

# 1 Thessalonians 3:1-3 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

1Thessalonians 3:1 [Therefore](#) when we could [endure](#) it [no longer](#), we [thought](#) it [best](#) to be [left behind](#) at [Athens alone](#) ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [Dio meketi stegontes](#) (PAPMPN) [eudokesamen](#) (1PAAI) [kataleiphthenai](#) (APN) [en Athenais monoi](#)

**Amplified:** THEREFORE, WHEN [the suspense of separation and our yearning for some personal communication from you] became intolerable, we consented to being left behind alone at Athens. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**NLT:** Finally, when we could stand it no longer, we decided that I should stay alone in Athens, ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** And so at length, when the separation became intolerable, we thought the best plan was for me to stay in Athens alone ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**WBC:** For this reason, because we could hold out no longer, we resolved to be left behind alone in Athens ([Bruce](#))

**Wuest:** Wherefore, being no longer able to bear it, we thought it good to be left behind in Athens alone,

**Young's Literal:** Wherefore no longer forbearing, we thought good to be left in Athens alone,

1Thessalonians Overview					
Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	
LOOKING BACK			LOOKING FORWARD		
Personal Reflections Historical			Practical Instructions Exhortational		
Ministry In Person		Ministry in Absentia (Thru Timothy)	Ministry by Epistle		
Word and Power of the Spirit		Establishing & Comforting	Calling & Conduct	1Th 4:13ff Comfort	1Th 5:12ff Commands
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Salvation	Service	Sanctification	Sorrow	Sobriety
Exemplary Hope of Young Converts	Motivating Hope of Faithful Servants	Purifying Hope of Tried Believers	Comforting Hope of Bereaved Saints	Invigorating Hope of Diligent Christians

Written from Corinth  
Approximately 51AD

Modified from the excellent book [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#)

## OUTLINE OF 1THESSALONIANS CHAPTERS 1-3

CHAPTER	THEME
1	An Exemplary Conversion
2	An Exemplary Witness
3	An Exemplary Follow-Up

**THEREFORE WHEN WE COULD ENDURE IT NO LONGER, WE THOUGHT IT BEST TO BE LEFT BEHIND AT ATHENS ALONE: Dio meketi stegontes (PAPMPN) eudokesamen (1PAAI) kataleiphthenai (APN) en Athenais monoi**

- **When** 1 Th 3:5; 2:17; Jeremiah 20:9; 44:22; 2 Cor 2:13; 11:29,30
- **We thought** Acts 17:15
- 1 Thessalonians Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Paul had just explained his desire to see them but how Satan had thwarted him...

But we, brethren, having been bereft of you for a short while-- in person, not in spirit-- were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. For we wanted to come to you-- I, Paul, more than once-- and yet Satan thwarted us. (see notes 1Thessalonians 2:17; 18)

And what was the result of Satan's impeding Paul's personal return to Thessalonica? There were actually two results, one the letter we are reading today and second the sending and maturing of Timothy as a disciple maker in the lineage of his spiritual father Paul. What Satan meant for evil, God used for good, once again emphasizing His sovereignty over His creation including the fallen angels.

**Therefore** ([1352](#))(**dio**) is a relatively emphatic marker of a result, usually denoting that the inference is self-evident. Synonyms include words or phrases like: so then; consequently, for this reason, on which account.

**Therefore** or on account of Paul's affection for them (his "hope and joy and glory" 1Thes 2:19; 20), and the frustration of his attempts to return to them.

**Lightfoot** writes that **therefore** means...

on account of the very fervent desire, which I was unable to gratify

**J Vernon McGee** explains the **therefore** noting that...

this important word ties this chapter back in with what Paul had talked about in the previous chapter: the family relationship that exists in the church. He had been a mother to the church, a father to them, and a brother. He had led them to the Lord, and he loved them. He said that they would be his glory and his joy at the coming (parousia) of Christ, at the appearance of the Lord Jesus when all believers will receive their rewards.

Now because Paul had a real affection for them, he was frustrated in not being able to return to them. He had been hindered by Satan. Paul had to leave Thessalonica so quickly that there were many unfinished teachings and doctrines that he had not been able to develop fully. He not only longed to return, but he wondered about the future of the believers there. Paul desired to comfort them. In other words, he was demonstrating the thing he mentioned at the beginning of the letter—a labor of love.

Love is not affection or just a nice, comfortable, warm feeling around your heart. Love seeks the welfare of another. That is the way love is expressed for anyone. If you love someone, you seek his welfare and you actually would jeopardize your own life for the person whom you love. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**We** - In the present context Paul clearly states he was alone so his use of the plural pronoun here is what some refer to as an "editorial we". There are a few commentaries such as Hiebert which feel the "we" is used in the sense that all three missionaries shared these feelings and agreed to the plan of action to send Timothy.

**Green** agrees with Hiebert and has a reasonable explanation commenting that...

The verb we thought it best is the same as that found in 2.8, and the first person plural indicates that this decision was collective. If the plural is real and not editorial (we for "I"), the implication is that at some point Silvanus and Timothy traveled from Macedonia to Athens. Paul expresses his own, particular sentiments in v5, but the inclusion of this personal note does not negate the collective nature of the concern or the decision indicated in v1. According to the narrative in Acts 17.14, Paul departed from Macedonia and traveled on to Athens, leaving Silvanus and Timothy in Berea. When he arrived, those who

accompanied him went back to Macedonia “with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible” (Acts 17.15). It appears that they did precisely this. After coming to Athens, Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica, at which time Paul and Silas were “left behind” in Athens. Silas himself returned to Macedonia as well, though this is not specifically mentioned but only implied from the Acts narrative. Paul left Athens and headed south to Corinth where Silas and Timothy caught up with him upon their return from Macedonia (Acts 18.1, 5). Acts does not include all the details of the comings and goings of several people who appear in the narrative, so the omission of some movements of the characters does not surprise us. ([Pillar NT Commentary. Logos](#))

**No longer (3371)**(meketi from me = not + éti = anymore, yet, with k [kappa] inserted for phonics) means no more, no further, no longer. And in verse 5 Paul makes virtually the same statement but in that verse uses the singular pronoun "I".

Literally the Greek reads **no longer forbearing**.

Using the verb **stego** (see below) Paul is saying that his longing for personal communication and follow-up from his spiritual children had become intolerable.

**Endure (4722)**(**stego** from **steg** = to cover, conceal, **stege** = roof) had a fairly broad range of meanings including to cover, to protect, to hold back, to hide, to bear, to endure or to persist.

**Stego** means to protect by covering or to cover closely (so as to keep water out). Thus stego is found in secular Greek writings - "the camp **protects** men against the cold" (Plato); "a house **protects** men".

**Bruce** explains that **stego** was used...

originally of keeping out or keeping in water or another fluid (e.g. of a watertight house or of a vessel that does not leak), comes from the latter sense to mean generally “to contain” and then “to endure” ([Bruce, F F: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated. 1982](#))

**Stego** can mean keep in in the sense of contain or conceal and may also be used as meaning to support that which is placed upon it, this latter sense being to hold out against or endure the pressure of circumstances. The Berkeley Translation thus renders it we could not "stand it any longer".

In this verse **stego** is in the **present tense**, denoting linear action, which as **Hiebert** explains...

indicates that they were unable to continue enduring the suspense that they felt because of the lack of personal communication with the

Thessalonians. The continued separation from their beloved converts and the lack of information about their reaction under the pressure of persecution produced a strain of suspense that was unbearable. And there was ground for feeling anxious about their converts. If the unbelieving Jews were so relentless in their antagonism to the gospel as to hound the missionaries all the way to Berea, what might they be doing to their followers at home? The load of suspense was so heavy that they felt they had to take some action. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

The related word **steganos** meant covering or sheltering (think about this as you study the use of stego in 1Corinthians 13:7 below).

Figuratively, **stego** derives its meaning from the fact that by covering it keeps off something which threatens which then is taken to mean to bear up under.

At the core of its meaning **stego** denotes an activity or state which blocks entry from without or exit from within. Hence to protect by covering, as with a tight ship or roof.

The depth of the emotion expressed by the principal verb is illustrated in a papyrus that says

For my father did many evil things to me, and I **bore** them until you came (Moulton and Milligan)

**Vine** writes that **stego** "signifies either that of which it is predicated supports what is placed upon it or covers what is placed underneath it. The former idea is prominent here and in 1Thessalonians 3:5 ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**TDNT** has a somewhat more technical note based on use in secular and classic Greek literature...

The tendency of Greek towards linguistic ambivalence helps us to see why stego can have an outward as well as an inward reference and mean not only "to protect" but also "to ward off," "to hold back." *Domos ala stegon* is a structure which holds off the salt floods, namely, a ship... The sense "to hold back" leads to that of "make tight" of a ship; "to make something watertight,"; finally "to be watertight" ("ships which are not watertight") and "to hold fast," "to hold". The sense "to ward off," "to protect," seems to be the starting point for the further meanings "to endure," "to support," "to bear." A tower which has resisted the assault on a city has endured it (Aeschylus). How this can lead to "bear" in the technical sense may be seen from Josephus Ant., 5, 314: "pillars which endure the weight of the roof bear it.. The figurative power of the word helps us to understand why even the oldest witnesses use it in a transferred sense. Thus it means "to cover, conceal" an intellectual matter, Eur. Phoen., 1214, "to hide," Sophocles

Trach... , "to withhold" a judgment, Polyb., 4, 8, 2 and then especially "to keep silent": Phil., 136, cf. Oed. Tyr., 341; Eur. El., 273; Polyb., 8; 14, 5; Jos. Ant., 19, 48, and the one LXX ref. at Sir. 8:17: logon stegein = "to keep a confidence." With the silence complex, the main transferred use of stego is "to bear" (eg, the stench of an ulcer)...

At the core of its meaning stego denotes an activity or state which blocks entry from without or exit from within. It is not inwardly related to any particular subj. or obj. and refers to the hampering of ingress or egress, so that it may be used either of material or intellectual things: "to cover," "to conceal," with a ref. later to the function of that which separates: "to be compact, watertight," "to bear," "to sustain."...

(relating to the use in 1Thessalonians) Paul, impelled by his missionary task, can no longer bear not to have an influence on the development of the young church in Thessalonica. ([Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Eerdmans](#))

**Aeschylus** describes a ship...

The wooden house with sails that **keeps** (stego) out the sea.

In the present verse **stego** means to endure patiently, to forbear, to suffer.

There are 4 uses of **stego** in the NT (none in the Septuagint - LXX)...

**1 Corinthians 9:12** (Context = In the preceding 11 verses Paul emphasizes that he has the same right as other apostles to eat and drink, to take a wife with him, and to live by his missionary labours) If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we **endure** (stego - bear or suffer) all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. (**Comment:** Using the verb stego here Paul is saying in essence "we refrain from all that pertains to the legitimate private sphere of an apostle in order not to give an offense to the Gospel which belongs to Christ")

**1 Corinthians 13:7 bears** (Stego - Love endures without divulging to the world personal distress. Literally said of holding fast like a watertight vessel; so the charitable man contains himself in silence from giving vent to what selfishness would prompt under personal hardship. Moffatt translates it "slow to expose") all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (**Comment:** John MacArthur has an excellent note to help discern the meaning...

**Stego** (to bear) basically means to cover or to support and therefore to protect. Love bears all things by protecting others from exposure, ridicule, or harm. Genuine love does not gossip or listen to

gossip. Even when a sin is certain, love tries to correct it with the least possible hurt and harm to the guilty person. Love never protects sin but is anxious to protect the sinner. Fallen human nature has the opposite inclination. There is perverse pleasure in exposing someone's faults and failures. As already mentioned, that is what makes gossip appealing. The Corinthians cared little for the feelings or welfare of fellow believers. It was every person for himself. Like the Pharisees, they paid little attention to others, except when those others were failing or sinning. Man's depravity causes him to rejoice in the depravity of others. It is that depraved pleasure that sells magazines and newspapers that cater to exposes, "true confessions," and the like. It is the same sort of pleasure that makes children tattle on brothers and sisters. Whether to feel self-righteous by exposing another's sin or to enjoy that sin vicariously, we all are tempted to take a certain kind of pleasure in the sins of others. Love has no part in that. It does not expose or exploit, gloat or condemn. It bears; it does not bare. **[He goes on to illustrate this covering, protecting aspect of stego]**

During Oliver Cromwell's reign as lord protector of England a young soldier was sentenced to die. The girl to whom he was engaged pleaded with Cromwell to spare the life of her beloved, but to no avail. The young man was to be executed when the curfew bell sounded, but when the sexton repeatedly pulled the rope the bell made no sound. The girl had climbed into the belfry and wrapped herself around the clapper so that it could not strike the bell. Her body was smashed and bruised, but she did not let go until the clapper stopped swinging. She managed to climb down, bruised and bleeding, to meet those awaiting the execution. When she explained what she had done, Cromwell commuted the sentence. A poet beautifully recorded the story as follows:

At his feet she told her story,  
showed her hands all bruised and torn,  
And her sweet young face still haggard  
with the anguish it had worn,

Touched his heart with sudden pity,

lit his eyes with misty light.

"Go, your lover lives," said Cromwell;

"Curfew will not ring tonight."

([MacArthur, J: 1Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**1 Thessalonians 3:1** Therefore when we could **endure** it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone

**1Thessalonians 3:5** (note) 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 should be in vain.

**Vine** feels that Paul's...

mingled hope, 1Thessalonians 2:17 (note), and fear, 1Thessalonians 3:5 (note), imposed a strain in the mind of the apostle for which he sought relief in the manner described. ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Thought best** (considered it good, willingly determined, was well pleased) ([2106](#)) (**eudokeo** from **eu** = well + **dokeo** = think) means to think well of, be well pleased, to approve of or to take pleasure or delight in (As God does in His only Son Mt 3:17 *This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased*)

**Eudokeo** denotes not merely to think good of something but also stresses free and deliberate choice, the freedom of a resolve in what is good.

**Eudokeo** conveys a strong element of emotional satisfaction and delight.

The **orist tense** expresses a definitive determination made and adhered to. It was the free and deliberate choice for Paul to stay and Timothy to go. ("we were pleased and resolved"). Thus the plan was accepted with hearty goodwill. Paul considered it good and therefore worthy of choice to be left behind. He resolved or determined to be left behind. He says in essence...

I was willing to suffer the inconvenience of parting with Timothy in order to show my concern for you.

**Keathley** adds that...

**eudokeo** means "to be well pleased, to willingly determine, to think it a good thing to do." It stresses the willingness, the positive choice. Too often, ministry is performed out of a sense of, "Well, if I have to." The option the missionary team chose was not done grudgingly. ([1Thessalonians 3:1-13](#))

**Left behind** ([2641](#))(**kataleipo** from **kata** = intensifies meaning + **leipo** = leave behind)



signifies to leave behind, to leave remaining, to forsake in the sense of abandoning. It means to cause to be left in a place.

Paul use the **passive voice** in this verse which means to "be left alone or behind" or "to be forsaken."

The word **kataleipo** was used in secular Greek to describe the leaving of a loved one behind at death and clearly expresses how serious Paul took his separation from his coworkers.

**Hiebert** adds that **kataleipo** "implies the feeling of loneliness and desolation that swept over him when left all alone in Athens. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

Paul's strong affection for the young church in Thessalonica is shown here by his selflessness and willingness to be left alone in Athens. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy did not love the church only when they were face to face with them. They carried these believers in their hearts (see note 1Thessalonians 2:17).

**Ray Stedman** in a personal anecdote gives us a sense of how the apostle Paul may have felt as he was left **alone**...

In 1960 I spent the summer in the Orient. In company with Dr. Dick Hillis I was scheduled to speak to six hundred Chinese pastors on the island of Taiwan. This was a difficult assignment as my messages were to be interpreted into two different languages, Mandarin and Taiwanese. It is hard enough speaking through one "interrupter," but with two, by the time one sentence has been interpreted you have forgotten what you just said. But I was comforted by the fact that Dick Hillis, a veteran missionary, was with me. The day before I was due to speak, however, he got a telegram saying that his mother was ill in California and he had to return home. I have never forgotten the depression and loneliness that came over me. I am sure that is how Paul must have felt as he was left alone in Corinth, that cultured, degraded center of Roman life. ([1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13: Father's Joy](#))

**Alone** ([3441](#)) (**monos**) means without others or without companions. It indicates Paul was not just left behind but left behind by himself as emphasized by Luke's record that...

those who conducted Paul brought him as far as **Athens**; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed. (Acts 17:15)

**Athens** ([Wikipedia](#))([116](#))(**athenai**) is named after Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, arts, and industries and prudent warfare, **identified** by the Romans with Minerva. After the Roman conquest, Athens (pl.) became a federated city entirely independent of the governor of Achaia, who paid no taxes to Rome and had internal judicial autonomy.

Athenians were said to possess the keenest minds among the Greeks, and the University of Athens was the most important school, ahead of those of Tarsus and Alexandria. The Athenians were religious but not spiritual and indulged in lasciviousness at the festival of Dionysus, the god of wine. They had great love of human slaughter in the gladiatorial games.

Imagine Paul alone in a huge metropolis, in fact in the ancient world one of the major centers of blatant idolatry!

Paul was a man on mission. He was not on a sight seeing trip, but was burdened for the "church plant" in Thessalonica. Paul continually viewed this present life through the lens of eternity.

**1Thessalonians 3:2 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 ([NASB: Lockman](#))**

**Greek:** [kai epempsamen \(1PAAI\) Timotheon, ton adelphon hemon kai sunergon tou theou en to euaggelio tou Christou, eis to sterixai humas kai parakalesai \(AAN\) huper tes pisteos humon](#)

**Amplified:** And we sent Timothy, our brother and God's servant in [spreading] the good news (the Gospel) of Christ, to strengthen and establish and to exhort and comfort and encourage you in your faith, ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** And sent Timotheus, our brother, **and minister of God**, and our fellow labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: (words in bold only in Textus Receptus not Nestle-Aland used by most modern translations like NAS, NIV)

**NLT:** and we sent Timothy to visit you. He is our co-worker for God and our brother in proclaiming the Good News of Christ. We sent him to strengthen you, to encourage you in your faith, ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** while Timothy, our brother and fellow-worker in the Gospel of Christ, was sent to strengthen and encourage you in your faith. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**WBC:** and sent Timothy, our brother and fellow worker with God in the gospel of Christ, to establish you firmly and encourage you for the sake of your faith ([Bruce](#))

**Wuest:** and we sent Timothy, our brother and a ministering servant of God in the good news of the Christ, with a view to stabilizing and encouraging you concerning your faith,

**Young's Literal:** and did send Timotheus -- our brother, and a ministrant of God, and our fellow-workman in the good news of the Christ -- to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith,

**AND WE SENT TIMOTHY OUR BROTHER AND GOD'S FELLOW WORKER IN THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST: kai epempsamen (1PAAI) Timotheon, ton adelphon hemon kai sunergon tou theou en to euaggelio tou Christou:**

- **Timothy** - Acts 16:1; 17:14,15; 18:5
- **Our Brother** - Ro 16:21; 1Cor 4:17; 16:10,11,12; 2Cor 1:19; 2:13; 8:23; Eph 6:21; Php 2:19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25; Col 1:7; 4:9,12
- 1 Thessalonians Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**We sent** - As discussed in verse 1 ("we") many commentaries explain this as a so-called "editorial we" but that may not be completely accurate. It is possible that Silvanus was involved in this decision to send Timothy.

**F F Bruce** for example notes that in the other situations where Paul sent Timothy (1Cor 4:17, Phil 2:19), he uses the first person singular so that

the natural inference from the plural **epempsamen** here is that Paul and Silvanus were jointly involved in sending Timothy back to Thessalonica (cf. Bengel: "ego et Silvanus"). In v 5, indeed, Paul takes personal responsibility for sending him. This was fitting, since Timothy was Paul's aide-de-camp: the initiative was presumably Paul's and Silvanus agreed that Timothy should go. ([Bruce, F F: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated. 1982](#))

**Sent** ([3992](#))(**pempo**) means to dispatch, send, thrust out. The verb is the general word for sending and means that Timothy was sent to do something. The fact that he was **sent** and not asked to go is consistent with the fact that his sending was under the authority of the apostle Paul.

Paul subsequently sent Timothy on other missions to the churches in...

### **Corinth...**

For this reason I have sent to you **Timothy**, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. (1 Cor 4:17)

Now if **Timothy** comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid; for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am. Let no one therefore despise him. But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren. ([1Cor 16:10,11](#))

## Philippi...

But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send **Timothy** to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. 20 For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. 21 For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. 22 But you know of his proven worth that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father. 23 Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me; 24 and I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall be coming shortly. 25 But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need (see **note** Phil 2:19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25)

## Ephesus...

As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines (**1Ti 1.3**).

Timothy's missionary trip to Thessalonica was the first recorded ministry that Timothy carried out on his own.

**Gloag** writes that the sending of Timothy...

This was a great act of self-sacrifice on the part of Paul; because to be without an assistant and fellow-labourer in the gospel in such a city as Athens, the very centre and strong hold of heathenism, full of temples and idols, must necessarily have brought upon him many discomforts; and yet his anxiety for the Thessalonians overcame all motives of personal convenience. (The Pulpit Commentary)

**Brother** (**80**) (**adelphos** from collative **a** = denoting unity + **delphús** = womb) is literally one born from same womb and so a male having the same father and mother as reference person.

Figuratively, **adelphos** here refers to a fellow believer in Christ. Timothy was Paul's spiritual child but here he refers to him as **brother** by virtue of the fact that they have both been born into the family of God by virtue of their faith in the Messiah.

**Swete** remarks

As the younger brother of their father in the faith, the Christians of Thessalonica would learn to regard him very highly.

**God's fellow worker** - That is an truth that the creature could be a fellow worker with the Creator and that is the divine design.

**Our brother and God's fellow worker** clearly indicate that Paul had not sent an unworthy substitute but a man who was fully capable of carrying out his mission. This small point is just another indication that Paul was deeply concerned about the spiritual welfare of his readers.

Note that here the KJV reads "Timotheus, our brother, and **minister of God**, and our fellow labourer in the gospel of Christ". It should be noted however that **minister** (diakonos) is not an official title and does not connote an ordained minister in the modern sense of the term but instead designates one who renders a service of some kind to another. **Diakonos** speaks of the servant in relation to his work, stressing his activity of serving.

In regard to the Greek word **diakonos** Morris writes that...

Originally the word denoted the service of a table waiter, and from that it came to signify lowly service of any kind. It was often used by the early Christians to give expression to the service that they habitually were to render to both God and to man. Where a word like 'slave,' which is often used of Christians, puts the emphasis on the personal relation, this word draws attention to the act of service being rendered."

**Fellow worker** ([4904](#))(**sunergos** from **sun** = together with, speaks of an intimate relationship + **érgon** = work) means literally working together with and thus refers to a companion in work, a colleague, a co-laborer, a fellow laborer or fellow helper.

Notice who **Timothy** is working with! It is as if God employs as His assistant, as it were (a fellow-worker with God)! Notice that in 1 Corinthians, Paul refers to all believers **God's fellow workers** (1 Cor 3:9). Think of our familiar English word derived from sunergos - Synergy which describes combined action or operation. It is interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects.

**Timothy + God =  
supernatural synergy!**

In the NT, **sunergos** is used only of a co-worker or helper in the Christian work. In each instance sunergos conveys the idea of an affectionate partnership and not merely that of an impersonal, official relationship. Paul twice specifically includes godly women among his fellow workers (Prisca or Priscilla Ro 16:3) and Euodia and Syntyche, two godly but quarreling members of the church at Philippi who had shared Paul's "struggle in the cause of the gospel" (see note Philippians 4:3).

Thayer writes that **sunergos** "with a genitive of the person (refers to) one who labors with another in furthering the cause of Christ."

This word refers to someone who is a team player, who does not seek to run or control

things on his own, nor serve for selfish or personal agendas.

**Keathley** says that **sunergos**...

refers to someone who is a team player. This is someone who does not seek to run or control things on his own, nor serve for selfish or personal agendas. There are two aspects of a team player in the body of Christ:

1. He or she is one who is a fellow worker with God. The head of the body is the Lord Jesus. The church belongs to Christ, not us. This means we are to get our orders and spiritual strength from the Lord and allow Him to work in and through us. We work as God's fellow workers by submission to Him and by faith in His provision.

2. This also means we are to work together with our brethren in Christ as a part of God's team. There is no such thing as a one-man team. We work to build up others and to help the body to function as a body. It means team work with each believer doing his share for the goals of the Head and the team.

In addition, sunergos brings out the fact that Timothy was a worker, which, in New Testament terms, means a minister or a servant of others. Selfish, self-centered agendas spoil our ability to not only be team players, but to work as servants. ([1Thessalonians 3:1-13](#) )

This great word is used 13 times (predominantly by Paul) in the NT...

**Romans 16:3** (note) Greet Prisca and Aquila, my **fellow workers** in Christ Jesus... **16:9** (note) Greet Urbanus, our **fellow worker** in Christ, and Stachys my beloved... **16:21** (note) Timothy my **fellow worker** greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

**1 Corinthians 3:9** For we are God's **fellow workers**; you are God's field, God's building.

**2 Corinthians 1:24** Not that we lord it over your faith, but are **workers with** you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.

**2 Corinthians 8:23** As for Titus, he is my partner and **fellow worker** among you; as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ.

**Philippians 2:25** (note) But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and **fellow worker** and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need;

**Philippians 4:3** (note) Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my **fellow workers**, whose names are in the book of life.

**Colossians 4:11** (note) and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only **fellow workers** for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision; and they have proved to be an encouragement to me.

**1Thessalonians 3:2** (note) 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,

**Philemon 1:1** Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved brother and **fellow worker**... 24 as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my **fellow workers**.

**3 John 1:8** Therefore we ought to support such men, that we may be **fellow workers** with the truth.

**Gospel of Christ** - In chapter 2 Paul referred to it as the **Gospel of God** three times emphasizing its origin and authority (This description 8x in the NT = Mk. 1:14; Rom. 1:1; Rom. 15:16; 2 Co. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:2; 1 Thess. 2:8; 1 Thess. 2:9; 1 Pet. 4:17).

Here the phrase **Gospel of Christ** emphasizes the One in and through Whom the good news was made available, the central "theme" of the Good News being the Christ.

Paul is the only NT writer to use the specific phrase **Gospel of Christ** - uses 8x in the NT - Rom. 15:19; 1 Co. 9:12; 2 Co. 2:12; 2 Co. 9:13; 2 Co. 10:14; Gal. 1:7; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 3:2

**Hiebert** offers a more technical explanation noting that "The genitive "of Christ" may be interpreted as either a subjective or objective genitive. Under the former it denotes the gospel that is Christ's, which He has ordained to be preached; under the latter it points to the gospel that tells of Christ, the good news about Him as Savior. The latter seems to be the meaning here. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

**Gospel** (2098)(**euaggelion eú** = good + **aggéllō** = proclaim, tell) originally referred to a reward for good news and later became the good news itself. The word **euaggelion** was in just as common use in the first century as our words good news today. "Have you any good news for me today?" would have been a common question. In this secular use euaggelion described **good news** of any kind and prior to the writing of the New Testament, had no definite religious connotation in the ancient world until it was taken over by the "Cult of Caesar" which was the state religion and in which the emperor was worshipped as a god (see more discussion of this use below). The writers of the New Testament adapted the term as God's message of salvation for lost sinners.

**TO STRENGTHEN AND ENCOURAGE YOU AS TO YOUR FAITH: eis to sterixai humas kai parakalesai (AAN) hyper tes pisteos humon:**

- **To strengthen** - 1Thes 3:13; Acts 14:22,23; 16:5; Ephesians 6:22; Philippians 1:25



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**Strengthen** (4741)(**sterizo** from **histemi** = to stand) means to make firm or solid, to set fast, to fix firmly in a place, to establish (make firm or stable), to cause to be inwardly firm or committed, to strengthen. The basic idea is that of stabilizing something by providing a support or buttress (a projecting structure of masonry or wood for supporting or giving stability to a wall or building), so that it will not totter. The word implies fixedness.

**Sterizo** is employed frequently in those contexts where someone is in danger of falling in some way or another. Eg, in the Apocryphal book Sirach we read "When the rich person totters he is **supported** by friends". **Philo** comments that those who are carried in different directions in their life are those who cannot be established. Diogenes Laertius refers to those people who are never firmly established in any dogma.

In the present verse **sterizo** is used metaphorically referring to their continual state of spiritual stability, especially in the face of potential apostasy or persecution

**Vine** feels that **sterizo** is derived from **sterix**, a prop (something that sustains or supports).

There is an illustrative use of **sterizo** in the Septuagint (LXX) translation of Exodus 17:12 (sterizo is used twice in this verse)...

But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur **supported** (sterizo) his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were **steady** (sterizo) until the sun set.

**Barclay** writes that **sterizo** "means to make as solid as granite. Suffering of body and sorrow of heart do one of two things to a man. They either make him collapse or they leave him with a solidity of character which he could never have gained anywhere else. If he meets them with continuing trust in Christ, he emerges like toughened steel that has been tempered in the fire." ([Barclay, W: The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press](#))

The following uses of **sterizo** demonstrate the various ways God uses to strengthen His saints and thus what and how Timothy was enabled to strengthen the faith of the saints in Thessalonica. These are the same "methods" believers today can utilize to strengthen the faith of their brethren, a need which is always present because every believer's faith is continually subject to testing.

**THOUGHT** - Have you ever been sent to strengthen another's faith?

How would Timothy going to carry out Paul's charge to strengthen the faith of the saints at Thessalonica? Read on...

**Believers are strengthened...**



## By fervent, Scripturally based prayers of the saints...

May the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you that He may **establish** (sterizo) your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. (see **notes** 1Thes 3:12; 13)

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and **strengthen** (sterizo) your hearts in every good work and word. ([2Th 2:16-17](#))

## By the Lord Himself, our Strength and Protector...

But the Lord is faithful, and He will **strengthen** (sterizo) and protect you from the evil one. (2Thes 3:3)

## By looking and living for the Lord's return...

You too **be patient** (makrothumeo - have a "long fuse" especially with difficult people - aorist imperative) ; **strengthen** (**sterizo** - aorist imperative Do it now - it's urgent!, active voice = you make the choice to do this) your hearts (the "control center" of your life), for the coming (parousia) of the Lord is at hand. (Jas 5:8)

## By the God of all grace working through suffering...

And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, **confirm**, strengthen and establish you. (1Pe 5:10-note)

## By the truth of God's Word...

Therefore, I shall always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been **established** (sterizo) in the truth which is present with you. (2Pe 1:12-note)

## By the revealing of the mystery of the gospel...

Now to Him who is able to **establish** (sterizo) you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past (Ro 16:25-note);

## By the strengthening ministered through His saints who come alongside...

(**Peter**) Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail;

and you, when once you have turned again, **strengthen** (**sterizo** - aorist imperative conveys a sense of urgency. Do it effectively! When the opportunity presents itself, don't delay) your brothers." Lk 22:31,32

(**Timothy**) and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to **strengthen** (**sterizo**) and encourage you as to your faith,

(**Paul**) For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established (**sterizo**) (Ro 1:11-note).

So although it is the God Himself Who ultimately strengthens and stabilizes us, these other NT uses of **sterizo** teach that God uses the the encouragement and prayers of the saints, the certainty of Christ's return and the truth of His Word and the gospel to supernaturally exert a stabilizing effect on our faith.

### **Jesus** warns the church at **Sardis**

**Wake up** (gregoreuo as in 1Pe 5:8-note "be on the alert" - there was no time for indifference; they could not just go with the flow, they had to reverse it), and **strengthen** (**sterizo** - aorist imperative - command to do this now - it is urgent) the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. (Re 3:2-note)

**Encourage** (3870) (**parakaleo** from **para** = side of, alongside, beside + **kaleo** [ **word study**] = call) means literally to call one alongside, to call someone to oneself, to call for, to summon. **Parakaleo** can include the idea of giving help or aid but the primary sense in the NT is to urge someone to take some action, especially some ethical course of action. Sometimes the word means convey the idea of comfort, sometimes of exhortation but always at the root there is the idea of enabling a person to meet some difficult situation with confidence and with gallantry.

**Kent Hughes** illustrates the root idea of **parakaleo** "to come alongside and encourage" with the following example

I see this exemplified every time my church has a roller skating party, and the parents put their little ones on skates for the first time. Mom and Dad skate with their child, holding on to his or her hands, sometimes with the child's feet on the ground and sometimes in the air. But all the time the parents are alongside **encouraging**... [exhortation] is a wonderful gift, and we are to place it at Christ's feet and be willing to be worn out in its use.

**Encourage one another - Study the "one anothers" - most positive, some negative**

The English word "encourage" means "with heart." To encourage in a sense is to give them new heart. Shallow sympathy makes people feel worse-true spiritual encouragement

makes them feel better. It brings out the best in people.

In this usage of **parakaleo** the idea is to urge the Thessalonian saints to persevere and pursue a course of conduct specifically regarding their faith. Timothy came alongside them in order to encourage them to live according to sound doctrine which alone would assure that they stay firm and press on ahead in their faith.

**THOUGHT** - Do you know someone going through trials and afflictions? Have you come alongside them? Have you considered sending them an encouraging (parakaleo) note or email to let them know you are standing with them and praying for them? What effect might this have on their faith?

**Ray Stedman** writes that the saints at Thessalonica...

needed to be exhorted to steadiness, to not panic when things got tough. They should never forget that suffering and affliction could be surmounted. They had a resource to lean upon which they did not have before, so they did not have to fear. God would take them through everything and use it for their benefit. Paul had already laid the foundation for this when he was with them. ([1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13: Father's Joy](#))

In classic Greek **parakaleo** was used to describe the exhorting of troops who were about to go into battle. Sometimes parakaleo conveys the idea of comfort, sometimes of exhortation but always at the root there is the idea of enabling a person to meet some difficult situation with confidence and with gallantry.

One of the Greek historians uses parakaleo in a most interesting and suggestive way. There was a Greek regiment which had lost heart and was utterly dejected. The general sent a leader to talk to it to such purpose that courage was reborn and a body of dispirited men became fit again for heroic action. That is somewhat of the idea of **parakaleo** in Colossians 2:1-2...

For I want you to know how great a struggle (agon) I have on your behalf, and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face that **their hearts** may be **encouraged** (**parakaleo** - it could also be translated strengthen because the Colossians were beset by false teachers and needed strengthening as well as comfort - notice the phrase in **their hearts** signifies it is an inner strengthening brought about by truth not a list of do's and don'ts) having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself (see **notes** Colossians 2:1; 2:2)

It was Paul's prayer that the Churches at Colossae and Laodicea may be filled with that courage which can cope with any situation.

**As to your faith** - Instability and discouragement is usually the result of a faith that is weak, out of focus, or focused on the wrong object.

**Faith** ([4102](#)) (**pistis**) is synonymous with trust or belief and is the conviction of the truth of anything, but in Scripture usually speaks of belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it. As **pistis** relates to God, it is the conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things well as the Provider and Bestower of eternal salvation through Christ. As faith relates to Christ it represents a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through Whom we obtain eternal salvation and entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Stated another way, eternal salvation comes **only** through belief in Jesus Christ and no other way.

**Wayne Grudem** defines faith that saves one's soul...

**Saving faith** is trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God. This definition emphasizes that saving faith is not just a belief in facts but personal trust in Jesus to save me... The definition emphasizes personal trust in Christ, not just belief in facts about Christ. Because saving faith in Scripture involves this personal trust, the word "trust" is a better word to use in contemporary culture than the word "faith" or "belief." The reason is that we can "believe" something to be true with no personal commitment or dependence involved in it. ([Grudem, W. A. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine Zondervan](#)) (Bolding added)

It is worth noting that Paul uses **pistis** with slightly different meanings depending on the context. Thus it can mean **trust** (as in this verse, and see notes 1Thes 1:3, 1:8; 5:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:2), **trustworthiness** (see notes Ro 3:3, Titus 2:10), **what is believed** (see notes 1Thes 3:10, Titus 1:13) or **as a ground for faith** ("proof" in Acts 17:31).

**1Thessalonians 3:3** so that **no one** would be **disturbed** by **these afflictions**; for you **yourselves** know that we have been **destined** for **this**. (**NASB: Lockman**)

**Greek:** [to medena sainesthai](#) (PPN) [en tais thlipsesin tautais. autoi gar oidate](#) (2SRAI) [oti eis touto keimetha;](#) ([1PPMI](#))

**Amplified:** That no one [of you] should be disturbed and beguiled and led astray by these afflictions and difficulties [to which I have referred]. For you yourselves know that this is [unavoidable in our position, and must be recognized as] our appointed lot.

([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**NLT:** and to keep you from becoming disturbed by the troubles you were going through. But, of course, you know that such troubles are going to happen to us Christians. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** We did not want any of you to lose heart at the troubles you were going through, but to realise that we Christians must expect such things. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**WBC:** so that no one should be perturbed in the midst of these afflictions. You know yourselves that we are appointed for this. ([Bruce](#))

**Wuest:** that is, that no one be shaken or disturbed and caused to break down in the midst of these afflictions, for you yourselves know with a positive assurance that for this we are destined.

**Young's Literal:** that no one be moved in these tribulations, for yourselves have known that for this we are set,

**SO THAT NO MAN MAY BE DISTURBED BY THESE AFFLICTIONS: to medena sainesthai (PPN) en tais thlipsesin tautais:**

- **Disturbed** - Ps 112:6; Acts 2:25; 20:24; 21:13; Ro 5:3; 1Cor 15:58; Eph 3:13; Php 1:28; Col 1:23; 2Th 1:4; 2Ti 1:8; 1Pe 4:12, 13, 14; Rev 2:10,13
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**So that** is more literally **that** but serves the same function of giving us the goal of Timothy's trip which was to establish and encourage (the Thessalonians) and to inform (Paul of their status).

**No man** ([3367](#))(**medeis** from **medé** = and not, also not, neither, nor, not even + **heís** = one) means not even one, no one, no one whoever he may be. This phrase emphasizes that God intends for all believers to become spiritually strong and stable in the midst of the disturbing problems of life. Paul has God's heart that not a single believer's faith be set back by the **afflictions**.

It the heat of afflictions, it would be easy to imagine that God was displeased with you as a believer and that is why all the suffering was occurring. And it could have easily have caused the Thessalonian believers to be disturbed or unsettled in their faith.

**Disturbed** (shaken, unsettled, perturbed or deceived, deluded) ([4525](#))(**saino**) means to wag, to move to and fro as dogs wag their tails in friendliness. As a dog wags his tail to allure, it gives rise to the meaning so to fascinate, beguile, flatter. To draw aside from the right path. This is the only use in the NT.

**Chadwick** mentions an occurrence of **saino** (actually "sainein") with the meaning "to perturb mentally" in a papyrus from Tura which reads "all matters concerning the faith

which **have perturbed** us have been examined.

**Saino** pictures one who has become so emotionally disturbed as to be shaken in his/her beliefs and even to give up his/her beliefs. The present tense speaks of being continually disturbed. It's difficult to avoid being disturbed initially when a "surprise attack" occurs (as they will for all believers) but Paul's desire is that this "disturbance" doesn't continue to resonate.

**Friberg** summarizes the two possible meaning of *saino*...

(1) originally of dogs wag the tail, move the tail to and fro, fawn; figuratively, of persons fawn over, flatter; **passive be deceived or deluded**;

(2) figuratively and passive, as being carried away emotionally by circumstances be shaken, be disturbed, be unsettled; either meaning makes good sense in 1Thes 3:3 but ancient versions and Greek expositors prefer the second (interpretation). ([Friberg, T., Friberg, B., & Miller, N. F. Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament. Baker Academic](#))

**Hendricksen** on the other hand favor the meaning of deceive or delude and thus renders this verse quite different from the NAS

to prevent anyone of you from being deceived in the midst of these afflictions.

**In these afflictions** - The Thessalonian saints' sufferings at the hands of their fellow countrymen have been referred to in chapter 2...

For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also **endured the same sufferings** at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews (see **note** 1Thessalonians 2:14)

Paul's desire was that in spite of these sufferings the converts would stand firm and that the sufferings would even serve to deepen their faith.

**Afflictions** ([2347](#)) (**thlipsis** from **thlibo** = to crush, press together, squash, hem in, compress, squeeze in turn derived from **thláo** = to break) originally expressed sheer, physical pressure on a man. Medically *thlipsis* was used of the pulse (pressure). It is a pressing together as of grapes. It conveys the idea of being squeezed or placed under pressure or crushed beneath a weight. When, according to the ancient law of England, those who willfully refused to plead guilty, had heavy weights placed on their breasts, and were pressed and crushed to death, this was literally **thlipsis**. The iron cage was **stenochoria**. **Thlipsis** thus refers not to mild discomfort but to great difficulty.

**Thlipsis** is frequent in the two Thessalonian epistles - 1 Th 1:6; 3:3, 7; 2 Th 1:4, 6. Why do you think that is so? Compare Acts 17:5-10+

**Thlipsis** - 45x in 43v - **NAS** = affliction(14), afflictions(6), anguish(1), distress(2), persecution(1), tribulation(16), tribulations(4), trouble(1).

Matt 13:21; 24:9, 21, 29; Mark 4:17; 13:19, 24; John 16:21, 33; Acts 7:10f; 11:19; 14:22; 20:23; Rom 2:9; 5:3; 8:35; 12:12; 1 Cor 7:28; 2 Cor 1:4, 8; 2:4; 4:17; 6:4; 7:4; 8:2, 13; Eph 3:13; Phil 1:17; 4:14; Col 1:24; 1 Thess 1:6; 3:3, 7; 2 Thess 1:4, 6; Heb 10:33; Jas 1:27; Rev 1:9; 2:9f, 22; 7:14.

In chapter 1, **Paul** explained that

our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much **tribulation** (thlipsis) with the joy of the Holy Spirit (See **notes** 1Thessalonians 1:5; 1:6)

How did the Thessalonian believers bear up under emotionally crushing circumstances? Paul says that even though the tribulation was quantitatively great, they were empowered "with the joy of the Holy Spirit."

**John MacArthur** writes that "**Thlipsis** (tribulations) has the underlying meaning of being under pressure and was used of squeezing olives in a press in order to extract the oil and of squeezing grapes to extract the juice... In Scripture the word **thlipsis** is perhaps most often used of outward difficulties, but it is also used of emotional stress." ([MacArthur, J.: Romans 1-8. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Figuratively **thlipsis** pictures one being "crushed" by intense pressure, difficult circumstances, suffering or trouble pressing upon them from without. Thus persecution, affliction, distress, opposition or tribulation, all press hard on one's soul. **Thlipsis** does not refer to mild discomfort but to great difficulty. In Scripture the **thlipsis** is most often used of outward difficulties, but it is also used of emotional stress and sorrows which "weighs down" a man's spirit like the sorrows and burden his heart. **Thlipsis** then includes the disappointments which can "crush the life" out of the one who is afflicted.

The English word "**tribulation**" is derived from the Latin word **tribulum** (literally a thing with teeth that tears), which was a heavy piece of timber with spikes in it, used for threshing the corn or grain. The **tribulum** was drawn over the grain and it separated the wheat from the chaff. As believers experience the "tribulum" of tribulations, and depend on God's grace, the trials purify us and rid us of the chaff.

**Lawrence Richards** writes that "**thlipsis** is used as a technical theological term for the **Great Tribulation** (see note below) of the end times. **Thlipsis** is also used in a non-theological, figurative way to convey the idea of the great emotional and spiritual stress that can be caused by external or internal pressures. Of the fifty-five uses of this root (thlipsis and thlibo) in the NT, fifty-three are **figurative** and correspond closely to the



Hebrew words [tsarar](#) and [tsar](#)." ([Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#))

**Marvin Vincent** has the following note explaining that the root thlibo means "to press or squeeze. Tribulation is perhaps as accurate a rendering as is possible, being derived from tribulum, the threshing-roller of the Romans. In both the idea of pressure is dominant, though thlipsis does not convey the idea of separation (as of corn from husk) which is implied in tribulatio." (Vincent, M. R. Word studies in the New Testament Vol. 1, Page 3-80)

**Vine** writes that **thlipsis** "primarily means a pressure, that which weighs down the spirit. For the believer who is enabled to endure it, the affliction becomes a means of triumph... "afflictions" are the various forms of injury to body and mind suffered by those who are persecuted... Thlipsis is the suffering which results from what presses hard on the soul." ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#) )

The **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia** adds that "**thlipsis** derives from roots that graphically portray the process in which a person is first limited, then walled in, and gradually squeezed until something must give. Sometimes the tribulation is seen as a punishment for sin (see note Romans 2:9), sometimes as a part of life to be expected and tolerated (see note Romans 12:12) ([Bromiley, G. W. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised. Wm. B. Eerdmans](#))

The picture of **thlipsis** is of one being squeezed. When you squeeze something, what comes out is what is on the inside. What comes out of you when you are experiencing "thlipsis"? Remember believers have Christ in them the hope of glory and therefore have the potential to exude the fragrance of His life when crushed.

Here in Romans 5 **thlipsis** is preceded by the definite article, marking these tribulations out as specific occurrences naturally expected in a Christian's life. Paul did not exult because of the tribulations themselves but because of their beneficial effect upon his Christian life. This the saint must learn to do as we grow in grace, weathering the trial, learning to lean on and trust Him. The believer must look at his or her tribulations as "assets" that God uses to hone one's Christian character into Christ like conformity (see **note** 1Pet 1:6-7). And so in context Paul says that **thlipsis** brings forth or accomplishes patience, proven character and hope.

**William Barclay** writes that **thlipsis** " In ordinary Greek always describes **actual physical pressure on a man**... Sometimes there falls upon a man's spirit the burden and the mystery of this unintelligible world. In the early years of Christianity the man who chose to become a Christian chose to face trouble. There might well come to him abandonment by his own family, hostility from his heathen neighbours, and persecution from the official powers. Samuel Rutherford wrote to one of his friends, "God has called you to Christ's side, and the wind is now in Christ's face in this land: and seeing ye are with him ye cannot expect the lee-side or the sunny side of the brae." It is always a costly thing to be a real Christian, for there can be no Christianity without its cross. (Ed note: i.e., thlipsis) ([Barclay, W: The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press](#)) (Bolding added)



In other notes **Barclay** writes that "**thlipsis** which originally expressed sheer, physical pressure on a man. There are things which weigh down a man's spirit like the sorrows which are a burden on his heart and the disappointments which are like to crush the life out of him... Originally **thlipsis** meant simply pressure and could, for instance, describe the pressure of a great stone on a man's body. At first it was used quite literally, but in the New Testament it has come to describe that pressure of events which is persecution. ([Ibid](#))

**Tribulation** is the normal lot of Christians and is a fact repeatedly emphasized in the NT. In the first NT use, **Jesus** taught that **thlipsis** (affliction) comes because of the Word of God but that holding fast to the Word in the face of tribulation proves one to be genuine.

And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the Word, and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when **affliction (thlipsis)** or persecution arises **because of the word**, immediately he falls away. ([Matthew 13:20-21](#))

**William MacDonald** explains that "The shallow earth yields a shallow profession; there is no depth to the root. But when his profession is tested by the scorching sun of **tribulation** or persecution, he decides it isn't worth it and abandons any profession of subjection to Christ." ([MacDonald, W., & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

In his second epistle Paul commends the Thessalonian saints

for (their) perseverance and faith in the midst of all (their) persecutions and **afflictions (thlipsis)** which (they) endured." ([2Thes 1:4](#))

**Paul** explained that God Himself, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort...

comforts (comes alongside of) us in all our **affliction (thlipsis)** so that (notice again how your affliction is not without purpose) we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." ([2 Corinthians 1:3-4](#))

From these uses of **thlipsis** in the NT, it is clear that tribulation is the path believers are destined to tread in this present life. ([Click here](#) for an instructive, convicting study of thlipsis in 2 Corinthians) Notice that **thlipsis** in the NT does not refer to the normal pressures of every day life, but to the inevitable troubles that come upon **all** followers of Christ because of their relationship with Him and His Word.

Luke records that after Paul was stoned in Lystra, he survived this "crushing event" and went on to Derbe with Barnabas and that...

after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, **strengthening** (episterizo - derived from sterizo in 1Thes 3:2) (see the other 3 uses of episterizo - Acts 15:32, 15:41 18:23) **the souls** of the

disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many (polus = quantitatively = same word in description of Thessalonians above) **tribulations (thlipsis)** we must enter the kingdom of God." ([Acts 14:21-22](#))

Commenting on Acts 14:22+ **Spurgeon** writes that...

It is ordained of old that the cross of trouble should be engraved on every vessel of mercy, as the royal mark whereby the King's vessels of honour are distinguished. But although tribulation is thus the path of God's children, they have the comfort of knowing that their Master has traversed it before them; they have his presence and sympathy to cheer them, his grace to support them, and his example to teach them how to endure; and when they reach "the kingdom," it will more than make amends for the "much tribulation" through which they passed to enter it." (Morning and evening: Daily readings: Morning, March 8)

Writing to the Colossian saints, **Paul** said

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake (refers to his present imprisonment), and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's **afflictions** (thlipsis) (in that Paul was receiving the persecution that was intended for Christ)." (see note Colossians 1:24)

Paul's **afflictions** had no atoning value, for In Jesus' death on the cross, the work of salvation was completed. It is also worth noting that , **thlipsis** is used **nowhere** in the New Testament to speak of **Christ's sufferings**.

Lawrence Richards adds this explanation regarding the **filling up** of Christ's afflictions...

The Greek word **thlipsis** is not linked with social vulnerability. It focuses attention on external conditions as the cause of emotional pressures. Paul's thought in Colossians is that the **afflictions** and the suffering that have come to him in the course of his ministry should not be viewed as discipline or as punishment. Instead, such suffering is an extension of the suffering experienced by Jesus, for it comes from the same source. Following Jesus, Paul also willingly chose a course of action that would bring him into conflict with human society. **We, too, have the privilege of making such choices, knowing that the pain that comes to us is far outweighed by the benefits our suffering will bring to others.**" ([Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#)) (Bolding added)

God promises that no matter how many or how great the tribulations we are called upon to endure for the sake of His Name and His Word. In Romans 8 Paul asks...

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall **tribulation**

(**thlipsis**), or distress (stenochoria), or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (see note Romans 8:35)

And then Paul answers that...

in all these things (**thlipsis**, et al) we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us, for I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (see **notes** Romans 8:37; 8:38; 8:39)

In light of eternity tribulations today are for a moment, are "light" and are continually working in us to produce an unimaginable eternal weight of glory for

Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my **tribulations** (thlipsis) on your behalf, for they are your glory." (see **note** Ephesians 3:13)

And lest you be tempted to seek revenge for **thlipsis** suffered for the sake of the Lord and His Word, remember that

after all it is only just for God to repay with **affliction** (thlipsis) those who **afflict** (verb thlibo) you, and to give relief to you who are **afflicted** (verb thlibo) and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ([2Thes 1:6-8](#)) (cp identical use of thlipsis in notes on Romans 2:9)

Paul explained the inestimable value of temporal **thlipsis** when viewed with eternal vision, explaining that...

momentary, light **affliction** (thlipsis) is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen (e.g., our future glory) are eternal. ([2 Corinthians 4:17-18](#)).

In summary, the truth you need to remember regarding tribulations (thlipsis) is that

1. tribulations have a purpose
2. one's response to tribulations demonstrates the reality of one's faith
3. temporal tribulations produce inestimable future, eternal glory
4. God will avenge tribulations you have endured for His Name and Word

**Jesus** used **thlipsis** to refer to a specific time period, the last 3.5 years of **Daniel's Seventieth Week** as...

a **Great Tribulation** (thlipsis - see notes) such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall" ([Matthew 24:21](#))

In a parallel passage in the **Revelation**, **John** beheld

a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands" (see note [Revelation 7:9](#)), whom one of the elders explained were "the ones who come out of the **Great Tribulation** (thlipsis - see notes), and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (see **note** [Revelation 7:14](#))

**FOR YOU YOURSELVES KNOW THAT WE HAVE BEEN DESTINED FOR THIS: autoi gar oidate (2PRAI) hoti eis touto keimetha (1PPMI):**

- 1Th 5:9; Mt 10:16, 17, 18; 24:9,10; Luke 21:12; John 15:19-21; 16:2,33; Acts 9:16; Acts 14:22; 20:23; 21:11,13; Ro 8:35-37; 1Cor 4:9; 2Ti 3:11,12; 1Pe 2:21; 4:12
- 1 Thessalonians Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**For (gar)** is a term of explanation which introduces the reason they should not be shaken or agitated.

**You yourselves know** - He reminds them that they had been taught by Paul, Silvanus and Timothy to expect suffering. In other words the sound doctrine which they knew was to be their foundation and anchor of their faith when the winds of affliction began to blow. Secondly, they were to remember that whatever afflictions were on their "appointment calendars" had been placed there or allowed to be there by their Sovereign Lord. And as writes in Romans believers can look at suffering from an eternal perspective...

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.** (See **notes** Romans 8:16; 8:17)

Suffering in this present life is evidence of the reality of one's faith as well as an earnest (a promise of what is to come) of the future glory. (see also 2Thes 1:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

**Know** (1492) (**eido**) literally means perception by sight (perceive, see) as in Mt 2:2 where the wise men "saw His star". It is the verb that describes absolute, positive, beyond a chance of a doubt type of knowing something. The **perfect tense** speaks of the permanence of their knowing. It refers to that quality of knowledge that is intuitive. It means to see with the mind's eye, signifies a clear and purely mental perception. It describes one as having come to a perception or realization of something.

**Fausset** makes a good point writing that "None but a religion from God would have held out such a trying prospect to those who should embrace it, and yet succeed in winning converts.

**How did Paul expect them to remain undisturbed in the face of afflictions of other believers?** See (1Th 3:2)... we all need someone to send us a "Timothy" from time to time to strengthen and encourage us as to our faith that we might hold fast, that we might run with endurance (He 12:1-note), that we might buffet our bodies (1Cor 9:24, 25, 26, 27-note), that we might lay hold of life indeed (1Ti 6:19), that we might fight the good fight, that we might run our race, that we might keep the faith (2Ti 4:7-note).

There is an eternity of difference between being **destined for afflictions** and **not destined... for wrath**, a contrast Paul brings out in the closing section of his letter...

God has **not destined us for wrath**, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (see note 1Thessalonians 5:9)

New believers (or at least those who profess belief in Christ) **must** be alerted to the truth that afflictions are guaranteed to come because of their faith in Jesus Christ, the One the unsaved world passionately, unremittently hates! And so they will hate His blood covenant relatives! Therefore Jesus Himself models what we are to teach our disciples lest they are surprised and discouraged by the trials. The trials in part are used by God to separate the wheat (genuine believers) from those who have made only a profession (intellectual decision without repentance) of belief in Christ. In John **Jesus** explains why believers are **destined for afflictions** in this present world reminding His disciples that...

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, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. ([John 15:19-21](#))

These things I have spoken to you (God's Truth is the sure stabilizing force in our continuous spiritual war with the terrorists -- the flesh, world and devil - so gird your loins with the truth - see note Eph 6:14), that in Me you may have peace (that which is at one, undivided). In the world you have **tribulation** (thlipsis), but **take courage** (present imperative = command to continually have confidence & firmness of purpose in face of danger/testing); I have overcome (Always of spiritual victory in the NT) the world. (John 16:33) ([Spurgeon's devotional](#))

**Comment:** Note that the first '**have**' (peace) is a possibility. {subjunctive mood}. The second **have** (affliction) is a certainty {indicative mood}. **Affliction** is guaranteed for disciples but **peace** is not. Peace depends on our trusting Him because He is our peace. There is no Peace other than in Christ, our Life, Col 3:4. His peace is a product of abiding in Him, of listening, of obeying immediately, of confessing quickly and repenting from known sin.

To the saints at Philippi **Paul** wrote...

For to you it has been granted (a "gift of grace"!) for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake (Php 1:29-note)

In his last letter **Paul** alerts Timothy that...

indeed, all (no exceptions!) who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2Ti 3:12-note)

**J Vernon McGee** explains that "If you are a believer, you are not going to escape trouble. To accept Christ does not mean to take out an insurance policy against suffering. The fact of the matter is that you will have trouble after you become a child of God, even if you haven't had any trouble before. He has never promised that we would miss the storm, but we will go through all the storms of life. What He does say very definitely and dogmatically is that He will go with us through the storms and that we will reach the harbor. Any boat which He is in will not go to the bottom of the Sea of Galilee but will reach the other side. You and I are in the process of going to the other side. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Richison** reminds all believers that "If you are in that cycle of your Christian life where everything is resulting in affliction, reverses or trouble, God knows how much you can bear and will not allow the pressure to become too great. The Lord is very careful how He measures out the pain that comes to your life. You can trust Him for that.

Commenting on the **we** in the phrase **we have been destined for this**, **MacArthur** notes that "Actually it is not clear from verse 3 whether **we** refers primarily to Paul or the Thessalonians. Some assert that **we** denotes Paul, and the afflictions the sufferings to which he had been destined (cf. Acts 9:16). That interpretation sees Paul reminding the Thessalonians of his God-ordained difficulties so that they would not equate them with God's disapproval of him or with nullification of His plans for him or even as evidence that he was not an apostle. Others see Paul's statement as a reminder to the Thessalonians and all Christians that they should expect afflictions... The widest interpretation, which includes Paul and believers within the statement, may be best, since it truly applies to both. (**Ed note:** I agree). ([MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press.](#))

**Destined** (appointed) ([2749](#)) (**keimai**) means literally to be in a recumbent position, to lie down, to be laid down. The root meaning refers to lying down or reclining and came to be used of an official appointment and sometimes of destiny. In the military **keimai** was used of a special assignment, such as guard duty or defense of a strategic position - the soldier was placed (set) on duty.

Figuratively then, **keimai** means appointed (determined or decided upon) or **destined** as in this verse (and Lu 2:34 and Php 1:16-note where we see that Paul was **divinely appointed** for the defense of the gospel). **Destined** means intended or chosen for a particular purpose or end. The idea is that God "sets (lays down)" something for a particular purpose. In context this usage of **keimai** affirms God's sovereignty and ultimate



control of all things.

Note that destined is in the **present tense** which speaks of a continuing "appointment" (until we see Jesus face to face). The **passive voice** implies that God is the active agent (He certainly is the Agent in not destining believers for wrath in 1Thessalonians 5:9). Paul is not referring to the pagan idea of an impersonal fate nor to the Islamic idea of determinism. As discussed above, afflictions are the norm for believers in a fallen world.

In **1Thessalonians 3:3**, Paul is using **keimai** figuratively to say in essence that appointments with trouble are already on our Day-timers®. He tells the believers at Thessalonica that he had told them this would happen. It's part of God's program. Believers are to expect troubles and difficulties because they "are appointed to this." The encouragement and comfort of a fellow Christian (like Timothy's visit to the Thessalonians) during such trials can be an especially welcome source of strength to one's faith (**strengthen and encourage** - in preceding verse).

**Vincent** writes that **keimai** means "primarily to be laid, and so to lie: hence to be set forth or promulgated, as the law is said to be laid down, and so, appointed or destined

**Friberg** adds that **keimai** "literally, spatially and predominately as the result of being placed or set (means to) (a) lie in or on something (Lk 2:12); (b) of things being situated somewhere - stand, set (Mt 5:14); (c) of storage of goods - be laid up, be in store (Lk 12:19); (2) figuratively; (a) of persons - be appointed, be set, be destined (Lk 2:34): (b) as a legal technical term - be laid down, exist, be valid (1Ti 1:9); (c) as being in a certain state or condition be, find oneself (in), lie (in the power of) (1John 5:19) ([Friberg, T., Friberg, B., & Miller, N. F. Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament. Baker Academic](#))

**Jesus Himself** had prophesied about Paul's coming afflictions (plural) declaring that...

he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel for I will show him **how much he must suffer** (why is he to suffer? read on... ) for My name's sake. (Acts 9:15, 16+)

**AW Tozer** was right when he said, *Before God can use a person greatly, He must allow that person to be hurt deeply.*

God is not being cruel, but He knows that we cannot comfort others unless we have been comforted ourselves. So beloved, no matter what you might be experiencing you must remember the truth about God, that He is "*the Father of mercies and God of all comfort who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*" 2Cor 1:3, 4

**Luke** records that suffering is the destiny of all believers...

And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,

**strengthening** (episterizo - derived from **sterizo**) the **souls** (their innermost being, that vital force which animates the body and shows itself in breathing) of the disciples, encouraging (parakaleo) them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many **tribulations** (plural of **thlipsis**) we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:21,22 +)

**Comment:** Observe how **strengthening** and **encouraging** saints going through spiritual battles is part of the SOP, standard operating procedure, for God's soldiers who would care of Christ's disciples. Note how Paul had sent Timothy to the Thessalonians prescribing this identical "antidote" for their afflictions in 1Thessalonians 3:2. We need to do likewise when we hear of a brother or sister in experiencing afflictions.

**Keimai** is used 7 times in the Septuagint (LXX) (Joshua 4:6; 2Sa 13:32; Ezra 6:1; Esther 3:13; Isa. 9:4; 30:33; Jer. 24:1) and **24** times in the NT...

**Matthew 3:10** "And the axe is already **laid** at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

**Matthew 5:14** (note) "You are the light of the world. A city **set** on a hill cannot be hidden." (**Comment:** **Keimai** means to be in a place frequently in sense of `being contained in' or `resting on' as in the present context of a city set on a hill)

**Matthew 28:6** "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was **lying**."

**Luke 2:12** "And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and **lying** in a manger."..16 And they came in haste and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He **lay** in the manger... 34 And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is **appointed** (set, destined) for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed--

**Luke 3:9** "And also the axe is already **laid** at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

**Luke 12:19** 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods **laid** up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry."

**Luke 23:53** And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and **laid** Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain.

**John 2:6** Now there were six stone waterpots **set** there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each.



**John 19:29** A jar full of sour wine was **standing** there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop, and brought it up to His mouth.

**John 20:5** and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings **lying** there; but he did not go in. 6 Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings **lying** there, 7 and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not **lying** with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself... 12 and she beheld two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been **lying**.

**John 21:9** And so when they got out upon the land, they saw a charcoal fire already **laid**, and fish placed on it, and bread.

**1 Corinthians 3:11** For no man can **lay** a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

**2 Corinthians 3:15** But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil **lies** over their heart;

**Philippians 1:16** (note) the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am **appointed** (I am put here or set here) for the defense of the gospel;

**1 Thessalonians 3:3** (note) so that no man may be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been **destined** for this (this is to be our lot).

**1 Timothy 1:9** realizing the fact that law is not **made** for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers

**1 John 5:19** We know that we are of God, and the whole world **lies** in the power of the evil one. (Vincent writes that in this verse **keimai** "is stronger than [esti] **is**, indicating the passive, unprogressive state in the sphere of Satan's influence. "*While we are, from God, implying a birth and a proceeding forth, and a change of state, the kosmos the world, all the rest of mankind, remains in the hand of the evil one*" [Alford])

[\*\*Revelation 4:2\*\* \(note\)](#) Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was **standing** in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.

[\*\*Revelation 21:16\*\* \(note\)](#) And the city is **laid** out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.

**Richison** sums up this section reminding all believers that...

God ordains us to affliction. When people become Christians, they receive a new kind of trouble. Affliction is God's appointment for us. God places affliction strategically in our lives for our personal growth. This is God's destiny for us that comes by His divine design. Affliction is God's appointment for us. Trial is no accident. We can clearly see the folly of trying to evade persecutions. This was the appointed path of the Thessalonians. The word "appointed" here does not refer to past eternity but to present time. The Christian life being what it is and the godless world being what it is, makes afflictions and persecution certain. God says, "I have an appointment for you with affliction." We make appointments regularly. This is an appointment that I would prefer not to keep!... Affliction is in the plan and will of God for the believer. Some of us might say, "What did I ever do to deserve this pain in my life. What did I do wrong?" It may be that you did not do anything wrong. This is just one of the by-products of being the child of the King. You say, "I don't like these side-effects of Christianity." A disciple is someone under discipline. God appoints trial into our lives so that we will become more disciplined in the things of God. ([Ref](#))

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In **Our Daily Homily**, **F B Meyer** writes the following note on 1Thessalonians 3:3...

WE all love the sunshine, but the Arabs have a proverb that "all sunshine makes the desert"; and it is a matter for common observation that the graces of Christian living are more often apparent in the case of those who have passed through great tribulation. God desires to get as rich crops as possible from the soil of our natures. There are certain plants of the Christian life, such as meekness, gentleness, kindness, humility, which cannot come to perfection if the sun of prosperity always shines.

We often shrank from the lessons set us at school, and looked out of the windows, longing for the hour of release. But now how thankful we are for the tutors and governors, appointed by our parents, who kept us steadily at our tasks. We feel almost kindly to the schoolmaster or mistress that we dreaded. And, similarly, one day we shall be glad for those hard lessons acquired from the horn-book of pain. "We have had fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, who chastens for our profit, and live?"

The tears of those who suffer according to the will of God are spiritual lenses and windows of agate. As the weights of the clock or the ballast in the vessel are necessary for their right ordering, so is trouble in the soul-life. The sweetest scents are only obtained by tremendous pressure; the fairest flowers grow amid Alpine snow-solitudes; the rarest gems have suffered longest from the lapidary's wheel; the noblest statues have borne most blows of the chisel. All, however, is under law. Nothing happens that has not been appointed with consummate care and foresight.

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**Tough Trees 1Thessalonians 3:3-4**

Bristlecone pines are the world's oldest living trees. Several are estimated to be 3,000 to 4,000 years old. In 1957, scientist Edmund Schulman found one he named "Methuselah." This ancient, gnarled pine is nearly 5,000 years old! It was an old tree when the Egyptians were building the pyramids.

Bristlecones grow atop the mountains of the western United States at elevations of 10,000 to 11,000 feet. They've been able to survive some of the harshest living conditions on earth: arctic temperatures, fierce winds, thin air, and little rainfall.

Their brutal environment is actually one of the reasons they've survived for millennia. Hardship has produced extraordinary strength and staying power.

Paul taught that "tribulation produces ... character" (Romans 5:3-4). Adversity is part of the process that God uses to produce good results in our lives. Trouble, if it turns us to the Lord, could actually be the best thing for us. It leaves us wholly dependent on Him.

So we should pray not just for relief from our affliction, but for the grace to turn it into greater openness to God and to His will for us. Then we can be strong in calamity, and at peace in the place where God has planted us. —David H. Roper

#### THINKING IT OVER

- What trial in your life is making you wonder why God is allowing it? Read [Why Would A Good God Allow Suffering?](#)
- God uses our difficulties to develop our character. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### **1 Thessalonians 3:3 G Campbell Morgan**

Here unto we are appointed.—1 Thess. 3.3

The "hereunto" refers to "afflictions." These Thessalonian Christians were in circumstances of actual suffering, resulting from persecution by their own country-men. Through these trials they had stood fast. Paul was full of joy because this was so, but was desiring to hearten and strengthen them in their loyalty. This he did, first, by reminding them that the churches in Judaea had suffered in the same way at the hands of their kinsmen. Then he made this declaration; "Hereunto we are appointed." Surveying the whole Christian movement, he saw suffering everywhere as the result of loyalty to the faith; and he did not conceive of it merely as something to be endured. He saw God ruling over all, and knew that this pathway of pain was a Divinely-arranged one. Therefore he realized that the sufferings of all Christian souls were not only within His knowledge; they were in His plan for His people. They were appointed to affliction. The word "appointed" here is the emphatic word. In affliction the saints are where God has put them, and they are there for purposes within the counsel of His will. It is patent that Paul was thinking in the realm of the Cross. As the sufferings of Christ were all by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and that in order to the accomplishment of His redemptive

purpose, so all the affliction of those who followed Christ were of the same fellowship, and those enduring them were workers together with God. (Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible).

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## **1 Thessalonians 3:1-10** Booster Words

Exhort one another daily. —Hebrews 3:13

Booster shots—think of the benefits! They are part of a complete program of vaccinations that protect us against threatening diseases.

Booster words—ever heard of them? They are words we say to help others in the fight against discouragement and despair.

In his book *Secrets From The Mountain*, Pat Williams tells of an experiment with a group of students. They were told that scientists had proven that brown-eyed children were smarter than blue-eyed ones. Immediately, the brown-eyed students began doing better in school. A few days later, though, the students were told that they had been misinformed, and it was the blue-eyed youngsters who were actually smarter. Quickly, the scores of the blue-eyed children rose above those of their brown-eyed classmates.

Lying to children is never right, but the study demonstrates that words have the power to influence behavior. Paul recognized this, so he sent Timothy to the church at Thessalonica to encourage the believers in their faith—and his words did just that (1 Thessalonians 3:2-3,6).

Do we “exhort one another daily”? (Hebrews 3:13). Do we bring comfort and encouragement to the people we know? Try using some booster words today. —Dave Branon

### Putting It Into Practice

Think of someone who needs encouragement.

How can you help that person today?

Make a phone call, send an e-mail, or pay a visit.

Hope can be ignited by a spark of encouragement.

By Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## **1 Thessalonians 3:3** The Way To An “Easy” Life

Read: 1 Thessalonians 3

No one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. —1 Thessalonians 3:3

Are parents trying too hard to make their kids happy? And is that having the opposite

effect? These questions introduce an interview with Lori Gottlieb, author of an article on the subject of unhappy young adults. Her conclusion: Yes. Parents who refuse to let their children experience failure or sadness give them a false view of the world and do not prepare them for the harsh realities of adult life. They're left feeling empty and anxious.

Some Christians expect that the Lord will be the kind of parent who protects them from all sorrow and disappointment. But that's not the kind of Father He is. He lovingly allows His children to go through suffering (Isa. 43:2; 1 Thess. 3:3).

When we start with the mistaken belief that it's an easy life that will make us truly happy, we become weary trying to live out our faulty belief. But when we face the truth that life is difficult, we can invest our lives in the pursuit of a good and godly life instead. That kind of life strengthens us for the times when life is difficult.

God's goal is to make us holy, not just happy (1 Thess. 3:13). And when we are holy, we are more likely to be truly happy and content.

Must I be carried to the skies  
On flowery beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas?  
—Watts

A contented person has learned to accept the bitter with the sweet.

By Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))