

# 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians Ch 3 Vs 1-5

Appointed to Afflictions

## Vs 1-5

A man by the name of William Russel Maltby once said, “Jesus promised three results for those who would follow Him. They will be absurdly happy, entirely fearless, and always in trouble.” Jesus said, *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”* John 16:33 Jesus was a straight shooter; He didn’t try to paint visions of grandeur for those who would follow Him. He didn’t seek to try and win people to Him by describing a life through rose colored glasses, He said, in this world you will have not “might have” or “occasionally experience” tribulation, but you will. It’s not a matter of “if”, it’s “when” because it’s coming, and odds are, they’ll be apart of your life as a believer more than not. and Paul had taught the believers here in Thessalonica about the afflictions, and persecutions, and tribulations that would come, but he was a bit leery that maybe they didn’t hear the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of Jesus’ statement to be of good cheer. Because even though these things may happen in this world, we’re to be of good cheer, or take heart, because Christ has overcome the world.

In other words, trials and tribulations aren’t to move us, or to persuade us to throw in the towel, because this world’s not our home, Christ has overcome the world, and *“our light affliction which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”* 2 Cor 4:17

But you recall that Paul had been run out of Thessalonica just 3 weeks after he’d arrived, and those in whose house he’d been staying got sort of roughed up, and so for the sake of everyone’s safety Paul left, but ch 3 finds Paul expressing his concern for them that they not lose heart. That they would follow Christ regardless of the cost, because we’ve been as believers appointed to afflictions, no servant is above his master, and they persecuted and afflicted Jesus because they loved darkness rather than light, and so don’t expect that we should get it any better.

Now many times we do get it better, we get it much better, Paul said you’ve yet to resist sin to the point of bloodshed, but don’t be deceived we don’t get it better because we deserve it better. We’re simply recipients of the immeasurable grace of God.

But Paul, in his understandable concern for these young believers was just aching to know how they were doing and so we read here in vs 1 of ch 3.

## Vs 1

Paul had such an undying love for the body of Christ, and here we’re witnessing once again his overwhelming burden for the welfare of others at the expense of himself. Paul’s mind was always *others* oriented, he was never concerned about himself beyond the desire for boldness to proclaim the gospel as he ought. Beyond that he was all consumed with the spiritual health and well-being of others, to the believers in Philippi he said he was willing to stay out of heaven in order that they might continue to grow through his ministry.

Remember he said, “*For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith.*” Phil 1:23-25 To the Corinthian believers he said, “*I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls*” 2 Cor 12:15 and Here, back in vs 17 of ch 2 when he speaks of being “taken” from them, it’s a word that’s used to describe a child that’s been orphaned. Being driven from them was an experience to him equal to be orphaned, it was a tragedy.

Paul the apostle was definitely no hireling and because he’d been hindered from seeing them personally, (that’s what this “therefore” in vs 1 is referring to) “Because we’ve been taken from you, (in presence), because I’ve tried to come to you once, and twice, but Satan has hindered me, when I just couldn’t take it anymore; I decided to be left alone in Athens.” In essence Paul is saying, “It’s costing me to send to see how you’re doing, I’m sending the one man who is nearest and dearest to my heart and am staying alone here in Athens, but I love you so much that I can’t stand not knowing how you’re doing and it’s a payment that’s well worth making.” “It’s good to be left here alone so that I might know how you’re doing,” and so he says in vs 2 that he...

Vs2

Now there are several things mentioned here that reveal to us a # of things, we see in this vs, #1 the type of man that Timothy was, #2 the arena of ministry in which Paul functioned, and #3 the purpose of Timothy’s coming to them.

The type of character that Timothy had was 3-fold, Paul’s endeavors in the ministry was singular, and the purpose of Timothy’s coming was 2-fold, and then vs 3-4 is Paul’s mini exposition concerning that purpose.

As for Timothy’s character we see (if you’re an underliner or note taker) that Paul calls him #1 a brother, #2 a minister of God, and #3 a fellow laborer. Now bearing in mind the inspiration of the scriptures, and the fact that Paul is just the *instrumental* author, and that the Holy Spirit is the *actual* author, these are some pretty high marks. He doesn’t receive any negative connotations but he’s recognized as a brother and a minister of God, and a fellow laborer.

The 1<sup>st</sup> thing we see noted about Timothy is that he’s a “brother”. He’s part of the family of God, he’s a believer and that’s quite critical when it comes to establishing others concerning the things of God. If you’re going to help a young believer to grow in the Lord, the 1<sup>st</sup> thing that needs to be recognized about you is that you’re a believer yourself, and Paul states this about Timothy.

2<sup>ndly</sup> He’s a “minister of God”, now the Greek word for “minister” here is the word “diakonos” ( □□□□-□□□□-□□□□ ) from which we get our English word “Deacon” and literally the

word means “servant” or “waiter” as in table waiter, or even “errand boy” or “attendant.” He’s God’s errand boy, or God’s attendant, he’s a servant. He wasn’t afraid to work, so many times we think the word “Minister” means one who is here to be served, and unfortunately many Pastors have that mentality as well. and Though I’m not seeking to diminish the reality of church order and authority, the fact of the matter is, is that the Pastor is to be the chief servant. The example of servitude, when I was in Nigeria, they wouldn’t let me carry my bags, my guitar, or even my bible and notebook, and though I was extremely honored and humbled by it all. I kept trying to explain to them that I wasn’t there to be served, but to serve.

They had this same problem back in Jesus’ day, when the banquets would be given and all the important people would show up, they’d be all “Rabbi” “Rabbi, you set here in the seat of honor” and if not the Pharisees would all fight for it. and One day when all this was going on Jesus was just sort of observing the situation, and He told the people, *“When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”* Luke 14:8-11

We read in Matt 20:25-27 where he said, *“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave.”* and Again in Luke 22:27 *“For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.”*

So with Christ having set the standard, Timothy followed suit, he was among them as one who served, and if you want to be great in the Kingdom take heed, have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying, are you among the people of God, the people whom God desires to minister to as one who is there to be served, or to serve?

Timothy was a servant of God, and as a servant of God, you serve God’s people, and it can be very demanding at times, especially when you’re treated like a servant, but we’re to walk in humility, for the one who humbles himself will be exalted in due season, but to get all in a huff and seek to get in someone’s face and exalt yourself against them, is to invite a lesson in humility into your life. Timothy was a servant.

and 3<sup>rdly</sup> He was a “fellow laborer” or a companion in the work, the short of it is, he was a team player. He wasn’t a Lone Ranger in the ministry, and we’ve talked about that many times in the past, Paul was a team player, we’re seeing here that Timothy was a team player, even Jesus had 12 other guys around Him all the time. No man is an island unto himself and I always

grow real suspicious of a self-made man in the ministry with no accountability. Because the example of the scriptures is that of co-laboring, Timothy was a servant of God who labored with others in the work that God had committed to him.

He was able to submit to those over him, he was teachable; he received instruction and acted on it. Paul told him to go to Corinth and he went, he sent him to Philippi to minister, and here Paul dispatched him for Thessalonica, and Timothy didn't whine and gripe about how much time he'd been spending away from home, or ask Paul why he always got the grunt work, he went. He was teachable and submissive, he was others oriented even as Paul was, it's no wonder that Paul wrote of him "*For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.*" Phil 2:20

But there was a specific sphere of care and an arena in which Paul and Timothy would minister and care for people, they weren't just do gooders for the sake of being do gooders. They had a very pointed and purposed agenda that they were seeking to fulfill; they were laborers in the gospel of Christ. Yes he was there to serve, yes he was a team player, but the sphere in which he met those qualifications was in the arena of the work and the labor of spreading and establishing people in the gospel of Christ. They need not worry about any other social activity because they're all worked out through people coming to know Christ; these guys dealt with the heart of the matter.

Everything else is peripheral, "We need to get these kids off drugs" and so we start all of these campaigns concerning drug awareness, the long term affects, harsher penalties etc. "We need to get these young girls to quit having abortions" and So we start making the kids aware of the various stages of fetal development, the hardcore brutality and murderous reality of what abortions really are, and we're all the time being consumed with various social activities, drinking and driving, or whatever. and Please don't misunderstand me it's good for the public to hear our voice concerning all of those things, but understand that they'd all go away if all of these people simply came to know Jesus.

The best thing you could ever do for your society, your economy, your ecology or anything else, is turn someone on to Jesus Christ People stop having abortions in Christ, they stop abusing alcohol in Christ, they stop doing drugs in Christ, Jesus is the best thing that could happen to anyone, anything, or any people.

and Paul and Timothy knew that, and so they labored intently, and intensively, but they had a very specific arena that they targeted and it was the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified, because there is no other name among men given under heaven by where we must be saved. Jesus is the cure for every social or political, or family schism, and I might add He's the only cure, nothing else works.

We so often error by seeking to cleanse the outside of peoples vessels, all the while neglecting the inside, and so we have all these nice sparkling cups on the outside hanging out in AA meetings, or in detox or whatever, but meanwhile the inside is still full of all these infirmities and pollutants. and So now we have sober people going to hell instead of fall down drunks going to hell, we have people who are clean going to hell instead of people strung out going to hell. What have we really done, that's counted for eternity?

Jesus said, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.”* Matt 23:25-26 We need to be careful that we don't give people a sense of false security and pseudo righteousness by cleaning them up on the outside all nice and neat so that they think all their problems are over. How much better to focus on the inside of the dish, knowing that when that's clean, when their hearts have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, all those other thing will be eradicated and begin to dissipate from their lives?

The ministered in the gospel of Jesus Christ and What was the purpose of Timothy's coming to them as it pertained to his ministry? That he might #1 establish them and #2 encourage them, not in political socialisms or anything else notice, but in their faith. Some of your bibles may say to “comfort” them, the word more literally is to “encourage”.

Paul desired that they might be established, now you would hope that every believer would be equipped to establish those younger than them in the faith, and though ideally that would be the case, unfortunately many fall into the category of Heb 5. We read there, *“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.”* Heb 5:12 and The reason, (vs 11 tells us) that they've become that way is because they've become dull of hearing, or spiritually lethargic and apathetic, they've gotten caught up in the cycle of going through the motions and forming a habit, but they've lost their passion and heart for the things of God. They come to church to sort of do their spiritual duty and get some Christian social interaction, rather than coming with ears fixed and hearts attentive, pens and notebooks ready having said in their hearts “speak Lord for your servant is listening.”

No longer are they eager to hear God's direction and possibly correction for their lives. They've become rather unteachable and they wonder how much longer is this going to go on, their conversations revolve around how long it went, or how short it was, how dynamic the speaker was or how they could barely stay awake they were so bored.

Rather than looking and listening for that one nugget that God wanted them to receive and chew on and think about and allow it to sink in and change their lives, that they might then impart it to someone *else*, and help establish *them*. Instead they need to be re-taught themselves, they more or less go through a 2<sup>nd</sup> spiritual childhood.

But such was not the case with Timothy; he was mature and ready to be used, eager to help establish others in a spirit of humility. This word “establish” is an interesting word, it means to “strengthen” or “make firm.”

But what interests me about it is that it’s the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew word that was used in describing the event in the book of Ex when Moses was holding up his hands in prayer so as to assure Israel’s victory over the Amalekites. and You recall that Moses’ hands got heavy and we read there that, *“They took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.”* Ex 17:12 The words “stayed up” also translated as “supported” is the same word that we’re seeing here translated from the Greek as “establish”

Paul sent Timothy there to “Stay them up” to “support” them or steady them to help uphold and establish them. Timothy went to sort of hold them up in the faith, and so many of us need the same treatment today, we need people who can hold others up and steady them in the faith as so many of us are prone to waver and teeter in times of tribulation.

He sent him there also to “encourage” them or to “instruct” them, because a *discouraged* believer can easily become a *defeated* believer, and Paul knew that. So Timothy was to strengthen them in their convictions towards the Lord, who God is, His love for them, and goodwill towards them. To instruct them in the word of God so as to build up their faith that they might remain victorious because as John said, *“And this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”* 1 John 5:4-5

So Timothy was to gird them up in their belief in Jesus Christ steady them in their conviction and the order here is relevant, you can’t encourage someone until they’re first established, because if you’re encouraging them when they’re not established, you’re encouraging them in the wrong direction. Paul desired that they be established, and then encouraged or further instructed concerning the heart and mind of God.

Vs 3-5

Vs 3, man, it’s a heavy vs. Paul states very clearly and quite candidly that you yourselves *know* that we are appointed to afflictions. Don’t be moved, or unsettled, or persuaded to throw in the towel concerning these afflictions that come into your life, because you well know that we’re appointed to them.

The word “afflictions” here meaning, “pressures” or “tensions” and “troubles”. You remember when Paul wrote to the Corinthians and said, *“We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed -- always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”* 2 Cor 4:8-10 and Paul is telling the Thessalonian believers “I desire the same thing for you.” That no matter what may come your

way, no matter how hard pressed you may be, that you not be crushed, no matter how perplexed concerning your situation you may be, not understanding why whatever is happening, that you not be in despair. and Though you may be persecuted, God will never leave nor forsake you, if you're struck down, you won't be destroyed, what can man do to you? Kill the body at best, but you fear the one who can destroy both the body and soul in hell. and If we be established and encouraged in the faith, then trials and tribulations won't move us, they won't shake us up to the point that we throw in the towel and decide to give up.

Because you understand that hardships are apart of life, Jesus said, *“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”* Matt 10:16 Now sheep in the midst of wolves is a concoction that spells trouble, 1 wolf in the midst of sheep is a bad deal but sheep in the midst of wolves is a real bad deal, that is if you're a sheep. It invites persecution, and so you can know that suffering as a believer is preordained and it's already in your day timer. You have an appointment with afflictions.

But don't be shaken by them, even Jesus (the bible says) learned obedience through the things that He suffered, He was obedient unto death as He suffered in the Garden over the will of God for His life. When Paul was converted Jesus told Ananias that He would show him how many things he needed to suffer for His names sake. *“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”* 2 Tim 3:12 Those who teach that suffering as a believer is an evidence of a lack of faith, gravely error in their understanding of the scriptures, I guess Jesus was as faithless as they come.

Peter said, *“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”* 1 Peter 4:12-13 God teaches us so much through our trials, and we just don't have time to get into all that but suffice it for now to say, as Paul said, *“we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”* Rom 5:3-5

Hope doesn't disappoint because biblical hope is that “guaranteed certainty”, and we have that guaranteed certainty because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. God wants to conform you into the image of His Son, but it comes through the fire, the refiners fire.

So don't think the hardships and tough times that you're going through or do go through periodically are indigenous to you, they come to us all. The important thing is how we respond to them, and through them, it's been said that trials don't make you or break you; they only reveal what's already there. and God willing we'll pick up next week in this same vein of thought regarding trials, the need *for* them, and the fruits *of* them, bringing honor and glory to our Lord Jesus Christ and We'll discuss vs 4-5 a bit and talk about the purifying hope of the coming again of the Lord.

If you're here this morning and you don't know Jesus Christ, you don't have that purifying hope of the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ. Maybe you have a terrifying, dreadful anticipation of that day, because you know that you're without God, and without hope in the world. God has brought you here today so that all that might be changed. He's giving you the opportunity to surrender to Him, and you need to know that there's another purpose behind trials in our lives. God will allow them to come into our lives at times in order to break us. In order to take us to the end of ourselves so that we might in desperation cry out to Him. He loves you so much that He's willing to let you see the depravity of this life so that you might be open to Him, giving you everlasting life. But it's only through Jesus Christ.