

# 1 Thessalonians: Chapter 3

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All right now we're going to go into 1 Thessalonians, chapter three. I am Wayne Dalrymple. And so let's look at how Timothy encourages Paul, as he describes in this chapter. Paul, in chapter two, talked about how he longed to see the Thessalonians. And he had felt like he was orphaned from them. That's how strongly he felt about it. And he wanted to know how the Thessalonians were doing, if they were staying faithful to God. And so, he describes what he did about that here in chapter three. And so let's read verses 1 through 5 together.

“Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.”

So Paul here describes again, because of his longing to see them, he says, he had to send Timothy, to check on them. And so apparently, Timothy would be allowed back in Thessalonica, where Paul and perhaps Silas would not be. Maybe Timothy was not as recognizable. We're not told the reason why Timothy was able to go when Paul and the others were not. But whatever reason he was. And so Paul sent Timothy to them. Paul was concerned that they would buckle under the weight of the persecution that they were facing. And so Paul had dealt, obviously, he knew the kind of persecution that they had faced while he was there. And no doubt it continued, and perhaps, might have even worsened after he left. And so Paul was very concerned for his brethren there.

Now, Paul says, “We were left alone in Athens.” Now, when he says “we,” it's not sure who he's including here. Perhaps he's including Silas, but also, perhaps Luke. But in any case, he was sending Timothy to Thessalonica to check on them. Notice that he calls Timothy, his brother. In another place, he calls Timothy his “son in the faith.” Then also here, he calls Timothy “God's co-worker in the gospel.” What a great description that is to be called a co worker with God. Certainly we are God's co-workers, God is working through us and with us, as we are proclaiming His Word to the world. And so we need to take that responsibility very seriously. Just as, no doubt, Timothy had done.

And so, Timothy, would continue the work of making disciples. Notice he says, in the last part of verse 2, that Paul sent Timothy “to establish and exhort you in your faith.” In other words, to continue making disciples. In Matthew chapter 28, and verses 19 and 20, Jesus said to them, to the disciples, “Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you.” And so, there's a teaching, and then baptizing, and then more teaching, that takes place. And so, Timothy is continuing that model, continuing that pattern of teaching after baptizing. And so, they had, they still needed to be instructed. They still needed to be encouraged. And they needed to be informed more about what this new covenant, what this, Christianity was all about. They had some basic fundamental

understanding. But there were some things that they still needed more understanding of. So Timothy went to help them along that way.

Paul and his companions, it says, they kept telling the Thessalonians, that they would suffer persecution. He describes that in verse four, he says, “We kept telling you beforehand, that we were to suffer affliction.” Paul and his companions, warned them about the cost of discipleship. I think that's one thing that in some places, certainly here in the United States, it's something that we fail to do, so often. It may be the case, wherever you are, that that's something that needs to go on more is informing people about what the cost of discipleship really means. Sometimes we're so concerned about getting people to be baptized, that we forget to really make them disciples. And so, Paul here says, “That we kept telling you about what you were going to face.” We don't need to go in blind. when it comes to Christianity. We need to be fully aware of what may take place and what will take place. In fact, we know Paul said in 2 Timothy, chapter 3 and verse 12, that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” It's not just a possibility. It is definitely, this will happen. And so Paul says, “We warned you about that.” But even so, even though he had warned them about it, he says, he was still concerned that they had given in because of the persecution.

Jesus said in Luke 9, in verse 23, “And if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” So we have there the pattern of discipleship, of counting the cost, and making sure that we understand what we're dealing with, what we're getting ourselves into. And, no matter what it is, we need to understand that it is worth it. Paul says that “our light, momentary affliction works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 17). And so we certainly recognize that it is worth it. But we need to be aware of everything that we're going to deal with. Now Paul, as I said, was afraid that maybe the Thessalonians had turned back because of the persecution. And so, if that had been the case, Paul says that his work would have been in vain. Certainly not in vain in the sense of Paul's personal salvation, but it would have been in vain because it would have not would not have benefited the Thessalonians any, if they turned back. And so, Paul is certainly very concerned for the Christians there. And so he sent Timothy to find out how they were doing.

And then, now let's look at beginning of verse 6. We'll see how how Timothy's report encourages Paul. And so let's look at verses 6 through 10. “But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you—for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord. For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?”

And so Paul says that he is so thankful for the good news that Timothy brought. It brought him tremendous joy. Notice he says, “That he brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly, and longed to see us, as we longed to see you.” And so he says, notice in verse 8, he says, “For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.” It caused Paul to have a sense of, “Now we can rest easy. Now we can know that you're doing all right.” That didn't mean that their work was done. But it meant they were encouraged. They could have joy, because of this good news.

How encouraging is it to hear that those whom we have taught are faithful to the Lord? We need to continue to do whatever we can to ensure that that is the case. This also tells us that we ought to maintain contact with those Christians that we convert as much as possible. Certainly, Paul was not in constant contact with those brethren in the churches that he had established, the people he had converted. But he certainly kept in consistent contact with him as much as he possibly could. And so we certainly ought to do the same. And in our day of technology, we certainly have the capability much more of keeping in contact with brethren all over the world than Paul had during the first century.

And so, Paul says that he and his companions had a great desire to see them again, and to teach them further so that they would have all that they needed. That is, to supply what they had lacking in their faith, it didn't mean that they were not very faithful, it didn't mean that their faith was weak, in the sense of their dedication or their sincerity. But rather, it meant their understanding their knowledge was incomplete at this time, as evidenced by what Paul will deal with in the last couple of chapters in this letter. And so, Paul says, "We want to give you further instruction, and to help you so that you are complete in your faith." And so, Paul here, wants to give them that encouragement and that teaching.

But then he also, notice, he says that, "We pray most earnestly, night and day," verse 10, "that we may see you face to face." Paul described how that he had worked night and day while he was there in Thessalonica. And now he says that he prayed night and day for them, and to see them again. Now let's look at verses 11 through 13 together. He says, "Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints."

So notice here that Paul refers to "God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ." He mentions them both as separate individuals; they are not one in the same person. And so, Paul uses this language, he uses a very similar language back in verse 1 in chapter 1, "to the church of the Thessalonians, and God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." And so, Paul certainly recognized that they were separate, in fact, and then he in other places, he mentioned to the Spirit of God as well, as being separate. And so, we can see from this and many other passages throughout the Bible, that there are multiple persons who are referred to as God. And so, the idea is that they are all divine, that they are all three divine, but they are separate individuals who are yet one. And, I do not claim to understand how exactly that works. The Bible does not explain that for us in the way that we can fully understand it, because of our limited human minds. But we can accept that it is true whether we understand it or not. In John, chapter 14, verse 6, Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except by me." And so, he himself makes a distinction between himself and the father.

Then notice, in verse 12, again, he says, "May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another, and for all as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness, before our God and Father." And so, Paul here says that they ought to be blameless and holy. And notice he also describes it in a way, that it's actually God making them that way. He says, so that "he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness." Now, saying that God is the one who does it is not to say that we have no responsibility in this matter. But rather it's saying, it could not happen without God. In fact, we're told in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 21, "God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." And so, it is God, who makes it

possible for us to be holy and righteous, because of the sacrifice of Jesus. However, it is up to us to respond to him in holiness, to submit to God, in order for that to happen. God will not, against our will, make us blameless and holy. We must submit to Him, for him to do that.

And so, as we look at this conclusion of this chapter here, Paul is encouraged by Timothy's report from the Thessalonians how that they were remaining strong in the Lord. And he says that he wants to continue to instruct them to complete what they had missed in, because he had to leave early. And, so he prayed for them that they may continue to be strong and that God will establish them in holiness, and righteousness. And so, as we conclude, we certainly also want to pray that for each one of us. So that concludes 1 Thessalonians, chapter 3.