

Steadfast and Abounding in Love

1 Thessalonians 3

Paul had grown to love and cherish the new believers in Thessalonica. They had been eager to accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and he had hoped to stay longer and help them become more established in their faith. Being run out of town, Paul longed to return to Thessalonica but was hindered again and again. When he could no longer endure it, he sent Timothy.

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5.

1. Describe Timothy's mission. (v. 2)

Establish – to render constant, confirm, one's mind

Encourage – to address, speak to, combining the ideas of exhorting and comforting and encouraging

2. **THINK:** What do you think Timothy would need to be successful? What would you need to be successful given a similar mission?

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3. **THINK HARDER:** Why do you think one might need to be established in faith before one can be encouraged in it?

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4. Thinking back, what has helped you grow in your relationship with the Lord?

5. Why did Paul want Timothy to establish and encourage their faith? (v. 3a)

Shaken – to agitate, disturb, trouble

Paul was worried about these believers. He saw it as his personal responsibility not only to share the Gospel with them but also to make sure they were rooted and grounded in their faith.

6. How could failing to have a good understanding of faith and suffering affect a believer? (v. 5)

Tempter - to try or test one's faith, virtue, character, by enticement to sin; hence, according to the context equivalent to; to solicit to sin, to tempt, used of the temptations of the devil

7. Why should they not allow themselves to be shaken by these afflictions? (vv. 3b-4)

Appointed – to be (by God's intent) set, i.e. destined (with purpose)

8. What role did suffering and afflictions play in the life of Jesus? (Hebrews 5:8)

9. Read the following verses and record what you learn about the reality of persecution in the life of a believer.

John 16:33	
Philippians 1:29	
1 Peter 4:12-14	

Granted – to give graciously, give freely, bestow

10. What promises can we cling to when faced with affliction and tribulation?

Psalm 23:4	
Psalm 34:19	
Romans 8:35-39	

11. Read the following verses and record what you learn about the results of persecution in the life of a believer.

James 1:2-4	
1 Peter 1:6-7	

12. Record Romans 8:28.

The prosperity gospel permeates our current church culture. In fact, it has been referred to as America's Gospel. It teaches that the Holy Spirit has been given to the believer to use for whatever they need or want. Faith becomes a tool we can use to speak prosperity into our lives. They claim that if you have enough faith, anything can be yours—health, wealth, and all kinds of prosperity. If you have enough faith, you can eliminate suffering altogether.

13. **THINK:** How could this type of thinking crush a new believer who is not yet established in their faith and does not understand that suffering is an expected part of following Jesus?

Paul wanted these believers to be established in their faith, understanding that suffering as a Christian should be expected and can even be received with joy through the power of His Holy Spirit.

14. As mature believers, we should also be concerned with the welfare of other believers. How can you be more proactive in establishing others in their faith?

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-10.

Remember from Lesson 1 that Paul had sent Timothy to Thessalonica to check on the believers. Timothy had returned to Paul with an update and some questions the church hoped to have answered. In these verses, Paul recalls the update given by Timothy.

15. What was the report given by Timothy concerning their faith? (vv. 6-8)

Stand Fast - absolutely to persevere in godliness and rectitude in one's fellowship with the Lord

16. **THINK:** If Timothy were to give an update on the status of your faith, what would it be?

17. **THINK HARDER:** How does knowing God's Word and believing it play a vital role in our ability to be steadfast?

18. Do some research on your own. Record what the Bible says about how the Word of God aids in spiritual growth.

19. How was Paul affected by Timothy's good report? (vv. 7-8)

20. How did Paul respond? (v. 9)

Paul had learned to find joy in the things that really matter. He experienced joy, which led to rejoicing before God in response to the steadfast faith of others.

21. **THINK:** Can you think of someone whose faith brings you some level of joy? Write down how they model the joy of faith for you.

22. What did Paul continue to pray for and why? (v. 10)

Perfect – to complete

Lacking – deficiency to be filled up

Faith – fidelity, faithfulness

No matter where we are in our journey of faith, there is always more to be accomplished. While Paul could not be with them in person, he hoped his letter would continue to encourage them in their walk with Christ.

Another way he purposed to help them was to pray. All throughout the epistles we see Paul's dedication in fervent prayer for others.

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13.

23. What does Paul pray for in verse 12?

In this epistle, love is seen only in action – “labor in love”. It is not affection, but an active seeking of the welfare of another.

- J. Vernon McGee

24. **THINK:** Consider their circumstances of facing afflictions and persecution. Why do you think Paul specifically prayed for the Lord to help them abound in love during this time? How do you tend to react when you face trying times?)

Suffering can have different results on different people. Some turn to bitterness, while others find paths that lead to grace, love, and forgiveness.

25. **THINK HARDER:** How do you think suffering, if we will allow it, can teach us to abound in love, not just for other believers but for all men?

26. Do you know someone who is in a season of suffering right now? Will you commit to praying that their faith will mature, and they will learn to abound in love through this suffering? If so, start by recording your first prayer using the lines below.

27. The Bible teaches us that God is love. When we love well as a result of His Spirit transforming us into the image of Christ, we bring honor and glory to Him. What additional result would there be if they would learn to abound in love? (v. 13)

Establish – to render constant

Blameless – free from fault or defect

Holiness – moral purity

Warren Wiersbe said, “True prayer is hard work.” Yet, Paul found a way to pray exceedingly day and night.

28. What hinders you in prayer?

29. What steps could you take to be more disciplined in prayer and pray more effectively?

30. Read 1 Peter 1:13-21.

Describe what it looks like to live “holy.”

Why should we be committed to holy living while we wait for Christ’s return?

A Closer Look at Paul's Prayers for the Church

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

This week's *Closer Look* will be somewhat different. We will examine seven of Paul's prayers for the churches. Please take some time to review each prayer, and then use the space provided to write your own prayer, reflecting on your family, ministry, work, and areas where you wish to grow. After that, write a prayer for your church, considering your pastor, the church staff and leadership, as well as all the members of your church.

31. A Prayer for Love. Read Philippians 1:9-11.

Using this prayer as a model, write a prayer for yourself.

Using this prayer as a model, write a prayer for your church.

32. A Prayer for Wisdom. Read Ephesians 1:15-19a.

Using this prayer as a model, write a prayer for yourself.

Using this prayer as a model, write a prayer for your church.

33. A Prayer for Strength. Read Ephesians 3:14-21.

Using this prayer as a model, write a prayer for yourself.

Using this prayer as a model, write a prayer for your church.

34. A Prayer for Fruit. Read Colossians 1:9-12.

Using this prayer as a model, write a prayer for yourself.

Using this prayer as a model, write a prayer for your church.

35. A Prayer for Righteousness. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.

Using this prayer as a model, write a prayer for yourself.

Using this prayer as a model, write a prayer for your church.

36. A Prayer for Unity. Read Romans 15:5-6.

Using this prayer as a model, write a prayer for yourself.

Using this prayer as a model, write a prayer for your church.

37. A Prayer for Obedience. Read 2 Corinthians 13:7-9.

Using this prayer as a model, write a prayer for yourself.

Using this prayer as a model, write a prayer for your church.

38. Finish your lesson by summarizing all you learned through Paul's examples about prayer.
