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A1103 – January 16, 2011 – 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5
Called To Suffer

Last week we finished the 2nd chapter of Thessalonians. The second chapter of Thessalonians is concerned with the doctrine of service and we see how Paul and Silas served. We saw that that was an out-flowing of their spirituality. And we ended with a challenge. In the concluding section, vv 19-20 **For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.** What's Paul and Silas' hope, joy and crown? The Thessalonians. And the challenge we leveled here is, when Christ returns we're going to stand in His presence, we're going to stand face-to-face with the Lord Jesus Christ and when we do we're going to have to give an account for what we've done with the lives He's given us. In that confrontation what is going to be our hope? What is going to be our joy? What is going to be our crown of exultation? What will there be worth rewarding? When we stand before the Lord Jesus Christ we can't take anything from this world, except people. What we poured into people. You can't take your dog, you can't take your house, you can't take your car, and you can't take your job. All you can take is people. How can you take people? You minister to them. You serve others and through your service to others, by giving them the gospel, by giving them the truth you take these people to the judgment seat of Christ. Not in the physical sense, they're not going to be standing there, it's a private review, but the Lord knows who you served, He knows who you ministered to and He knows your heart. And that's going to be rewarded, if there's anything there. And that's the challenge I left you with. When you stand at the judgment seat of Christ what will be your glory and joy? Will there be some product of your ministry? Will there be some product of your proclamation of the gospel? Will there be some results from your proclaiming the truth to others?

Now we're going to move into 1 Thessalonians 3. This is our third S. The third chapter of Thessalonians is concerned with the doctrine of sanctification. And there are three aspects of sanctification. So we want to be clear on which aspect is being looked at in chapter 3. The first aspect of sanctification is the past tense, *you are sanctified* (1 Cor 1:2). All believers are sanctified in this first tense. This is positional and it simply means that at the point of faith in Jesus Christ you were set apart unto Him. And you have a new position in Christ. The second aspect of sanctification is the present tense, *you are being sanctified*. All believers are being sanctified in this second tense. This is experiential and it simply means that you are gradually being set apart by Jesus Christ from the world system. So this is your experience in Christ and has to do with spiritual growth. The third aspect of sanctification is the future tense, *you will be sanctified*. And all believers will be sanctified in this third tense. This is the day of our glorification and refers to receiving a resurrection body at the day of the pre-day of the Lord's rapture.

Now, chapter 3 of Thessalonians is dealing with the second aspect of sanctification, the present tense, *you are being sanctified*. This is the experiential aspect of sanctification. And Paul was concerned about the experiential sanctification of the Thessalonians. This is why he wanted to return so badly. He was concerned that Satan might come in and wipe these new believers out. And so he desperately wanted to return to be able to build them up so they might be grounded more firmly in the word.

See, Paul's method as a missionary was to go in and to evangelize first then follow up quickly by training the believers and then he would leave. Most missionaries don't do this and it's too bad because God the Holy Spirit gave Paul a great method that nobody uses because they're smarter than the Holy Spirit. So now we go read some psychology text on how to accommodate to a culture or something. It's a three-step procedure; evangelize, train, leave, evangelize, train, leave. After he left they would be sound in doctrine and trained well-enough to carry out more evangelism. The problem at Thessalonica was that Paul evangelized and started the training but before he finished the training he was booted out. And therefore he was concerned that Satan would come in and put some pressure on and they would fall apart and that would mean that Paul's ministry would have been in vain.

So he says, in 3:1, **Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, 2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, 3 so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. 4 For indeed 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. 5 For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain.** And so here we see a piece of the historical situation. And we want to try to put this piece together with the other pieces we find in the NT. Commentators get sloppy in verse 1 because the Book of Acts says Paul went to Athens alone and so if neither Silas nor Timothy went to Athens with Paul how can Paul say **we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy?** Who's **we**? And commentators will often say, well, **we** is Paul. Paul calls himself **we** and really nobody was with Paul. In other words, the commentators hit grease here and that means I have some work to do unraveling things. I don't like to be greasy with the text. I like to solve these apparent contradictions because God is going to bring some smart unbeliever into my path some day and he's going to say, aha, I see a contradiction with Acts 17:14-15 and 1 Thess 3:1-2 and I want to be prepared to give a defense to that person and share with them the gospel.

So let's turn to Acts 16. Does Acts conflict with 1 Thess? In Acts 16:12 they come to Philippi "which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in the city for some days." "we" in this context is Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke. This is one of the famous "we" sections in the Book of Acts, Luke is present in the "we" sections. So we have Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke. Four companions traveling together in Philippi. Now Luke splits off somewhere around verse 18 because the "we" section ends and it's all "they," "they," "they," which is just Paul, Silas and Timothy. Then at Philippi Paul and Silas are arrested and imprisoned. God sends the earthquake and the Philippian jailer and his family are saved. The next day Paul and Silas get out of prison. Observe verse 40, "They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed." Verse 1, chapter 17, "Now when they had

travel through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.” They go to the Jew first. So we have Paul, Silas and Timothy in Thessalonica. The Jews get jealous because of their converts, they form a mob and they attack the house of Jason trying to bring Paul and Silas out to the people. You know the story: Jason and his friends put up bail and this locks Paul and Silas out of Thessalonica. It seems that’s the satanic hindrance Paul mentions in 1 Thess 2. But it doesn't hinder Timothy. It only hinders Paul and Silas. As verse 10 shows, "The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea," Timothy was not immediately sent away. But, we gather he left of his own accord anyway because they’re all three in Berea in verse 14. "Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there." That’s Berea. So now Paul is split off. So now in verse 15 it looks like they’re shipping Paul out. They take him as far as the sea. Then it says in verse 15, "Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left." So what happened here was Berea was inland several miles and so Silas and Timothy stay in Berea and some escorts from Berea take Paul over to the sea where supposedly he was going to board a ship, but if you're a close student of the Scripture you don't see in verse 14 or 15 Paul getting on a ship. We think this was actually a decoy. They may have been tailed by some Jews so they walk Paul over to the sea like they were going to get on a ship and then they slip away and escort him by land in verse 15 "as far as Athens;" and when Paul and the escorts arrived in Athens Paul left them with the command at the end of verse 15 to return to Silas and Timothy at Berea and tell them to come to him in Athens “as soon as possible.” And so Paul is left alone in Athens in Acts 17:15. We have no doubt, according to Luke, Paul is escorted alone to Athens and left there. No Silas; no Timothy. And so commentators say we have an apparent contradiction with 1 Thess 3:1. So hold your place here and turn to 1 Thessalonians 3 to see the apparent contradiction. Acts says Paul is in Athens alone. What does Thessalonians say? **Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy our brother...** Now wait a minute I thought you were alone at Athens Paul. Who is the **we**? Who is with you? Who is with you sending Timothy? I thought he was in Berea? I thought you went to Athens alone? So what do you mean **we**? How did you send Timothy from a place he never was? I think the answer lies in that when Paul is escorted to Athens in Acts 17:15 he sent back a command

for Silas and Timothy to join him "as soon as possible." So Paul is going to be in Athens alone for some period of time. And it is during this period of time in Athens that we have verse 16, "Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens," who's he waiting for? Silas and Timothy. "His spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols." That's not hyperbole. The population was about 5,000 but Pliny says there were 30,000 statues. It was so densely idolatrous that Petronius said it's easier to find a god in Athens than a man. And so Paul goes into the synagogues and reasons with the Jews and he was out in the marketplace every day reasoning with whoever happened to be around and this led to his great *apologia* to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers on Mars Hill. Now all this time Paul was alone. But if you come down to verse 33, after his great address to the Athenians we have some of the results of his apologetic on Mars Hill. "So Paul went out of their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite," in other words, he was an intellect, he was a scholar, a professor at the local university, "and a woman named Damaris and others with him." Now, I suggest that verse 34 some time passes. In other words Paul gives his great address at Mars Hill and then he goes out and he continues to discuss with certain people that were curious about his address things regarding the gospel and they came to believe. Then if you read verse 1 of chapter 18 it says, "After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth." In other words you could be led to think that Silas and Timothy never joined him in Athens and Paul just left without telling them he was going. Then finally they find him in Corinth down in verse 5. But that won't work because it does not take into account 1 Thessalonians 3. 1 Thessalonians 3:1 says, **When we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy our brother...** So it appears that Silas and Timothy did join Paul at Athens after his address at Mars Hill and that's where Paul and Silas sent Timothy out from. If you don't hold this position then you have the problem of how did Silas and Timothy know that Paul left Athens and went to Corinth? Paul told them to meet him at Athens. Are we going to say that Paul just up and left? Paul commanded them to join him there. He didn't just suggest it. And we read that Paul was waiting for them there. The text states all these things explicitly. So why would Paul leave Athens and go down to Corinth before they arrived? And if he did that how would they ever find him anyway? And further as we see in 1 Thessalonians 3, Paul says **we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy our**

brother. So it appears that Silas and Timothy did come to Paul at Athens and it was from Athens that they sent Timothy to Thessalonica. Then if you come to Acts 18:1 it shows that Paul left Athens alone and went to Corinth alone. It says, "After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth." It does not say "we" left Athens and went to Corinth. It says "he," that's Paul. Only Paul went from Athens to Corinth. What about Silas? Apparently Silas went somewhere else. Because if you look at verse 5, Silas and Timothy come down from Macedonia to Corinth later. "But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ." In other words, it was not until Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia to join him at Corinth that he began to completely devote himself to teaching the word. Before this he was unable to completely devote himself to the word because he had to work to make a living. That's verse 2, when he arrived "he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them," that's Paul, Paul met this terrific couple. "And because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tentmakers." So Paul is having to work to earn a living. Of course he still ministers in verse 4, but he's limited, he can't spend all this time ministering because he's got to earn a living. Verse 5, "But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia Paul began devoting himself completely to the word," so why all of a sudden does Paul not have to make tents anymore? Why all of a sudden can Paul devote himself completely to the word? The basic answer is that Silas brought a gift, a financial gift to Paul from somewhere in Macedonia. Now Macedonia contains the cities that Paul had traveled to and established churches; Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. Which one did Silas go to? Silas was locked out of Thessalonica by the satanic hindrance so he could not have gone to Thessalonica. And he had been in Berea very recently and so it's highly unlikely that he went back to Berea. But if you turn to the letter to the Philippians, chapter 4 I think will discover that Silas had been sent to Philippi after Timothy was sent to Thessalonica and he brought back a financial gift. In Philippians 4:15 Paul mentions his reception of a financial gift from the church at Philippi. "You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia," when did he leave Macedonia? He left Macedonia when he was escorted to Athens. Athens is not in Macedonia; it's in Achaia. So he says, "after I left Macedonia," he's saying,

when I went down to Athens, "no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself," and he goes on but the point is that the only church that shared with Paul when he left Macedonia was the church at Philippi. And therefore it follows that Silas must have gone to Philippi and collected this gift and brought it to Paul at Corinth enabling Paul to completely devote himself to the word. And if it interests you to know, one commentator writes of the letter to the Philippians, that it's "the second most important source for study of the biblical principles of financial stewardship." The second most important. That's what the church of Philippi is known for the New Testament. If the Thessalonians are singled out as the church which demonstrates what it means to turn to God from idols and have this fantastic testimony then the church at Philippi is singled out as the church which demonstrates what it means to be good stewards of the resources that God has given you. And if you're curious, the Galatian church is singled out as the church you don't want to be like at all. There's nothing good about Galatia, they're legalists. Avoid doing anything the Galatians did.

So here's the picture that emerges. Paul, Silas and Timothy ministered at Thessalonica. Then Paul and Silas were booted out and they went down to Berea immediately. Timothy followed the next day. At Berea, Paul was persecuted and he alone was escorted to Athens. He sent back command with his escorts for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible. In the meantime he gave the great Mars Hill address to the Athenians. Then Silas and Timothy joined him at Athens, just like 1 Thess 3:1 says, they decided, when they could endure it no longer, to send Timothy back to the Thessalonians to minister. And so they sent him away. A short time later Paul and Silas, still at Athens, decided it would be a good idea for Silas to go to Philippi and inquire how they were doing. Since they planned to go down to Corinth they would all, after their individual journeys, rejoin Paul at Corinth. Paul himself ministered in Corinth alone and made tents for a while to support himself. When Silas came he brought a gift from the church at Philippi so that Paul could devote himself completely to the word. And when Timothy came he brought good news about the Thessalonians, their faith and their love, and this is what stimulated Paul to write the letter to the Thessalonians that we're studying. He wrote it from Corinth in response to Timothy's report of how they were doing, a report we'll get next week.

Now we have reconciled all the passages that deal with the travels of Paul, Silas and Timothy without violating the grammar of 1 Thess 3:1. This is what God the Holy Spirit wants when he says, "rightly divide the word of truth." He doesn't mean gloss over the text and say well, gee, I guess **we** really means **I**. No **we** means **we**, **I** means **I**. And if at all you can reconcile these things it needs to be done. That's the work of exegeting the text.

Now let's see how all these things fit together in a marvelous fashion.

Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, that's Paul and Silas in Athens alone, verse **2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith**, Paul and Silas sent Timothy from Athens to Thessalonica. And the reason given is because Paul and Silas **could endure it no longer**. And this is again an intense emotion caused by their being orphaned from the Thessalonians in 2:17. They really could not stand it any longer. They wanted to finish training them, they had been cut off and since they themselves could not return they sent Timothy. Timothy had access. Then Paul and Silas stayed on in Athens for awhile intending to meet up with Timothy in Corinth.

Verse 2, **and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ**, in other words what he's doing here is giving pause to authenticate Timothy, to give him some credentials before the Thessalonians. He's **our brother and God's fellow worker**. Because remember Timothy was somewhat of a gopher early on, he was not the one who ministered to the Thessalonians, he ministered to Paul and Silas and he was being mentored to be a pastor and teacher later on. And evidently Paul and Silas said it's later on now, so you go back to Thessalonica, Timothy, and you be a pastor and teacher to them. It's at the end of verse 2, **to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith**. So now Timothy is being injected into the ministry in God the Holy Spirit just providentially injected him because Paul and Silas can't return to train the Thessalonians and so this sets up the occasion where Timothy is the only one that has access and so it's the perfect timing for him to be injected into the ministry. So you shouldn't worry about the time you are injected into the ministry. You just go through the training and at the proper time God will inject you into the ministry. We had a whole series of elders injected into the teaching ministry at this church in the last six

months. And I would've never guessed this and they would've never guessed this two years ago. But God the Holy Spirit so worked things that they have now been injected into teaching ministry. And that ought to encourage you to know that God builds up leaders and that these leaders actually step out and teach the word. Because the church is not designed to be led by one single pastor-teacher and that's it, you listen to him and him alone. There are no passages you can show me that prove that the pastor is one single pastor teacher and everybody does what he says and only listens to what he says. That's total baloney! I've walked you through all of Acts and you can see time and time again Paul ministered at one church, and Silas ministered to the same church and Timothy ministered to the same church and these were all men who have the gift of teaching or the responsibility to teach at the very least and they minister the word in the same churches. These churches that get all tied around one individual Paul condemns in 1 Corinthians 3 because they got so allied to one individual they were saying, "I am of Apollos and I am of Paul" and all it was doing was causing division in the body of Christ and Paul says that's a bunch of baby talk, it's baloney and I'm sick and tired of this mess. God has gifted the church with a number of fine men and none of them are the equivalent of Jesus Christ. So don't go setting up one individual as the end-all, be-all teacher of the word. And I really have to tell you people this because some of you get so aligned around one individual that you think if somebody else teaches the word, or it's a video series, I'm not going to come, I'm going to stop assembling because nobody has anything else to offer. And I warn you against that because that's a cult mentality. God has given multiple pastors and teachers to the church and you should never isolate yourself to just one voice or you'll end up on the funny farm somewhere.

Here's a fine man, Timothy being sent to Thessalonica and they'd never heard Timothy preach the word. So Paul commends him, he's our **brother**, he's a **fellow worker of God** and he's authenticating him, he's saying he's credible, listen to him, Timothy is right here being injected into the pastor-teacher role by God the Holy Spirit **to strengthen and encourage** the Thessalonians in their **faith**. That means teaching Bible doctrine friend. You're not to be strengthened by some handholding group. You may feel better for 5 minutes but what happens when the 5 minutes are up and there's nobody there to hold your hand? These people had friends being executed and they did not just need someone to come hold their hand. They needed to know

Bible doctrine so they could stand firm in the truth and not go to pieces. Timothy gave them Bible doctrine. Why? Because all Christians need Bible doctrine so they can be encouraged and strengthened in their faith. You cannot be strengthened and encouraged in your faith by entertainment, by a whole lot of activity. The only way is by being taught the word of God systematically. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by what? Activity? Entertainment? No, by the word of God. It's the only way; you cannot build your faith apart from the word of God.

Verse three, another purpose clause, **so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions**; literally that says by these tribulations. And that's why I say be careful saying pre-tribulation Rapture because this verse says they were facing tribulations. So if you say the church must be removed before the tribulation then someone may come back and say well Paul and Silas were facing tribulation so therefore the pre-Tribulation rapture is not true. Now I totally agree that this is a terminology issue but I think it's just a lot easier just to override the whole thing and say well the Bible teaches that all believers will face tribulation, but they will not enter into the day of the Lord. That's the expression that the Bible uses to refer to that period of judgment that comes after the church has been removed. So the Bible does teach a pre-day of the Lord rapture for the church. But the Bible does not teach that the church will be removed before tribulation. In fact it teaches the church will face tribulation. And here's some of it. Paul and Silas were facing these tribulations. And they sent Timothy to them **so that no one would be disturbed by these tribulations**. Why might they be disturbed? They might think they're in the day of the Lord. And they weren't. They were under tribulation but they were not of the same kind of difficulties that will be faced by those who enter the day of the Lord. And so they should not be disturbed by Paul and Silas' tribulations. They are not day of the Lord tribulations.

There are two classes or kinds of tribulations. First, there are tribulations which are the lot of all Christians. Paul sent Timothy to remind them of this. We are called to suffer. Jesus said it in the upper room discourse, "In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage I have overcome the world." It is the lot of the Christian to face trials and tribulations. These are the stiffest tests of our faith. Are we able to stand under the pressures of the trials and tribulations that God sends us? He sends these, not so our faith

will fail, but so our faith will prevail. You'll be floating along in life and everything will be just fine and dandy and then suddenly your whole world falls to pieces. What's going on? You're being tested in your faith. But it's what you do when everything is fine and dandy that prepares you for when the whole world suddenly falls to pieces around you. That's why I encourage you, when everything is fine and dandy in life, to really start learning Bible doctrine, really start putting it away in your soul because you're in an environment when you can learn, there's not much pressure and you have the opportunity to concentrate and think about God's word. Usually what happens though is they relax and get lazy. And then when the world falls to pieces they fall to pieces. But if you get with the program then when the world falls to pieces you'll have the strength to walk by faith. That's one kind of tribulation and we should not be **disturbed** by these tribulations, they are the lot of all Christians.

The second class of tribulations are day of the Lord tribulations and this is a wholly different class altogether. The church is not destined for the day of the Lord tribulations. These are immensely bigger and they will be coming upon the whole world. They're global phenomena, they are not local phenomena. They are judgments coming upon the world to punish the unbelievers for their mistreatment of Israel and to purge the nation Israel to belief in their Messiah, Jesus. So that's a wholly other class of tribulations and the Thessalonians should not be disturbed that they are in those. Neither their tribulations nor Paul and Silas' were day of the Lord tribulations. They were every day run of the mill tribulations.

Middle of verse 3, **for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this.** They knew that because Paul taught them that Christians were appointed to suffer tribulations. So when Paul and Silas suffered tribulations it should be no surprise. Verse 4, **for indeed 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.** Now we should make some comments with respect to the fact that believers are marked out for trials and tribulations. Our Lord faced trials and tribulations. And the reason He faced trials and tribulations is because the world hated Him. Jesus said, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, for this reason the world hates you. If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated

you." In other words what we have here is the fact that if you actually live the Christian life your life will be counter cultural. There will be black and white between you and the world. People will see the difference. And that difference is what will stimulate their hatred of you. But know this, before the world hated you, the world hated Jesus Christ. Ultimately the hatred is directed at Him and not you, but because of His life in you they hate you. So don't ever get the idea that, well the Christian life means everything is going to be rosy. No, if you actually live the Christian life it's going to be thorny. To see this in another place turn to 1 Peter 2:21. In this section Peter is instructing believers how to live *in* the world system but not become part *of* the world system. That's a serious danger. And he's talking in particular about human institutions, the divine institutions that involve human beings; for example, how to live in a corrupt government, how to treat all people, no matter what their tribal background properly, and how to operate responsibly in your job. Living inside these institutions if a Christian lives the Christian life he's going to rub with the world. There are going to come times when you're going to be in a situation where you have to decide whether you're going to rub with the world or go along with the world and keep the *status quo*. Verse 20, Peter asks, "What credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if you when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God." Now it could be any situation, say, in the business world, and you're a businessman and you are being pushed to go along with something that you know is white-collar crime and you stand up for what is right and you're maligned and ridiculed, you suffer in your business relationships and he says if you patiently endure this then this finds favor with God. Verse 21, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you as an example for you to follow in His steps," in other words Peter says that God has called you to suffer. And He's going to deliberately put you in situations where your faith will be challenged, in the workplace, in your country, in your marriage and the question is are you going to go with the word of God and do what is right knowing you're going to suffer or are you going to be a buffoon of a Christian, sin and keep the peace.

Now, Paul and Silas and Timothy all knew what it was like to suffer for the right thing. And it didn't mean being a doormat. Paul and Silas stood up to the authorities. And the reason they often stood up to the authorities is because the authorities were violating authority. And Paul and Silas were

simply trying to highlight the importance of authority. And so they would do whatever God wanted them to do whenever God called them into these situations. They said if we suffer, if we get thrown in prison, if we get beaten, it really makes no difference to us because we know that when we suffer for doing the right thing it finds favor with God. So go ahead, do your worst but were going to do what's right. We've been called to suffer.

And I don't mean by saying this that you deliberately try to make yourself suffer. That's not what we're talking about. Don't be stupid and try to get yourself martyred or something. We're talking about a situation where you have a choice to do what God says or just go along with the world and keep the peace. That's a situation in which God is saying Christian I've called you to suffer for doing what is right. Now are you going to do what's right or you just didn't go along with the world be a nansy pansy believer?

Now the final thing we discover in verse 5, **for this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith**, you know, how are the Thessalonians doing? How are they handling the trials and tribulations of life? **For fear that the tempter might have tempted you**, see that's Satan, and Satan wants our faith to fail. God wants our faith to prevail. So Paul says, **when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might attempted you, and our labor would be in vain**. See, that's Paul concerned about the energy that he's expended ministering to the Thessalonians. If we look at our labor, there's a certain product that comes out of our labor and we want a good product. When we pour our lives in ministry into others we want their lives to be fruitful, we want there to be a tremendous product there that brings glory to God. I want that in this ministry. I want to be able to look at you and I want to see that there's good application coming in the day to day trials of life. I want to see the whole town of Fredericksburg to be so impressed with you they try to cram into these doors to hear the truth. I pour a lot of energy into you and I don't want your faith to fall to pieces. And sooner or later you're going to face the trials and tribulations. That's why I teach the word of God, teach the word of God, teach the word of God because faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. I know that I can't be there all the time to hold your hand. I may want to be there to hold your hand but I'm only one person. And sometimes I can come and hold your hand. But in any case I want you to be able to stand firm in your faith. I want you

to be encouraged that the Lord thinks you are ready to go through certain tribulations as a test of your faith. Because you built and you study, you've learned and you thought and now God says, now look, see what I've worked into you through the word of God. I know what I worked into you but I want to show you what I've been at work developing in you, strengthening your faith. And that's your testimony before the people in our town. And Paul is saying boy, I sure hope you haven't fallen to the temptations of the evil one because that means my whole labor with you was just a waste of time and so he's sent Timothy to find out about their faith and whether their labor was fruitful. That's the exegesis.

Now I want to conclude with one note about the doctrine of sanctification. This is a larger idea considering all that Paul was going through on the second missionary expedition. We said last week that Paul was satanically hindered from returning to the Thessalonians after only a month or two. But we also said that Paul recognize that this was the plan of God for his life. Now Paul desperately wants to get back to the Thessalonians. But he can't get there because he is satanically hindered. And we said that God often uses Satan to hinder us as a means of sanctifying us. God can use evil for good. And we speculated that God is trying to teach Paul patience. Be patient Paul. You can certainly see in verse 1 and verse 5 that Paul's patience had run out. He just had to find out. And there's another thing here that Paul I think is being taught. And I think in the Book of Acts when Paul gives his parting charge to the Ephesian elders that he's learned something from being cut off from the Thessalonians. He's come to realize I can't always be there to hold my converts hands. I can evangelize them, I can teach them the word but at some point I've got to let them go. See, Paul is going to die. I'm going to die. You're going to die, barring the pre-day of the Lord rapture. And I think one of the lessons that God is teaching Paul is this: Paul, you need to learn that you can't secure the faith of other believers. And I'm using this satanic hindrance to cut you off so you learn that the Thessalonians' faith doesn't depend on you Paul. And when you and Silas were booted out of town I was still there with them and I put my Holy Spirit in them. In fact I think it's good for missionaries to leave them. It's good for all of us, but especially for missionaries. Missionaries get the idea that they go in and they work with the people and then they just have to stay there forever and they can't turn it over to anybody else and the converts learn to depend upon the missionary and they don't learn to depend upon the Holy Spirit. And that's the danger. If

the missionary would just trust the Lord and leave the people then the people would have to grow up spiritually and learn to trust the Lord and not the missionary. And that's a lesson Paul was learning and it's a lesson for modern missionaries in particular, but all of us in general. Evangelize, train, leave...

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