

Remaining Committed Amidst Affliction
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Text: 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

1 Thessalonians: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: Paul's Desire to Visit the Church Again

Central Idea of Message: Encouragement from other believers is a source of strength in the midst of affliction encountered in a world hostile to Christianity and Christians.

Introduction: Paul could no longer bear not knowing about the spiritual condition of the Christians in Thessalonica. He had waited long enough. It was time for him to take the initiative in order to encourage the afflicted. After all, is it not the duty of the preacher to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable?

I. Christians Live in a Hostile World (v. 1)

- A. Paul was separated from the Thessalonian Christians
 - 1. He had been run out of town
 - 2. Imagine what it was like for those who remained
 - 3. The Thessalonian Christians were encountering great opposition from their adversaries
 - a) Unbelieving Jews
 - b) Roman authorities
 - 4. The world is hostile to Christians and Christianity: try these and see what happens
 - a) Tell friends and co-workers you do not drink alcohol as a beverage
 - b) Tell friends and co-workers you do not cheat on your spouse
 - c) Tell friends and co-workers you are against abortion
 - d) Tell friends and co-workers you are against gambling because you see it as exploitation
 - e) Tell friends and co-workers that your conviction is that marriage is intended by God to be between a man and a woman
 - f) Tell friends and co-workers you believe a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, by

grace through faith and repentance, is the only way to heaven

- g) Tell friends and co-workers you believe only the sixty-six books in the Bible are the inspired words of God found in all the world
- h) Tell friends and co-workers you believe in tithing
- i) Tell friends and co-workers you believe Christians ought to gather together regularly in worship of God
- B. Paul thought it best to remain in Athens
 - 1. He was willing to remain alone in Athens
 - 2. He was desperate to help the struggling Christians in Thessalonica

II. Christians Need to Be Encouraged in the Faith (v. 2)

- A. Timothy is sent to conduct aftercare
 - 1. Became a temporary pastor there
 - 2. Brother in Christ and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ
 - 3. Paul is emphasizing Timothy's qualifications to minister to the church people
- B. Strengthen and encourage in the faith
 - 1. Strengthen
 - a) **Christianity has many followers who are, simply put, spiritually weak**
 - b) Become a strong Christian!
 - 2. Encourage
 - a) **Discouragement abounds even among Christians**
 - b) Encouragement is available from God's word and from God's people
 - c) But do not expect either God's word or God's people to encourage and comfort you while you remain in the midst of your sin
 - d) **The foundation of encouragement is advising one to make a positive change based on biblical truth which results in the bearing of fruit**

III. Christians Must Not Be Disturbed by Afflictions (v. 3)

- A. Disturbed: cajoled away from the faith
- B. Afflictions
 - 1. **Why are there afflictions?**

- a) **"Because we live in a fallen world where evil and Satan reign at the present moment"**
(Larson 39)
- b) **Because the world system is diametrically opposed to the Christian value system**
 - (1) Regarding truth
 - (2) Regarding morals
 - (3) Regarding ethics
- c) **Because Christ Jesus has not yet been crowned as Lord in totality**
- 2. **Afflictions are as much a part of the Christian life as grease under the fingernails of a mechanic**
 - a) The church was born in the midst of affliction
 - b) America was born through religious persecution
 - c) Pearls are made as a result of much affliction
 - d) Coal is produced as a result of intense pressure
- C. Destined for this
 - 1. Christians are going to encounter affliction and opposition
 - 2. This context suggests not an individual collision in the future being predetermined but a corporate collision for all those ministering the gospel of Christ: has the result of putting a match to gasoline been predetermined?
 - a) No, in the sense that God made you do it
 - b) Yes, in the sense that certain laws of nature exist such that, when violated, typical results can be expected

IV. **Christians Can Expect That Afflictions Will Come (v. 4)**

- A. They told their listeners in advance that they would suffer afflictions
 - 1. Difficulties should take no informed Christian by surprise
 - 2. We must not lead people to believe that coming to Christ will usher them into a life of ease, health, or wealth
 - a) This is totally untrue
 - b) **This is also very harmful not only because it is patently false, but also because saying such creates expectations which contradict**

life experiences, thus setting that person up for failure of faith

- c) But the failure of faith turns out to be a failure of placing faith in a *caricature* [false substitute] of the faith once for all delivered to the saints and not a failure of authentic biblical faith

B. The suffering came to pass as they had predicted

V. **Christians Must Be Concerned for the Faith of Others (v. 5)**

A. Paul had to know of their spiritual condition

- 1. Some people will tell you much about themselves, except for spiritual check-ups
- 2. People are conditioned not to discuss politics and religion
- 3. Paul routinely inquired about the spiritual condition of his acquaintances

B. Paul sent Timothy to find out about their faith

- 1. Paul feared that the tempter might have tempted them
 - a) "Tempter" indicates the seductive aspect of Satan's work (Hubbard 1352)
 - b) God tempts no person to sin
 - c) Temptations in the midst of affliction
 - (1) To think God has abandoned you
 - (2) To believe your faith is absurd
 - (3) To conclude that life would be better without being a Christian
 - (4) To abandon church, faith, Christ, or God
 - d) Satan tries to devour our faith through afflictions and difficulties
- 2. Paul feared that his work would bear no fruit
- 3. Every minister wants his work to bear fruit
 - a) Paul labored for Christian commitment from his listeners
 - b) Paul worked for Christian determination from his listeners

Conclusion: Principles.

- (1) Afflictions will come; expect them.
- (2) Remain steadfast in your faith in spite of affliction.
- (3) God wants all people to be Christians.
- (4) God wants all Christians to be fully committed and courageously determined to stand with him and for him no matter what challenges life brings.