

1Thessalonians, Chapter Three, Lesson One

SUFFERING AFFLICTION 1Thessalonians 3:1-8

STIMULATE

** In the course of our study on the "**Bounty in Christ**" which we all can have, we learned three ways that Satan tries to thwart the victorious lives of Christians. Do you recall his methods or schemes?

Hating - Acts 17:5-9

Tempting - Matthew 4:10, 16:22-23

Testing - Job 1:6-12

** We know that God's word has prepared us for victory, so what must we do if we wish to experience the same "**Bounty in Christ**" as did Paul?

We must:

1. Proclaim God's word for what it is!
2. Thank God for those who receive it as His word.
3. Treasure the work of God in the hearts of others, with whom we were privileged to share.

All of this is designed by our Lord to take our focus off from our own lives and onto the lives of those He places around us for His glory sake.

MOTIVATE

** Very often we find that the Holy Spirit inspired writings of the apostle Paul instructs our hearts, not only by what they say, but also by the example which this man of God lived for all to follow. Such is the case for us as we spend the next two studies enjoying the third chapter of 1Thessalonians.

We will watch Paul as he is:

SUFFERING AFFLICTION - 1Thessalonians 3:1-8

SHOWING AFFECTION - 1Thessalonians 3:9-13

Let's begin here in 1Thessalonians 3:1-8 and observe Paul so that we might learn from his obedience to the Lord while "**Suffering Affliction**".

Read passage (V.1-4) (V.5-8)

Opening Prayer

Suffering Affliction

INVESTIGATE

V. 1 ** As he begins our passage, how does Paul connect his thoughts to our last study?

By using the word "Therefore", this common practice for Paul was used to cause his reader to think through the profound issues at hand.

** So, let's think it through. Which two thoughts are being connected by Paul?

1. "great desire to see your face" (V.17) "you are our glory and joy" (V.20)
2. "when we could endure it no longer"

Having been "bereft" of his beloved Thessalonians, Paul simply could not stand being in the dark about their present spiritual condition.

** Do you care about other Christians in that same manner? Are you driven to the brink, just because you do not know how they are doing in their walk with the Lord?

It is so easy to develop an "out of sight, out of mind" posture. We must become more committed to the prayerful concern of others who belong to Christ!

** Paul obviously missed the Thessalonians terribly, what two actions did that bring about in his life?

1. He was willing to be left behind at Athens alone. (V.1)
2. He was willing to send his beloved Timothy to find out about the Thessalonians. (V.2)

V. 2 ** Do you think that was very easy for Paul?

Absolutely not! Paul constantly watched out for his son in the faith.
cf. 1Corinthians 4:17, 1Corinthians 16:10-11, 1Timothy 1:1-2, 2Timothy 1:1-2, 2Timothy 2:1

** In our verse two for today, how does Paul describe Timothy?

1. "our brother" - extremely valuable to Paul
2. "God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ" and extremely valuable to God Himself.

** Before we move on, this one verse gives us two aspects of the person Timothy, what are they?

1. Who he is - "our brother"
2. What he does - "God's fellow worker"

** Why did Paul send Timothy to the Thessalonians?

"To strengthen and encourage [them] as to [their] faith.

** Should we be able to apply that same description to our own lives?

Certainly! We are all brothers and sisters in Christ and hopefully all that we do is done, as if working with God, in the advancing of His kingdom by the sharing of the gospel.

V. 3 ** What had happened in the life of Paul which might be used by Satan to "disturb" the new faith of these Thessalonians?

He was "**Suffering Affliction**".

** What did they know about his suffering?

"...we have been destined for this..." cf. 1Thess.2:14 (all Christians) and John 16:1-4, 12, 33, Acts 14:21-22

V. 4 ** How did the Thessalonians become aware of Paul's prediction for "**Suffering Affliction**"?

He told them! "...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."

V. 5 ** We are very aware of Paul's propensity for rejoicing, even in the midst of trials. Here in verse five he goes way beyond merely rejoicing, what was Paul's major concern in life - his afflictions?

"...to find out about your faith..." Paul did not care about "**Suffering Affliction**", what he cared about was the growth and stability of the Thessalonians' faith in Christ.

** Did Paul know their spiritual condition?

No - that was why he sent Timothy. (V.2)

** What was at the heart of his concern? What did he think might have taken place?

That Satan had tempted them and all of Paul's labor had become in vain.

** Last week we learned that Satan tries to thwart the victorious lives of Christians by hating, tempting and testing. How do you think he would have tempted the young faith of these Thessalonians?

By getting them to doubt Paul (because of his many afflictions) and thereby to doubt the gospel message itself. cf. 2Corinthians 4:3-4

** If Satan could be successful in this regard, what would have become of Paul's labor of love among the Thessalonians?

"...our labor should be in vain."

V. 6 ** Why is the first word in verse six so encouraging?

Because it is pointing out a contrast. Paul's labor was not in vain! Timothy had made it back to Paul and was the bearer of "good news".

** What were the two areas of Timothy's report to Paul?

1. "...your faith and love..." cf. John 13:34-35

2. "...you always think kindly of us" cf. Hebrews 13:7

** How strong was the love in the hearts of the Thessalonians for the apostle Paul?

Just as strong as his love for them!

epipatheo means "to yearn" or "long for" and represents a strong bond of love between these two groups of believers.

V. 7 ** If you spend your life helping, instructing, admonishing and encouraging others from God's word, how will their obedient faith impact your times of "**Suffering Affliction**"?

Paul said that he was "comforted" simply by the good news of their obedient faith. His afflictions were of no concern when put up against the joyous news of Christians obeying God's word. cf. 3John 4

** What does this verse say about the potential impact Christians can have upon one another?

The Thessalonians stood firm in the middle of persecution (2:14), which caused Paul comfort in his.

V. 8 ** What was Paul's "real" reason for living?

Because his children in the faith were standing firm in the Lord, Paul was experiencing the joy of life to the fullest measure. This is life indeed!

** If we realize how important it is to stand firm in our faith and obedience to Christ, because of the impact we can have on our brothers and sisters in the Lord, do you think we would be more aware of our effort?

Absolutely - We do not stand alone. We are meant to encourage and build up one another.
cf. 1Peter 4:10

EXTRICATE

** Let's look back over our passage for today and find the words or phrases which speak of Paul's love for the Thessalonians and vice versa.

- V. 1 "we could endure it no longer"
- V. 2 "we sent Timothy to strengthen and encourage"
- V. 3 "so that no man may be disturbed"
- V. 4 "we kept telling you"
- V. 5 "to find out about your faith"
- V. 6 "longing to see"...each other
- V. 7 "we were comforted"
- V. 8 "for now we really live"

** Paul's example of "**Suffering Affliction**" was made even more significant because of the relative value he placed on it. In verse seven, what did Paul say was more important than any news of his suffering?

That the Thessalonians were holding to their faith.

DELINEATE

** What impact can a Christian's obedient faith have upon the life of another Christian, even if they are "**Suffering Affliction**" at the time?

It will comfort those Christians who know the true value of an obedient walk with the Lord.

EVALUATE

** Will you ask yourself this question, "Do I stand firm enough in the Lord so as to be a comfort to my brothers and sisters in Christ who may be "**Suffering Affliction**" for His name sake?"

We must remember that our sustained obedience to the word of God is tremendously encouraging and comforting to other believers who have invested their lives in us.

ACTIVATE

** We do not want to be a stumbling block to those Christians around us, so let's ask the Lord to remind us throughout this next week of our responsibility to stand firm in Him for the building up of His body, for the advancement of His kingdom and for the comfort of our fellow saints.

Closing prayer