



**The Promise of Affliction
It's Not If, But When
1 Thessalonians 3:1-13**

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Before getting too deep into things, we need to go back and familiarize ourselves with the overall timeline of Paul and the team involving the Second Missionary Journey once they entered Greece from Asia Minor.

As the team left Troas, based on the dream Paul had, we know that the team consisted of Paul, Silas, Timothy and Dr. Luke.



Acts 16:11–12

“So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days.” (ESV)

Paul was determined to begin ministry in Macedonia proper, so we know they passed through Samothrace and Neapolis finally arriving in Philippi and leaving the ship there to minister in town. They began to do so on the very next Sabbath day after arrival leading Lydia and her family to Christ and then establishing her home as a base of operations. From the dream to this point most likely less than 2 weeks.

In Acts, we see it was just the next day the team ran into a fortune teller who began to follow them around. Satan wasted no time sending an operative in to try and disrupt the mission.

This is something we must remember today as well. Satan will not waste any time at all in attacking us as we step out in faith to achieve whatever it is the Spirit has led us to do on behalf of Jesus.

I have counseled many, and continue to do so, that as you step out to serve, you will experience things that will get in the way. Your car battery will die, the car won't start, the parking lot is flooded, and no one can park in it, you have a cold, but only on Sundays. Here is the reality of what is happening, Satan wants to delay stop or prevent you from doing anything on behalf of Jesus.

Of course, after doing this for “many days,” Paul became annoyed and cast the demon out of her setting her free and ending the fortune telling. Suddenly, this was now an economic issue for those making money off her fortune telling.

That isn't unusual either. The moment following Jesus and being faithful to Him impacts the bottom line of unbelievers, that is when the persecution tends to ramp up. Why is it we have been unable to find a place to meet? Well, it might impact the other businesses in this shopping center. Parking you know is limited and we can't cut into their bottom line.

The economic impact resulted in Paul and Silas being seized, charged, and beaten; then summarily dragged off to jail. The problem for the rulers; they were Roman citizens. After an eventful night in jail, earthquake, salvations of the jailer and his family, Paul confronts the rulers.

They want him out of town, and quick, when they found out they were facing a death penalty for what they did. As a result, the team was asked to leave, which after ensuring the little church in Philippi was good to go, the team did indeed leave. Total time so far in Macedonia, maybe a month.

So onwards to Thessalonica, so about 3 to 5 days of travel time and then once again on the Sabbath, Paul and the team begin ministry and once again salvations begin to take place.

That would have to be encouraging to them after what they just encountered.

The problem, the local synagogue leaders are jealous of the team as they are preaching Christ and salvation without following the law.

Acts 17:5–9

“But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has received them, and



they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.” (ESV)

After only 3 sabbaths, probably a little more than 2 weeks, of ministry, Paul and the team must leave. A group of Jewish leaders and “wicked men” from the local market decided to visit Jason, and basically forced payment from them to prevent the group from beating them.

Extortion was alive and well even then and persecution began in Thessalonica as a protection racket run with governmental support.

Satan still uses this today as a means of stopping the gospel.

There are current examples in most Islamic nations involving the payment of the jizya. And one more thing, “non-Muslims are denied equal access to and equal protection before the law because their testimony in court is not valid against a Muslim. This applies even to murder! (Morey 2003, 238)

I thought Islam was a religion of peace. No, it isn't. “An analysis of the Qur'an, the Hadith, Islam's historical past, and widespread Muslim interpretation today makes it clear that the Muslim fundamentalist is not an aberration but, in fact, is the one carrying out more precisely the teachings of Islam. (Miller 2004, 39)

This means that the idea of religious toleration in their culture is simply not an idea that is embraced. As a result, they too engage in a similar protection scheme.

“The least objectionable form of infidelity in the eyes of Muhammad and his followers, is that of the Kitābīs or people of the Book (ahlu 'l-kitāb), i.e. the Jews, as possessors of the Old Testament, or Taurāt, and the Christians, to whom, moreover, the Injīl (Gospel) was revealed. As they are not guilty of an absolute denial, but only of a partial perversion of the truth, only part of the punishment for disbelief is their due, and it is imposed upon them in the shape of a tribute, called poll- or capitation- tax [JAZYAH], by means of which they secure protection for their property, personal freedom, and religious toleration from the Muslim Government.” (Hughes 1885, 710-711)

Our brothers and sisters who are being routinely arrested, beaten and killed in Pakistan would tell you that this is not religious toleration. It also does not preclude groups from storming your church and destroying it either.

After being in Macedonia for less than 2 months, Paul and the team were forced to leave and go to another town, Berea.

But the protection racket was good business, still is, and the jealousy of the Jewish leadership was strong, so they showed up in Berea and once again Paul and the team had to leave.

This time they split up with Paul and Timothy taking the first ship to Athens and the rest following by land later.

Paul left Athens but not before seeing some more coming to Christ because of his teaching on Mars Hill. But no church plant that we know of. Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica before that point.

Paul went onto Corinth, teaming up with some Jewish believers who had just been forced out of Rome to reach Corinth for the Lord.



It was in Corinth the rest of the team, including Timothy, joined up with Paul and the Lord gave him a vision (Acts 18:9) letting him know he was good for ministry there for a while.

This brings us to 1 Thessalonians 3; Timothy's mission is referenced by Paul and the team, and this letter is due to his returning to them with good news about the church.

1 Thessalonians 3:1–5

“Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it best to be left behind, alone at Athens, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you for the benefit of your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For even when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it happened, as you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be for nothing.” (NASB 2020)

For Paul, sending Timothy back to Thessalonica was not easily done. This was a serious sacrifice for him and left him alone in Athens to do as the ministry. “The verb *kataleipein* means more than “remain behind.” Rather, it conveys the emotional sense of being left or bereft, as Aristotle’s use of the term shows (cf. Rhetoric 2.4.26; 3.16.5). Paul is a social animal and he is certainly not reluctant to show his feelings.” (Witherington III 2006, 91-92)

If you have done much traveling alone, it can be a bit daunting going someplace new by yourself, especially a different culture or country. That is why we considered it be important to meet each plane carrying some of our troops to us in Kuwait. You are in a group of four, all from the same base and have traveled from there to Germany, changed commercial flights and then flew straight into Kuwait City. The very first thing you see after clearing customs is a line of men in traditional attire, waiting on flights and the shock is real. You are not in Kansas anymore. We made sure we were right there in the middle of it all to “save” them.

If you are with others, then you can lean on each other, which is why we were there. But by yourself, and in a new place like Athens of the 1st century AD and the culture of idolatry that was there; that was all new to Paul.

He may have enjoyed arguing over ideas, but the Stoics and Epicureans enjoyed doing that just for the sake of doing it.

He eventually engaged with them with his sermon on Mars Hill, but even then, we see he changed things up a bit and relied on his knowledge of Greek philosophers in his message.

Here, Paul does not quote the Old Testament explicitly...Second, in Acts 17, Paul quotes one of the pagans’ philosophers. Because of this, many conclude that Paul’s approach to apologetics was more in line with those who abandon Scripture altogether. But he was simply trying to identify with his audience and meet them on ground that was familiar to them. And if Paul did this, how much more should we! (Baucham Jr. 2015, 78)

Paul had a difficult time in Athens, he was engaging with intellectuals, and it was tough.

It is hard to speak to intellectuals, even harder to speak to people who are basking in the glory of a former age. It is hard for us too. Yet Paul did try to reach such people for Christ, and so should we. Suppose our results are meager. Well, so were Paul’s. (Boice 1997, 301)



And Timothy wasn't with him. Paul was that concerned about the church he had to leave behind in Thessalonica.

Who is Timothy? Paul uses a term frequently and uses it of Timothy here.

Other than the recipient of two of Paul's letters, we see here that he is a dear and valuable brother and fellow worker in the service of God. He is called "God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ" here. The word used is *συνεργῶν* (*synergon*) which simply means fellow worker. "Paul uses the designation *synergos* for a number of people who do not merely offer him some kind of help on occasion, but who also work with him in a particular way, under his direction." (Boring 2015, 115)

By using these terms Paul raises a theological claim for himself and his helpers. Their assistance in proclaiming the Gospel means that they share with the apostle the burden of the ministry of reconciliation. Along the lines of Isaiah 43:24 they thus share in God's own work with its toil and labour. Hence they are God's servants and workers. As such they can claim the obedience of the community. Nevertheless they are not lords of the community in the human sense; they are helpers of its joy, 2 Corinthians 1:24. (Bertram 1964-, 875)

Why the focus on Timothy? They know him. He is carrying this letter with him, and it could be a validation of his ministry to them that he has done in the past and will do in the future. It is also the beginning of Paul's letter writing ministry. Letters that would be read and reread by those they were originally written to, but also copied and circulated around to other churches as well for the same purpose.

It is a written text to be read repeatedly, to all, as the point of orientation for the church's continued teaching, preaching, and life. Early in the Aegean mission, the new genre of the apostolic letter begins to assume a status alongside the Scripture adopted from Judaism, a first step toward the canonization of such texts themselves. (Boring 2015, 116)

Paul will later refer to the reading of this letter to others in 1 Thessalonians 5:27. This became a practice we still follow today.

The intent of Timothy being sent was to strengthen and encourage those in the church, and more specifically, those being persecuted and suffering as a result. Paul was concerned about their faith, so Timothy's purpose was come alongside those suffering and encourage them in the faith.

1 Thessalonians 3:2-3

"and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you for the benefit of your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we have been destined for this." (NASB 2020)

Have you ever noticed that there are those times when you step out in faith and take the next step the Lord has revealed to you, and you encounter pushback. And not pushback from where you expected it, but from groups or people you thought would be on your side.

I have had that take place more than once. As a teenager, I had stepped out with a like-minded group, and we formed a band and singing group. By faith we took the ministry to others and began seeing folks come to Christ. We reported back to our home church and expected to be supported further in what we were doing, instead, they killed the ministry entirely. That's pushback.

This is a tactic Satan uses a lot. The common factor, when you step out in faith and the Lord begins to bless, expect Satan to use others to attack you and try to delay or stop you. Even folks in the church who



“have your best interests in mind.” This is interpreted as, I wouldn’t do that, and you shouldn’t either. Be more like me, spiritually dead.

Then there are those who are just plain jealous that the Lord is using you and not them. So, they either become naysayers of the ministry or if given the opportunity, attempt to shut it down for good. Grieving the Holy Spirit in the process.

When that happens, I don’t know about you, but the Lord knows I need to be encouraged. The Holy Spirit will provide it too, just on time and when you need it.

Encouragement comes from brothers and sisters who are being blessed by what it is that the Lord is doing through you, or the ministry you are involved in, supporting, or busy serving in. Again, we are simply being faithful and are having our Timothy show up to “strengthen and encourage you for the benefit of your faith.”

Here is an email we received earlier in the week about our online ministry through the UnSafe Bible from a brother in Uganda. “GREETINGS From Eastern Africa. I look forward to many hours learning from you (such opportunities are “few and far between” here in Uganda.) I thank Almighty God for this opportunity and for having led me to such a capable individual...I will continue enjoying your “teaching section,” and, judging from its endless size, will be doing so for quite some time. May God continue to bless your ministry and may His Holy Spirit successfully encourage many to “your shores.””

Yes, that was encouraging to hear.

We need to look for those opportunities where we can also come alongside and encourage our brothers and sisters in ministry. I think of my nephew who is fighting discouragement in his ministry. In his case, it is from a government that has placed intentional roadblocks in front of anyone wanting to do ministry in the country he was in. But it could also be that friend who has just stepped out to serve in some ministry here at Calvary. Be on the lookout for your opportunity.

Paul was concerned that the people in Thessalonica would not only become discouraged by the persecution but be constantly bugged by those doing the persecution.

“Here Paul seems to have in mind the possibility that, while the Thessalonians were in the middle of their troubles, some of their enemies might by fair words wheedle them out of the right way. Perhaps while the Gentiles were persecuting them some of the Jews spoke kindly to them (or Paul feared that they would) with a view to persuading them to accept Judaism, which, of course, would have as one of its effects the immediate cessation of persecution. It was their being Christian that aroused hostility so that to apostatize from Christianity would mean instant relief. We must not minimize the attractiveness of this prospect for people suffering persecution.” (Morris 1991, 96)

Yes, this is indeed going on today.

“In Iraq, a free university education has been offered to any Christian or Jew who will embrace Islam. A “bounty” of one thousand dollars has been offered to any South African black who will renounce Christianity and embrace Islam. They will also be paid \$500 for any other blacks they convert to Islam.

It has been quite common to tell Americans and Europeans that if they want to continue to work in the oil business in Saudi Arabia, they must convert to Islam. No church is allowed to be built on Saudi soil in the attempt to suppress Christian worship.” (Morey 2003, 237)



And the last part of verse 3, tells us that Paul had told those brand-new believers who were coming to Christ in Thessalonica to expect persecution. He and Silas were both still visibly showing the “after” of their run in with the officials in Philippi. That is not a reality for us in this nation currently, but it is reality for many globally today.

This is something that we all need to understand, and Paul made a specific point to inform them about this beforehand there in Thessalonica. And it was not a one-time telling or warning either.

When Paul talks about this, he uses the Greek word *θλιψεῖν* (*thilypsein*), which comes from the word *thilypses*.

We see it translated as afflictions here. The word in the Greek means “to crush, press, compress, squeeze...to break. Tribulation, trouble, affliction...pressure from evils, affliction, distress.” (Zodhiates 2000)

What is taking place is coming from an outward source and is intended to apply pressure with the intent being to break the individual.

We like to forget this is taught in the Bible.

Here is the news that is not being taught these days...“Persecution is part of the divine will for his people. It should never come as a shock.” (Osborne 2018, 69)

The reality of rejection and opposition to the gospel truth is everywhere in the New Testament (e.g., Matt 5:11–12; John 16:33; Rom 8:17; 2 Cor 4:7–12; Heb 11:32–39; 1 Pet 3:13–17). The heresy of the gospel of prosperity is quite evident in these passages. (Osborne 2018, 69)

1 Thessalonians 3:4–5

“For even when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it happened, as you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be for nothing.” (NASB 2020)

To make sure we don't miss the point, Paul speaks very clearly to us about the topic of persecution. Some comfort, “I told you so.”

We should not be surprised when we get push back from the world, from other believers, yes that is a bit disconcerting, but the world, expected.

It should therefore not be surprising that those who stand in opposition to such a world and its primary values—even if not verbally so, but by contrasting lifestyles—should regularly experience the scorn and hatred of those who prefer Satan's values to Christ's. Perhaps the single most unfortunate result of Christendom as a cultural reality has been that the overlay of a less than radical Christian worldview allows God's people to “coast” rather than to experience the kind of expected discipleship Paul speaks of here. (Fee 2009, 119)

In our culture, the pressure is to “get along.” It is not to stand out, not anymore.

It used to be that we loved to see those who were the best at what they did float up to the top and catch the attention of the world.



Those who were consistent in their lifestyle and in their message made an impact. Not everyone would believe what Billy Graham was preaching, but many still respected him because of his faithfulness and consistency.

Today though, the culture wants to hear and see less of consistent Godly living.

Paul heard back from Timothy that what was prophesied, has indeed become reality for the church in Thessalonica. Jesus told us to expect this.

John 15:18–19

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” (ESV)

The moment we give our life to Christ, we have opted out of the world and changed our eternal destination. All things are new and we are no longer part of this world system, and they hate us for that.

Contrary to what some teach, prosperity health and wellness were not promised to those who gave their life to Christ, persecution was (John 15:18, 2 Timothy 3:12). But also, blessings beyond your wildest dreams as a present possession (Ephesians 1:3).

Because Paul feared that they were being persecuted, he sent Timothy. He needed to know if they were remaining faithful. He was fearful that some may have given into Satan and opted to return to their former lives.

1 Thessalonians 3:6–8

“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, for this reason, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord.” (NASB 2020)

Timothy brought good news back to Paul and the team there in Corinth. He is writing to them almost as soon as he heard about them and how they were doing. Hearing that they were faithful in the face of persecution was encouragement to Paul.

His investment in them, even though limited due to persecution, had paid off in huge dividends. The church was remaining faithful in the face of pressure from persecution. They were standing firm because God enabled them to do so.

On top of the church remaining faithful, the fear that Paul had of them believing lies about him and why they had to leave suddenly were all without any value at all. They did not believe the rumors and lies being told.

When we hear rumors or stories about others, what do we do? Most times it is a single person who is speaking out of turn about someone else and this is how rumors begin and reputations are destroyed. Having worked as a senior manager and executive, I have firsthand knowledge of lies and the impact they can have. They can absolutely demoralize a workplace and distract you from what it is you should be doing. Paul was concerned about that.

At the end of Desert Storm, rumors began to fly about when reservists would be released from active duty and could return home.



In less than 48 hours the rumors had come close to crippling our ability to be able to function as a squadron since 2/3 of the squadron thought they were going home tomorrow. They weren't.

No one had returned from Saudi yet, and no orders were cut. We killed the rumor by creating our own false narrative without even saying a word. We simply had desert uniforms prepared and then hung up in our offices where they could be seen when the door was open.

Immediately, everyone stopped talking and worrying about going home and hoped that by working extra hard, they wouldn't be rotated to Saudi to replace those returning.

Paul would later remind Timothy of the problem of rumors in one of his instructions to him about the running of a church. Specifically, what do you do when rumors start flying around about one of the pastors?

1 Timothy 5:19–21

“Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.” (ESV)

Two or three witnesses, and not baked up ones either. That is a witness you arrange to create but first must establish a false narrative about someone. In other words, you lie about them. You ask someone to listen in on your conversation with that person as you “confront” them about the lie. How would you do? When did you stop lying to your wife about the affair?

How do you effectively refute a negative? How do you refute a statement that has baked into it an allegation that has never been proven. When did you stop beating your husband?

Then there is gaslighting, a common practice appearing in workplaces and churches around the nation. Wow, have you seen how tired he looks, I guess the stories must be true about him.

It can be subtle. Paul would know and he was delighted to discover that the church had not bought any of the rumors been floated about him and the team.

As believers in the 21st century, we must guard against this desire to cancel someone who simply disagrees with us. Slanderous things are being alleged against pastors daily online.

People are quick to judge with no evidence at all and before the truth even comes out, resignations are being asked for. Be careful on social media, it is so easy to pile on and be enraged over a photograph that, thanks to AI, was manufactured on a computer yesterday.

Paul was comforted, as the church in Thessalonica remained faithful to Jesus.

There is nothing more exciting than seeing someone you worked with and witnessed to in the past, still growing in the Lord today and busy serving Him.

1 Thessalonians 3:9–10

“For what thanks can we give to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice because of you before our God, as we keep praying most earnestly night and day that we may see your faces, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?” (NASB 2020)



The anxiety Paul may have had in his concerns over the state of the church in Thessalonica is now a thing of the past. They are faithful followers of Jesus Christ. They are remaining faithful in the face of persecution. That is a source of joy for the team. Now they are praying for the opportunity to return and finish the job.

Paul is not telling them he wanted to bring them something new. We are about to learn the depth of his teaching to them in the short time he was there. When he says “to “supply” (katartizō) generally connotes completing or improving the condition of something (cf. Gal 6:1).” (Martin 1995, 109)

The church was not lacking in faith, there was no fatal flaw in the church he needed to correct. They had survived and endured persecution and remained faithful.

I always wonder what class with Paul would have been like. I know he was a bit long winded, like teaching all night long. Talk about in depth Bible study and being fully in the room the entire time.

He was not an entertaining speaker like Apollos, but when he taught, you needed to listen closely to pick up the nuances of what it is he is saying. Even his word choice is important.

But for some, there was always a danger as Paul would just keep on teaching.

Acts 20:7–12

“On the first day of the week, we gathered with the local believers to share in the Lord’s Supper. Paul was preaching to them, and since he was leaving the next day, he kept talking until midnight. The upstairs room where we met was lighted with many flickering lamps. As Paul spoke on and on, a young man named Eutychus, sitting on the windowsill, became very drowsy. Finally, he fell sound asleep and dropped three stories to his death below. Paul went down, bent over him, and took him into his arms. “Don’t worry,” he said, “he’s alive!” Then they all went back upstairs, shared in the Lord’s Supper, and ate together. Paul continued talking to them until dawn, and then he left. Meanwhile, the young man was taken home alive and well, and everyone was greatly relieved.” (NLT)

When Paul was teaching, not even dying would be an excuse not to listen.

He seriously wanted to go back to Thessalonica to finish what he had started. Most missionaries I know are like that. They all want to return and complete the work, there is still that one person who needs to hear and come to Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 3:11–13

“Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you; and may the Lord cause you to increase and overflow in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also 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.” (NASB 2020)

Paul is praying for himself as well as for the church in Thessalonica. His prayer makes clear also that in Paul’s mind, there is no difference between God the Father or the Lord Jesus Christ. They are both God, and he is praying to the Father and the Son that he would return to them in Thessalonica.

Satan had hindered the team and Paul is asking God to clear a path for them to be able to return. Is it okay to mention God and Jesus as we pray? Yes, it is. Paul is our example here. This is his prayer for himself and the team.



Then he moves onto praying for the church in Thessalonica. They are persecuted, they are under pressure and stress, and it is hard right now to see how they will make it to another day and continue on in their worship of the Lord.

The prayer provides them good news, they are not benched. God is not done with them yet, not at all.

1 Thessalonians 3:12–13

“and may the Lord cause you to increase and overflow in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also 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.” (NASB 2020)

We have learned, contrary to much poor teaching going around today, that as believers, we are promised to be treated just like Jesus was treated. ““If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.” (John 15:18, ESV)

2 Timothy 3:12

“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,” (ESV)

Why? “Christ’s righteousness is the root cause of the aggravation that leads to the persecution of Christ’s people. Though Christ is the reason his followers are persecuted, he also is the reward.” (Cochran 2016, 65)

Matthew 5:11–12

“Happy are you when people insult you and persecute you and tell all kinds of evil lies against you because you are my followers. Be happy and glad, for a great reward is kept for you in heaven. This is how the prophets who lived before you were persecuted.” (GNB)

Loyalty to Christ on the part of the church in Thessalonica, the fact that they refused to compromise and insisted on a life wholly devoted to Christ. Being in Christ, abiding in Him, as we are commanded to be doing in John 15:1-11, is a source of unbelievable joy and the key to a truly fruitful life. Abiding in Him, is sufficient evidence to the world system, run by Satan and his minions, for affliction, slander and persecution.

We are no longer part of this world and have declared our undying allegiance to the one who has already defeated the world powers on the cross.

Ephesians 6:12

“For we are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age.” (GNB)

The world in which the newly inaugurated kingdom of God was now spreading was one dominated by invisible divine powers transparently described in the vocabulary of geographical rulership. We are not told how the terms relate to each other or precisely what they signify in a hierarchy, but the message of cosmic geography is plainly telegraphed. (Heiser 2015, 331)

Paul deeply understood this to be the case as to this church, currently engaged in serious combat with the unseen realm, his prayer is clear. To increase and overflow in love for each other.

When you are in the middle of a battle, you need to know there are those who have your back. That there are those who will take care of the little things you simply cannot handle right now because of the very real combat you are engaged in.



Exercises are nice and help you to learn, but there is no learning like that of actually being engaged with the enemy.

When that happens, what was theory, Jesus is all you need, becomes truth and practice. Now we know Jesus is all we need because Jesus is all we have. As we understand this new reality, we also understand that our brothers and sisters in Christ, the ones who are with us physically and spiritually, love us and we love them and truly depend on them like we never have before. You don't just want their prayers for you, you crave them and need them for daily survival.

When Jesus taught His disciples about loving one another, He also talked about praying for one another. Here in Thessalonica, this is now reality and required.

What about the Laodicean Christian of these last days. The lukewarm progressive Christian who just wants to get along with the culture and not rock the boat. No persecution = no danger to the world system.

There is no distinction made in the passage between lukewarm Christians and zealous ones. What Paul appears to be saying is not that those who are zealous (as opposed to those who are not) will be persecuted, but rather that those who desire to live godly in Christ (as opposed to those who do not) will be persecuted. Identification with Christ is enough to ensure persecution. (Cochran 2016, 100)

Paul prays for their love for each other to increase and overflow. Once again, Jesus tells us "Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." (John 13:35, NLT)

The prayer is not simply that their love increase but that it abound beyond limits, being exceedingly great and overflowing. (Green 2002, 177)

How effective are they? We are talking about their love right now. This is an answer to what Paul was praying on their behalf here. We see how they loved each other and learn from that, how we to are to be about the business of loving one another in our culture here in the 21st century.

Paul continues with his prayer in verse 13 and begins to look at that day when Jesus Christ returns for His church. Paul is not only praying that their love abound today, but the impact of that love to be evidenced in holiness.

Paul wants them to be found, at the final evaluation before Jesus Christ, that they are blameless resting in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This begins at a single point in time and Paul points that out, "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

After the rapture of the church takes place, the church, past and present, all arrives in heaven at the same time. We are in glorified bodies and because we are in glorified bodies, we are now blameless in holiness before our God and Father.

When the dead in Christ and living Christians are caught up to be with the Lord and arrive in heaven as the trophies of grace, the marvels of God's resurrection power, they will be presented as a spotless bride, as a holy people, as those who are the workmanship of Christ. At the coming of Christ with all His saints to heaven, we will be "unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father." In that day we will not be "unblamable" because of any works on our part. It will rather reflect our entering in God's marvelous grace—unblamable because every sin is washed away, every unholy thing once and forever removed. (Walvoord 2007, 34)

For all of us who are believers, we will be there. Will you? You can make sure that you are.



Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

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