now we {really} live, if you **stand firm in the Lord**.

- Paul acknowledges a tempter that exists to cause us to fall away from the Lord.
 - Job after suffering a great loss, As he mourns he says (Job 1:21) "*Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.*"
- Vain (empty) ministry verses Living ministry.
 - Vs 5 "Labor in Vain" - If the tempter would have victory over the Thessalonians, Paul would have considered him ministry to be vain (empty)
 - Vs 8 "We Really Live" - It is the steadfast faith of the Thessalonians that confirms their ministry is real living.
- "Standing Firm in the Lord"
 - Israel after leaving Egypt is pressed against the Red Sea. Moses says, (Exodus 14:13) "*Do not be afraid. **Stand firm** and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today*"
 - Psalm 40:2 "*Do not fear! **Stand** by and see the salvation of the LORD*"
 - Proverbs 10:25 "*When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more, But the righteous has an everlasting **foundation** (firm foundation)."*
 - a. His Word is firm Psalm 119:89
 - b. His Love is firm Psalm 89:2
 - Galatians 5:1 "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep **standing firm** and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."
 - 1 Peter 5:8-9 "*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, **standing firm** in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*"

1Th 3:9 **3) Be Always Learning** vs 9-10

For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account,

1Th 3:10 as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is **lacking in your faith**?

- It is evident that Paul has a great love for the believers.
 - He Gives thanks for them, - He's filled with joy because of them,
 - He rejoices over them, - Prayed for them,
 - He desires to see them
- "Complete what is Lacking In Your Faith" Up to this verse Paul has commended them quite a number of times (1 Thessalonians 1:3, 1:7, 2:13, 2:19-20, and 3:6). Now he speaks to what is lacking.
- Ephesians 4:11-13 "*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and **teachers**; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*"
- Matthew 11:9 Jesus said "*Take my yoke upon you, and **learn of me**; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*"
- Our heart is to be humble and teachable. It is always sad to see saints that know it all.

1Th 3:11

Prayer for what
was lacking

4) Be In Love vs 11-12

Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you;

1Th 3:12

and may the Lord cause you **to increase and abound in love** for one another, and for all people, just as we also {do} for you;

First, Abounding
Love

- This is the fourth time in this Chapter that Paul mentions or implies his desire to be with them.
- "Increase and Abound in Love"
 - Paul doesn't want us to be content with how much love we have.
 - 1 John 4:7-8 "*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*"
 - God is Love and He is endless. So our capacity to love is also endless.
 - Who should we Love?
 - a. One Another
 - b. All People (Matthew 5:46-47 teach that great love is one that loves beyond family, friends and church.)
- Increase and Abound
 - John 13:35 Jesus said, "*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*"

1Th 3:13

Second, True
Holiness from
the Heart

5) Be a Holy Rock vs 1-13

so that He may **establish your hearts without blame in holiness** before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

- "Establish Your Hearts" Paul is concerned with the heart not external performance.
 - Blameless - Free from Fault or Defect
 - In Holiness - Separate but not in the sense of isolation from others but separate in that the believer is committed to a moral purity.
 - So the meaning is faultless with regards to moral purity.
 - How?
 - a. 1 John 1:7 "*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*"
 - b. 1 John 1:9 "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"
- WHEN BLAMELESS? "At the Coming of Our Lord" (Not Caught Off Guard)
 - Again the chapter ends with the picture of the Lord's Coming again. But this time it is with ALL HIS SAINTS. Are You His Saints?
 - A question that will wait to be answered, Are we Coming With Him or are we Caught up in the Air To meet Him? Coming With or Coming For? (See Chapter 4)

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