

I Thessalonians 3: 1-5

*The Burden of Paul
for New Believers in
Thessalonica*

HHBC





I Thessalonians chapter 3: 1-5

Today's passage:

1 Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, 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, 3 so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this.

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. 5 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.



I Thessalonians 3:1-5

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

1) Verse 1: is REVIEW material from last week

- Paul, Silas and Timothy escaped Thessalonica as the mob there took Jason hostage and demanded that the believers there turn over Paul.
- They sent him to Berea. Somewhere between Berea and Athens, Paul sends the two of them back to the churches at Philippi (Silas) and Thessalonica (Timothy)
- Paul, alone or perhaps with some other helpers not mentioned, goes from Berea to Athens, then on over to Corinth without his 2 right-hand fellow helpers
- He remains in Corinth without them a year or a year and a half.
- From last week: Satan is blocking Paul from going back up to see the Thessalonians to personally strengthen and encourage them.
- He was '**cut off at the pass**' from going back up at least two times

McCalley's Outline:

1. 3:1-2a - 'The Burden of Paul for New Believers in Thessalonica'
2. 3:1: '**His Selfless Attitude**' - "we thought it best to be left behind" – "**alone**"
3. 3:2a: '**His Selfless Action**'. - "we sent Timothy our brother and fellow worker"



I Thessalonians 3:2

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

2. By sending Timothy:

- a) Paul is making a ministerial sacrifice- he could surely use Timothy's assistance and fellowship himself
- b) Demonstrates Paul's Pastoral care as an Elder and Overseer of the church at Thessalonica:

This involves: **Shepherding** (*poimainō*) the flock; protecting; guiding; leading; seeking out pastures and waters; selecting paths; correcting; rescuing; mending wounds; teaching; counselling; consoling; training. Paul, Silas, Timothy: accountable in this to the Chief Shepherd.

Also: **Overseeing** (*episkopos*): the character and condition of the fledging Thessalonian church; proactive and responsive measures to care for it and produce a spiritually healthy and spiritually growing flock.

3. The Gospel of Christ:

- a) Transmission of what Paul directly received from the Lord in I Cor. 15:3-8: Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; He was buried; He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures; then He was seen by the 12; by over 500 people; then James; then Paul.



I Thessalonians 3:2

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

4. Strengthen & Encourage:

- a) Strengthen is: support, stabilize; (buttress), establish, fix
- b) Encourage = **parakaleo** = entreating alongside; to call beside. Comforting; exhorting; encouraging. To call a believer alongside the Truth of scripture (Merryman)
- c) Encouraging & strengthening: are well within the scope of the work of Paul as an Elder-ing (**presbyteros**) and shepherding (**poimainō**)
- d) Paul: along with Peter were model Elder-Shepherds of all their flocks
- e) The Goal: to establish the Thessalonians in their faith. "the faith of you" in greek



I Thessalonians 3:3

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

1) So that: no one would be disturbed by these afflictions;

- a) Wuest renders it: “**with a view to stabilizing and encouraging you concerning your faith, that is, that no one be shaken or disturbed and caused to break down in the midst of these afflictions**”
- b) The Thessalonians were suffering afflictions, too, along with Paul, Silas & Timothy: how do we know this?

I Thes. 1:6: “You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word (*in power and in the H.S. with full conviction, v.5*) **in much tribulation** with the joy of the H.S.”

I Thes. 2:14: “For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for **you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen**, even as they *did* from the Jews...”

- d) “**Disturbed**”: **sainō** – to be moved, agitated, troubled (in mind). Also: to wag the tail (of dogs); both as to fawn over the owner and as panicked, disturbed.



I Thessalonians 3:3

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

2) 'Afflictions' = *thlip-sis*

- a) A pressing together; a pressure; distress; tribulation; straits
- b) Anxiety: would be associated with *thlipsis*

3) You know: we have been destined for this.

- a) “destined”: *keimai* (ky-mye): used to refer to a city, situated on a hill, founded upon permanently. Metaphorically: God’s set, fixed, intent. His appointment
- b) Since “destined” is in the mode of reality (indicative mood): It is a reality that we will experience afflictions, straits, troubles, tribulations

4) Purposes in: Trials & Suffering: **Supplement-** *see attachment*



I Thessalonians 3:4-5

(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.) 5 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.

1) 'when I could endure it no longer'...

- a) **Endure** = *stegō* = bear; suffer it. Word picture: a thatched roof bearing up against a torrential storm, the roof can no longer hold and starts to peel away in the storm.
- b) This is the 2nd time Paul can no longer “hold out” against the desire (righteously) to 1. to see them face to face (2:17), then 2. find out how their faith is holding up (3:5)

2) 'that our labor would be in vain'

- a) 'vain' = *kenos* = Paul did not want his efforts with the Thessalonians to be fruitless; without lasting effect; devoid of lasting value due to The Tempter's success in drawing them away from the gospel and their steadfastness of the blessed hope of the Lord's imminent return.



I Thessalonians 3:5

5 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.

3) Circling back: to 'the tempter'

- a) Last week we saw how Satan is described as: the Adversary (***satanas***), the Maligner, Accuser, Defamer, Slanderer (***diablos/devil***); and Beguiler (***serpent***)
- b) By way of review, he is also the Tempter, using a tactic to draw and peel a believer away from God's Word, a soliciting to sin (***peirazō***)
- c) The Serpent did not tempt Eve to eat the fruit, or the benefits of eating- instead he made his entry by assailing God's Word... ***'Indeed..has God said...?'*** A form of gaslighting Eve. (JB STONEY)

4) How did Satan tempt the Thessalonians?

- a) Had false teachers, apostles come in after Paul to make them doubt the solid foundations of biblical facts Paul communicated to them
- b) ***For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*** 2 Cor 11:13-14



I Thessalonians 3:5

5 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.

4) A Picture of the Temptation process ... continued

Abiding in Paul's Gospel; steadfast in the Lord

Enter: Satan; his messengers, ministers, false reports, etc.

Drawn away by the temptation to think Paul was not who he said he was; there were better things than his gospel . . .

ENTICED; LURED

Take the bait . . .

Pregnant with doubts about the word; fed up with affliction

SIN = birth = these "new" ministers are right

Spiritual DEATH = loss of fellowship; belief; return to idolatry; Judaism for the Thessalonians

'IN VAIN' = fruitless; worthless



I Thessalonians 3:5

5 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.

5) A Final Word about the 'World' as in 'World, Flesh and the Devil'

- a) World = ***kosmos***
- b) Merryman: defines cosmos as: the sum collection of intelligent beings in the universe:
angels; principalities; powers; thrones and mankind
- c) In other words: the whole of sentient created beings in the universe
- d) Satan: has title deed of the cosmos for now and can use this web of minds to his purposes
- e) Merryman: ***“You are appointed to afflictions in the cosmos system. Expect them..
Especially if the Cosmos finds out how you think. There is an animosity that will express
itself against you from the system”***
- f) William Kelly: ***(But) there is a constant network (the cosmos) for men to hold them fast in
Satan’s hand; and the truth, as being God’s word, judges the thoughts and intents of the
heart.***

Afflictions (thlipis) & Psalms 23 -

. . . Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. . . .

- IN THE SUMMERTIME, FLIES BOTHER SHEEP. THE WORST ARE NOSE FLIES WHICH BUZZ AROUND A SHEEP'S HEAD TRYING TO LAY EGGS IN THE SHEEP'S NOSE. THE HOVERING FLIES CAN CAUSE SHEEP TO PANIC AND RUN WILDLY. THIS SORT OF ACTIVITY CAN RUIN THEIR MEAT AND MILK, AND MAY RESULT IN INJURY OR DEATH.
- IF THE FLY IS SUCCESSFUL, IN A FEW DAYS, LARVAE WILL HATCH AND BURROW INTO THE SOFT FLESH OF THE SHEEP'S NASAL PASSAGES. THIS CAUSES IRRITATION, INFLAMMATION AND INFECTION.
- THE PAIN WILL CAUSE THE SHEEP TO RUB ITS HEAD ON THE GROUND, THRASH THROUGH UNDERBRUSH AND EVEN BANG ITS HEAD ON TREE TRUNKS ATTEMPTING TO GET RID OF THE INTRUDERS.
- IN SEVERE CASES, A SHEEP MAY KILL ITSELF TRYING TO GET AWAY FROM THE PAIN. IF THE SHEEP MANAGES TO SURVIVE, THE INFECTION CAUSED BY THE LARVAE CAN CAUSE IT TO GO BLIND. BECAUSE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY NOSE FLIES, SHEPHERDS MUST BE EXTREMELY ATTENTIVE.
- IN BIBLICAL TIMES, THEY WOULD WATCH FOR THE FIRST INDICATION OF NOSE FLIES AND THEN APPLY A NATURAL REPELLENT MADE OF OLIVE OIL AND STRONGLY SCENTED, MEDICINAL ESSENTIAL OILS.



Supplement:

6 Points: on the Purposes of Trials & Suffering . . . *follows*



6 Points: Regarding Suffering/Affliction on Behalf of Christ

1. Suffering is a grace gift [Phil 1:29]
2. Suffering is a real part of the normal Christian life: [Phil. 1:29]
3. Believers are appointed to trials & suffering
 - a) By God as His ambassador
 - b) We represent our country: Heaven
 - c) We represent our sovereign: God [I Thes 3:3; 2:14,15]
4. The Believer's suffering is intrinsic in his Identification with Christ:
 - a) "we suffer with Him" [Rom 8:16-18]
 - b) "we are partakers of Christ's sufferings" [I Pet 4:13]
5. God's Purpose in Suffering is to Reveal His Glory (essential essence)



6 Points: Regarding Suffering/Affliction on Behalf of Christ

5. God's Purpose in Suffering is to Reveal His Glory (essential essence) through the Believer
 - a) The greatest manifestation of God's glory through Christ was during His suffering at the cross and then resurrection to Life
 - b) Likewise, the greatest manifestation of God's glory through the believer is during his/her suffering (and reckoning him/herself dead to the sin nature *[which desires immediate deliverance from suffering/circumstances]* & alive unto God, who we can trust through the circumstances and sufferings [Rom 6:11; 8:16-18] [I Pet 4:12-16]
6. God's glory will be revealed through suffering as we enjoy his sweet company, fellowship, love, matchless grace, compassion, empathy and all comfort as we rest in Him during our suffering [II Cor 1:5]

HAL MOLLOY; NOTES & SLIDES ON 'TRIALS & SUFFERING'; 1991, 1993, 1998