

Appointed unto Salvation through Afflictions

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How and why was Timothy sent to establish and encourage the Thessalonians' faith? Pastor leads his family in today's "Hopewell @Home" passage. 1Thessalonians 3:2–5 prepares us for the second serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these four verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that truth about afflictions strengthens real faith, whereas lies about easiness fosters unbelief. The God Who appointed us unto faith and salvation through faith has appointed unto us the afflictions through which come at last into that salvation.

Thursday, April 7, 2022 ▫ Read 1Thessalonians 3:2–5

Questions from the Scripture text: What two things did they send Timothy to do (v2)? In what, specifically, was he to encourage them? What did the apostle not want to happen to a single Thessalonian (v3)? To what are believers appointed? Who should know this? How had the Thessalonians come to know this (v4a)? How was this verified (v4b)? What couldn't the apostle stand not knowing (v5a)? By what means could the Thessalonians have been shaken (v5b)? What would this mean about the apostle's ministry to them (v5c)?

Unbelief is encouraged by being told how pleasant things will be. But faith is encouraged by being told more accurately—namely that it is through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God. On the one hand, we will have those tribulations. On the other hand, since our entry has been secured by Christ, then our passage through the tribulations must also have been secured by Him.

So it was that at the end of the first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas returned to the churches that they had planted, “strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God” (Ac 14:22). That’s how they *strengthened* their souls!

Now, he has sent Timothy “to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith” (v2). How? By reminding the Thessalonians that they were “appointed to this” (v3b). Appointed to what? Afflictions (v3a)!

Those who suggest the possibility of a painless Christianity would put you on ground where you will easily be shaken. v4 isn't Paul saying “I told you so” in a gloating fashion but rather “this is exactly why I told you”—and am telling you again: so that you would NOT be shaken.

In fact, this “I told you so” comes with a great amount of love. So much love that just not knowing if the Thessalonians had held up under affliction was itself a great affliction to Paul. He could not endure (v5) not knowing if their faith had endured!

Why was it such a big deal to him? Because if their “faith” had not held up, then his labor would have been “in vain” (end of v5). It's a word that means “empty” and the same word translated “foolish” in James 2:20. In both places, Scripture speaks of what appeared to have been faith but was not. Here are these dear ones, whose glory at Christ returns the apostle anticipates, and the agony of waiting to hear that their faith was genuine was greater to him than just about any earthly affliction (cf. 2Cor 11:28–29).

So, let us be strengthened by being told about the afflictions through which we must go. And, when they come, let us rejoice that things are just as the Lord has faithfully told us. And, let us be honest with other believers about what they too must go through. Finally, let us care enough about other believers that we would rather go through great earthly pain than learn that their faith did not turn out to be genuine.

What afflictions are you going through? What afflictions are other believers that you know of going through? What are your expectations for the circumstances of your earthly life? What are your expectations for how you will get through them?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You both for telling us plainly that we must go through affliction, and that You will bring us safely through it, into Your kingdom. Forgive us for when we fail to find Your faithful Word encouraging, or even desire that things would be other than You have said. And grant unto us to be unshakable by affliction, we ask, through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP23B “The Lord's My Shepherd” or TPH231 “Whate'er My God Ordains Is Right”

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

First Thessalonians 3 versus two through five. These are God's words and sent Timothy our brother and Minister of God and our fellow laborer in the Gospel of Christ to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith. That no one should be shaken by these afflictions for you yourselves.

Know that we are appointed to this for. In fact, we told you before, when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation just as it happened and, you know, For this reason, when I could no longer endure, it, I sent to know your faith Last by some means the tempter had tempted.

You and our labor might be in vain so far. The reading of God's inspired and inherent word. One of the things that we find here in this passage that faith is encouraged and established by being told that it will suffer says that the reason they had sent Timothy to them was to establish them and encourage them concerning their face.

So that no one would shaken by the afflictions for you yourselves. Know that we are appointed to this for. In fact, we told you before, we were with you before, when we were with you, that we would suffer tribulation, This wasn't an isolated incident, the Thessalonians were not the first ones that Paul had.

Told that believers are appointed unto suffering, that Christians are important appointed unto suffering. In fact, at the end of the first missionary journey, Paul, and Barnabas returned to the churches that they had planted and names, three of them in particular there, in Acts chapter 14. And yet, it's probably the whole of them with those three being the primary ones.

And it said that they strengthened their souls. Let's strengthen the souls of the disciples exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying. We must through many tribulations Enter the kingdom of God. It's unbelief that is strengthened by being told fairy tales of how pleasant things will be unbelief.

Like lies, not truth. Faith likes the truth. Faith is not a hoping against hope and against evidence and making a leap and all of that nonsense, that people describe faith as faith is being certain of something. Because God has said, it faith is evidence and confidence in things that are not seen and are not yet confidence of things hoped for evidence of things not seen.

So faith is strengthened by being told the truth by God and it strength and especially by being told that we are appointed to suffer. Why are Christians strengthened by being told that we are appointed to suffer? Well, first of all, it gives an explanation for our suffering that it is not random or unexpected, but is something that is appointed.

And it's appointed not by fate some impersonal force that, that determines beforehand, what is going to happen, but by the person who loves us and chose us and has appointed us for salvation. Remember, the scripture that says that after the Apostle preached? As many as were appointed unto salvation believed?

And so if we are appointed unto suffering, it is by him who has appointed us unto salvation. That's why in Acts 14 verse 22. He says we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God. If you take the through many tribulations out, you still have, we must enter the kingdom of God.

That's been appointed. And the many tribulations as we hear hear, in our passage in verse 3, the many tribulations are that through which we have been appointed to enter the kingdom of God. It's not surprising because Christ was appointed to suffer and if we are being pressed into the shape of Jesus by the Spirit of Jesus from the life and character of Jesus, Then why would it surprise us that we have some measure of the experience of Jesus?

The Lord Jesus was not discouraged, but rather strengthened by the fact that he was appointed to suffer, He said, now, what shall I say Deliver me from this hour? No, it is for this hour that I have come. I have been appointed for this suffering. He says and so the Christian is strengthened even in the same way that the sinless Christ, strengthened himself by the fact of God's appointing to him the suffering that he was about to go through as much encouraging as you come into suffering or as you look forward to the prospect of a certain suffering.

To remember God has appointed for me all the suffering through which he has appointed to bring me at last into his kingdom to save me at last. Now, the reason that Paul had sent Timothy to them was so that he could do this again, he had told them before, and then it happened while they were there, that's all onica.

The visit to Thessalonica was very brief in the scripture because of the suffering that happened after those three Sabbaths that on which Paul had preached the gospel there. And then So it happened and they know and he had sent Timothy to remind them again of the same thing. So he sent Timothy to them so that they would be established and strengthened in their faith, that their faith would keep standing, despite the affliction, but he sent to them for Timothy or sent four Timothy from them.

Because he wanted to know that this was in fact, what had happened for this reason? When I could no longer endure it I sent to know your faith. It's a very strange thing that there's apostle who suffered much and this apostle who told them that that they would have afflictions and through many tribulations, they must under the kingdom of God that he would say.

I could no longer endure it What pain, what affliction would be so great, that the apostle who preaches affliction would say I could no longer end. It was the pain of wondering. How many Thessalonians we're genuinely converted as we see in the scriptures especially in the Old Testament church.

But also in the New Testament church Not all who are members of covenantal Israel on earth are true and eternal Israel in their hearts. And so he was finding out whether his quote-unquote labor might be in vain concerning. Some of them uses a word that James uses in James 2.

Verse 20 says, you foolish fellow talking to the person who thinks he has faith, but it doesn't have works. And in that context in James 2, verse 20. He's talking about someone who looks like a Christian but isn't a Christian. So that's one test James 2 verse 20. If the faith doesn't produce the fruit of works, then it's empty and the the person who's called Christian is empty cold.

So and there are other places where this, where the Apostle Paul talks about his labor, being in vain, or people's believing being in vain, and he's talking there about those who have the name Christian, but not the inward and eternal reality of Christianity. And so, one of the tests is, like we said from James 2, does your faith produce fruit?

Is it functioning in your life as the thing, by which you walk that you respond to Jesus with how you live? This is one of the reasons. It's such a mercy of God, that He gives us His public worship at the beginning of every week. So that the rest of the week, we would respond to the Lord Jesus, by how we live.

Because that's how faith walks, that's how faith obeys. That's how faith serves. That's how faith puts sin to death and fosters that growing life of righteousness and holiness that will extend will be perfected when this life is over and extend into eternity. And that's why it's a mercy that God gives us evening and especially morning to worship him together as a family.

When you lie down and when you rise up because it's not just a theological truth, that our faith produced must be demonstrated by producing fruit in the life. It's also the daily mechanism that we come to the Lord, through the righteousness, of Jesus and the blood of Jesus. But even more than that, by the person of Jesus and the help of His Spirit in that worship and then we respond to Him, continually all the rest of the day.

So that's one thing does, the faith produce fruit? And then the second thing is, does the faith vanish in the midst of affliction? Is it shaken and does it at last fall? So he says that no one should be shaken by these afflictions verse 3. And if someone had been shaken, then he would have known verse 5.

Not that God was testing them to show the quality of the faith that he had put in them that it is strengthened and grown even in the midst of affliction. But that it was the tempter, tempting them. That Satan was using affliction to show about false believers that their profession of the Lord was superficial and not genuine from a work that God had done giving the new birth in the heart.

And so Paul says, even about the Thessalonian church about whom he had said such wonderful things about his joy and thanksgiving about the fruit that he and Silas. And Timothy had seen. He said such wonderful things in chapter one. He acknowledges that there may be people in that church, even who's profession of faith and outward works.

We're not the product of the work of God and therefore we're susceptible to the attacks of the devil and that when the devil attacked, they would be shaken and abandon their faith. Now, sometimes the double thinks he is attacking to destroy faith. You know, of course, that that's what he thought he was doing with Job, but God intended for good, what the devil intended for evil and he used Satan's attacks to produce more faith.

In Job as Job says, at the end of the book that he before his knowledge of God was the kind of knowledge that you get by hearing a rumor. And then after his affliction that his knowledge of God was the kind of knowledge that you get by eyewitnessing and and experiencing.

And so the Lord was the one who was testing Job, even though, Satan thought he was the one. That's what's Paul is saying in verse 5 He was trying to find out about the Thessalonians. Was the faith real or was the faith? A man-made imitation that could be destroyed by the devil.

If it's real the devil can't destroy it. He only finds himself the unwitting failing. Instrument by which God strengthens it. Praise God. You can come into your afflictions and you can say, Lord, you are the one in whom. I hope this faith is from you and not from me.

Whatever else happens in this affliction. Strengthen establish. Grow my faith because even the devil himself cannot undo or even well shake what you give me and what you keep strong. So it's a very different view of affliction than many have in the churches. And when you find your own heart, wanting to be told that things will be easy.

You can rebuke yourself and say that's the way unbelief things, rather let me know that whatever affliction comes is what we've been appointed to. And let me know that God will not only get me through it, but this is the path through which he is getting me ready for that heaven into which, I must surely come because Christ who suffered on the cross was Victorious.

And I who suffer with him will be victorious in him, a man. Let's pray. Father. Thank you for telling us the truth about our afflictions. I pray that you'd help my children to understand these verses that have been before us this morning. So that we might be strengthened by knowing that you have appointed unto us all the providence through, which you bring us, and that the wisdom and love in, which you have appointed to do.

So is the same wisdom and love in which you have decided to save us in Jesus. Thank you for his example, who was strengthened by your appointing him to the cross, and grant us to follow his example, to be strengthened by remembering that you have appointed to us. Those crosses that cross, which we each of us must take up daily Customizing it as the the path through which you bring us finally to glory.

Help us O God we pray in Jesus name. Amen