

## 1 Thessalonians 3

*1 So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. 2 We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith,* Paul had fled to Athens and later been joined by Timothy and Silas. (Acts 17:15) He was so anxious to hear how the church was doing that in a short time he turned around and sent Timothy back. Not knowing how they were doing was what he couldn't stand. Vs 5 He calls Timothy a *sunergos* – one who works alongside. Paul didn't see others as superior or inferior but as those who work together. Timothy was sent to strengthen and encourage them in the faith, that is their relationship with Christ. Who does this for you? Do you do this for others? How? Acts 14:22-23; Ephesians 6:22

*3 so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. 4 In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.* He wanted Timothy to strengthen them and encourage them so that they could endure the trials. 2:14; John 16:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-6 Satan's tactic is to get us unsettled. We should be resting in Christ, trusting in God's protection and provision. If Satan can get us unsettled, he knows we will take our eyes off Jesus and fixed on our concerns. That makes us ineffective. But if we are strengthened and encouraged, solid in our faith, we will not be moved. Ps 16:8 Why are trials our destiny? 1. We live in a fallen world ruled by Satan. 2. Man is free to sin and we often encounter the consequences of that freedom. 3. It is the path to maturity, an instrument for our strengthening. 4. It is one way in which we lay up heavenly rewards. Paul warned them that this would be the case. 2Thessalonians 1:4-6

*5 For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.* Paul was afraid that in the trials they would have lost faith and the church would fall apart. 2 Corinthians 2:11 and 11:2-3 Have the efforts that have been made toward your life in Christ been useful or useless or a little of each?

*6 But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you.* Paul and Silas were thrilled to know that their faith and love had endured the trials. Has yours? They were glad to hear that the accusations and poisonous lies that were sown were not received by the believers. They had the same desire to see Paul that Paul had to see them.

*7 Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith.* Is your faith encouraging others? In spite of what Paul and Silas were enduring, they were encouraged by their faith. This is one of the most encouraging things to any minister, the continuing faith of those we have ministered too. 2 John 1:4 Sometimes we get a call out of the blue from a grateful soul that finally surrendered. They remember your concern.

*8 For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. 9 How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?* To know our actions have been fruitful and enduring gives us the encouragement to keep at it. We really live! To know we have affected lives for eternity gives us great joy. We realize God has touched people through us. 2 Samuel 7:18-20

*10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. 11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you.* They longed to come and share with them more of the Lord Jesus. This word 'faith' is used the same way as in verse 2. Their knowledge of Christ was lacking since they were so young in the faith. We all need more knowledge of Christ. Ephesians 1:17 We need Paul's heart to see younger believers grow in the knowledge of the Lord. Ephesians 4:11-15

*12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.*

A greater revelation of Christ does cause our love for one another to increase because love births love. 1John 4:19 One thing we really need in all churches is an increase in love for one another. Many of our problems stem from a lack of obeying Jesus command to love one another. John 15:12,17 Let's pray for our love to increase towards one another and everyone else. It has to come from God. It isn't a natural thing; it's a supernatural thing!

*13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.* Here is another great prayer. Lord, strengthen our hearts, our resolve, our commitment, our will to love and serve. We need to let Him make the most of our lives so that when we see Him we have no need to make excuses. May we be kept holy and blameless. Jude 1:24 He can do it! See 5:23; Philippians 1:10 Do you have that desire for yourself and those you love? Ephesians 5:27