

Future Hope

Suffering in View of Christ's Coming

WEEK 3

WARM-UP

- Recall a time you were waiting in line for quite a while. What happened?
- How do you encourage your friends? What mode of communication or platform do you use?
- What is one of the hardest things you endured in the last eighteen months? What did you learn from that experience?

WORD *¹Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, ²and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, ³that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. **1 THESSALONIANS 3:1-3***

(Read also **1 THESSALONIANS 3:4-13.**)

Imagine losing contact with someone you love and not knowing how the person is doing. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy had lost all contact with the Thessalonian believers. They knew of the difficulty and persecution, but they didn't know if the new believers would stand strong in their faith. So they decided to send Timothy and were relieved to hear his good report. Our faith, too, is tested and refined through the challenges we face. In this lesson, we will look at the reality of affliction, the necessity of community, and how God enables us to endure tough times.

1 | As followers of Christ, we face affliction.

³. . . *that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this.* ⁴*For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.* **1 THESSALONIANS 3:3-4**

The authors of this letter didn't just say that affliction is real; they said that *we are destined for this*. Though this is a promise we would rather not claim, the truth is, all believers will face affliction for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Why do you think Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy found it crucial to tell new believers that suffering and affliction would come their way?

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2 | As followers of Christ, we need community.

⁷. . . *for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith.* ⁸*For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.* **1 THESSALONIANS 3:7-8**

Timothy's good report of the Thessalonian church encouraged Paul and Silvanus. Their faith was mutually built and edified when Timothy told the Thessalonians about Paul and Silvanus's love and concern, as well as when Timothy brought back the report. In the midst of affliction, followers of Christ are to stand fast in faith together. In 1 Thessalonians 3:10, what was their prayer for the church? Why is seeing each other face to face and supplying what is lacking in our faith important?

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As followers of Christ, God establishes our hearts while we wait for our future hope.

¹¹Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, ¹²and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, ¹³so 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.

1 THESSALONIANS 3:11-13

Since the church planters could not be with the Thessalonian church, they did what they could from where they were. They asked God for a way to be with the church, committed them to God, and trusted God to complete His work in their lives. According to verse 13, who establishes our hearts *blameless in holiness before our God and Father*? What attitude do you think we should have as we wait for *the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints*?

APPLICATION

- Recall the most difficult experience you have had. How did you stand fast in your faith? What enabled you to endure?
- How do you think the Thessalonian believers felt when they saw Timothy return, heard of Paul and Silvanus's concern, and received their letter? Why do you think we can endure difficulties with the support and love of a spiritual community? How will you apply this in your life today?
- Who can you pray for this week, with the same urgency and fervor as in this letter? Who do you long to see face to face and supply what is lacking in their faith?

PRAYER

- Thank God for the grace and strength He provides so we may stand fast in the midst of affliction. Thank Him for the spiritual community you are part of.
- Pray for the body of Christ around the world that is facing affliction for the sake of the gospel. Pray that each believer would remain strong and grow in faith, even as we wait for Christ's glorious return.
- Pray 1 Thessalonians 3:10–13 for your Victory group. Pray that you would meet face to face, abound in love, and be established blameless before God.

NOTES



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