

Studies in 1 Thessalonians 03 Conduct

by Svend Christensen

Paul's letter to the Thessalonians emphasizes the importance of the Word of God, the authority of the gospel, and the hope and joy of believers in Christ.

Duration: 36:49

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 3:1

Topics: "Christian Conduct", "Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of establishing and comforting fellow believers in their faith. He mentions the afflictions and tribulations that Christians may face, but emphasizes the need to remain steadfast. The speaker also expresses his deep love and longing for the believers he is addressing, highlighting the bond they share. Throughout the sermon, various biblical truths are mentioned, including the Trinity, conversions, the Second Coming, sanctification, and the resurrection. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the role of believers as ambassadors for Christ, spreading the light of the word in a dark world.

Transcript

Let's read this morning 1 Thessalonians chapter three. 1 Thessalonians chapter three, and we'll come back and finish chapter two and try to get into chapter three this morning. We only have sort of one day for one chapter, running all around it quickly.

I think it's good to get over, get a sort of a bird-eye view and get some of the practical things for a hunt as we pass through. Chapter three, and beginning at verse one. Wherefore, when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother, and minister of God, and all fellow-worker in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions, for ye yourselves know that we are there, we are appointed to these things.

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and ye know. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means attempt to have tempted you, and our labor be in vain. But now, when Timothy came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, ask we also to see you.

Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all affliction and distress by your faith. For now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord. And what thanks can we render to God again for you? All the joy which we joy for your sake, before our God, night and day, praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith.

Now God himself, and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you, and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you. To the end, he may establish your heart unblameably in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. You remember yesterday we were talking about Paul's great heart of love, his shepherd's heart for the believers, and it can't help but marvel at the wonderful grace of God, and how he raised up such a man as Paul.

Paul at this time was, if he had ever been married before, he was single at this time. You remember what a hard persecutor he was, and yet to these Thessalonians he was now a gentle mother. Every family needs a mother, and every family needs a father.

If you only have a mother, there's something missing. If you only have a father, there's something missing, and he could tell them that he was as a gentle, nursing mother to them, and also he was as a father to them. I think that's marvelous to think that God could take a man like Paul and make him fill the bill, not only to have children, but after you have them, to look after them and to minister to them in such a wonderful way.

Another thing I just wanted to point out was the Thessalonians, as you know, is the first, as far as we know, Paul's epistles, and these believers only say the comparatively short time, and yet in this epistle you'll find Paul's teaching has some great truths. In chapter one, verse four, he teaches them the truth of the election. He teaches them the truth of the Holy Spirit in chapter one, verse five and six, also in verse four, eight.

He gives them the truth of assurance in one, five, the truth of the Trinity, also in chapter one, verse one, and also verse five and six, the truth of conversion, chapter one, nine, how they're turned to God from idols, the truth of the second coming, and it's the rapture in chapter four, the truth of sanctification, and also in chapter four, verse three, the day of the Lord or the day of Jehovah in chapter five and verse three, the resurrection, first resurrection in chapter four, fourteen to eighteen, and then the tripod nature of man in chapter five and verse twenty-three. So, there's many great truths taught to these new believers. It shows you what God's people can take in because they have the Holy Spirit, and apart from the Holy Spirit, we could never understand it.

So, see, even with young believers, we can teach them many profound truths. They call this to the Thessalonians. Now, we come to the part where we left off yesterday in verse thirteen of chapter two, and here we see something about their response to the gospel.

Paul, this is a wonderful verse. If there's any verse that's worth memorizing, this is it to give you what the Word of God really is, the authority of the Word of God. He says, for this cause we are all to thank thee God.

Notice Paul is still at it, thanking God, thanking God, thanking God. Spend much of your time thanking the Lord. Truly, there's much to thank him for.

When you become a thanksgiving Christian, you become one that's living very close to the Lord, and it produces a light of holiness. Now, he was thankful for the way they received the message. You know, it follows up on sore trial, as we saw in verse nine.

It was backed by holy living in verse ten and eleven, that there'd be holy lives. And, you know, the credit and the glory went to God in here in verse thirteen. For this cause we thank God without ceasing because you receive the Word of God which ye heard of us.

You receive it not as the Word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God which effectually worketh also you that believe. Now, we could almost spend the rest of the time just on this wonderful verse before us, but of course we are not able to do that. Now, this thanksgiving he said it was without ceasing.

Remember, he says, praying always with all prayer and thanksgiving, giving thanks always. Paul is practicing what he taught the believers. For this cause we thank God without ceasing.

It's a continual thing, just like something that's continually going on, having a continual feast, thanking the Lord. Now, notice something of a first, negatively, what the message is not. Well, the Word of God is not.

He says, you receive the Word of God which you received of. You received it not as the Word of men. Now, the Word of men, human wisdom is limited.

He said we didn't bring you any limited wisdom or knowledge. Human wisdom and knowledge is biased, it's slanted. Not too long ago, or well, it's quite a while ago now, the vice president was speaking about the biased press, and the communication was biased, and human wisdom and word is always biased, and then it's limited.

I don't care how much man knows, it's still limited, not so with the Word of God. And then something else, it's changeable. Signs, anything else a man comes up with, it's changing every decade.

It keeps on changing. God's Word is not like that. It's unchangeable.

He has died it forever. Sometimes human words are very, very charming and beautiful, but they don't do much good for you. The Word of God is effective, as we see here in this word, we effectually work it.

The Word of God is really wonderful. Now, what is it? In truth, is that the Word of God, the consciousness of its divine origin. You remember in 2 Timothy, we read 3.16, all scriptures given by inspiration of God.

It's God's way. Holy men of God speak at the removal of the Holy Ghost. This Word of God, as the Bible also says about it, is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.

It's divine in its origin. It reveals to us the good news of salvation. As it points out here, it gives the word of truth that gives the gospel of God, as we also study in this chapter, and is absolutely immutable.

You can't change it. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word abided forever. Thy word is truth, for as it is truth, the Word of God is much superior to man's wisdom.

Man could never plan salvation, and all is wonderful as it is. This Word of God comes through human instrument. Ye heard of us.

You heard this word of truth of us. Isn't it grand that we have this in earth and vessels? God deigns to use man. God can use us.

That's why the Colossians says that the Word of Christ dwells in you literally. It's the Word of God that's quick and powerful. Make much of the Word of God, and be full of the Word of God, and preach the word as Paul said to Timothy, because this is the word of truth.

This is what is effectual, and notice what it does. It works effectually in you that believe. Paul himself was a great example of that.

Think of what the Word of God did for him. The Thessalonians were a great example of the Word of God working effectually. All heathens one day, next day saints.

One day they had no father, now God was their Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ their Savior. Turn to God from idols, completely transformed. The Word of God worked effectually, and can we not each of us that are saved this morning testify to the same? The Word of God worked effectually in you that believe, and after you believe it still works effectually.

It's the Word of God that sanctifies us. Sanctify us how? By thy truth, by thy word of truth. That's how we're made holy, by the Word of God.

It worked in us effectually. All that the Word of God may have free course in our lives. So, this is something about what the Word of God does.

Now, in verse 14, notice the persecutions. In verse 13, you might say you have the power and the authority of the Word of God. In verse 14, you have the persecutions endured by the Thessalonians.

For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus. For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews. You remember the believers in Judea, how they suffered at the hands of the Jews? He said, that's exactly what happened to you.

You have suffered at the hands of your countrymen, and it always turns out so that they which live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. It happened to the Jewish believers in Judea, it happened to the Gentile believers in Thessalonica. Wherever the people believe in the Lord Jesus and live godly, they're going to suffer persecution.

There's no way around it. If we as believers were true, light without any form of persecution, we're not much like the Lord Jesus. Lord said, marvel not if the world hated you, it hated me before it hated you.

If they had done this to a green tree, what would they do in a dry? This is what the Lord Jesus taught, and the Thessalonians experienced something about that. Now, notice the description of these persecutors, these Jewish persecutors, that outline for us in verse 15 and 16. What a list here.

First, the greatest of all crimes ever committed, and God will hold them responsible even though they're fulfilling the scriptures. It was ordained by God, yet they did their own thing and crucified the Lord Jesus, is that who won't kill the Lord Jesus. That's the first great sin, the treatment of the Lord Jesus.

It all says in Acts 2.23, that according to the foreknowledge of God ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. Paul puts it this way in 1 Corinthians 2.8, with none of the princes of this world

knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, for they took and they killed the Lord of glory. They cried out his blood be on us and on all children, and it certainly hath been the awful sin of killing, crucifying the Lord Jesus and their own prophets.

Remember, the Lord Jesus reminded them, from their own prophets, beginning right down at Abel, right on to sacrifice whom you slew at the altar. All the blood of these prophets are the guilt of all these sins upon you as a nation. They killed all their own prophets, and then he said, they've persecuted us.

And you go through the book of Acts and see something of the persecution that Paul and his associates received at the hands of these people. Read about it in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, where Paul gives a whole list of his privations and his persecutions and his endurance, and how he was treated at the hands of these persecutors. And then something else, and they pleased not God.

The treatment of the Lord Jesus, they killed him. The treatment of the prophets, they killed them. The treatment of Paul persecuted them.

The treatment of God, they pleased not God. The very opposite to the Lord Jesus we spoke about last night, who set his face at the flint, he was out to please his father. That should be mocked.

Every believer, we should be able to please our father. This is the very opposite, that please not God. Completely contrary to God, and contrary to all men.

These were obstinate people, and then their treatment of the gospel in verse 16, but forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved. They were like the dog in the manger. They wouldn't eat the hay themselves, and they wouldn't let the animal eat it.

Contrary to all men, hindering the gospel. They didn't want others to have it. But notice what it says here, to fill up their sin always, that the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

It's accumulated guilt here, adding up. I remember in the years of depression up in Prince Edward Island, my father always dealt with the, actually, almost the only country store that was near there, and during the summer months, while the milk was being shipped, and while the cattle were being raised, there wasn't much income. So, he would charge the groceries, charge the groceries.

Every week at the store, he'd be buying groceries and charging them, and it was amazing. In the fall, when the milk settlement came, and the wheat was sold, and so forth, he was always surprised, always was surprised how large that bill, that grocery bill was. It was much larger than we expected, and I tell you, guilt accumulates, sins accumulate, and they're adding it up.

But there's a payday coming. Every fall, those groceries have to be paid for, and these folks will have to be answerable to God. Sin will always be dealt with.

It's wonderful to have one that has put all sins away, isn't it? Then we come to verse 17. We see something about the passion of Paul for these Christians, but we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. What a love he had for these people! Actions that he had only made them more precious to him.

How we hate to be away from our loved ones. He hated to be away from them. He longed for them.

Now, this is something, isn't it? Here's a man, he's not just planted one assembly at Bethlehem on Ida. He has planted assemblies in many different areas, and for every one of these assemblies, he has this fatherly love, this shepherd care, and he longed for them. Isn't this practical? This genuine love for the brethren, and I tell you, when there's that love for one another, it's death away with many ills.

Perfect love casted out fear, and when there's really that love for one another, it's death away with so many other side issues and ills that come in among the people of God. Genuine love. Then, in verse 18, you see something of the preventative put in the way by Satan, and may I remind you that he is the devil.

Wherefore, we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again. Different times we wanted to come to you, but he said, Satan hindered us. Now, you know, Satan is seen in many different aspects.

The accuser, the brethren, the deceiver, and so on. But, here he's seen as the hinderer, one that hinders them. Now, this is not the first time he was hindered.

We'll read about it in the book of Acts, how he was hindered to go certain places. Satan hindered him, and Satan does still hinder, and Satan is no respecter of persons. He hinders even Paul the apostle.

The greater you are in Christian work, that is, the more you're in the front line, the more you'll get the attack of the devil. He goes after the leaders, and that's why we need to pray for the brethren and the sisters that are really engaged in the Lord's work, that on the front line of the battle, they meet the onslaught of the devil. They're the ones he attacks.

Satan hindered us, he said. Now, use of men. Remember, in 2 Timothy 3, 8, we read about James and James which withstood Moses by imitating their miracles.

I was just reading about that this morning in the book of Exodus. Imitation. The monster threw down his rod and became a serpent.

Pharaoh called those imitators, and they threw down their rod, and they became serpents, and so they imitated. Satan withstood Moses by these false imitators. Korah and his followers, remember, they withstood Moses and Israel in number 16, full-stopping rebellion, and the earth opened up and swallowed them up.

They consented against God and hindered the progress of Israel in taking Ai after they had conquered Jericho because he covered it. One man in Israel hindered the whole progress of the work of God. Sandalus and Tobiah was used by Satan to hinder Nehemiah in building the wall, and we could go on and on with illustrations how Satan hinders and tries to hinder the work of God, and he's still the same.

Satan is still loose, and he's still in the oppose of the brethren. He's still the hinderer of progress in the work of God. Now, we come to the lovely last section of this chapter, connection with the soul in its crown.

Remember the first? You have the second coming connection with their conversion. Here you have it in connection with the crown. First, what is this? For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye? What is this? Well, they were his hope of the reward of the judgment seat of Christ.

Ye are our hope. Those are the hope of those who are going to continue the work. See, God's great purpose in establishing testimonies in different places that he would have a name, or testimony to his name, of people that would be a light for him, that represent him.

They were ambassadors for Christ, representing him in the dark world, spreading the light from that local headquarter, as it were. These were the words of God for him. From you sounded out the word of the Lord, and that's what God wants to have assemblies for.

So, they were his hope at the judgment seat of Christ. They were his hope of Christ continuing the work of the Lord down here. You know, and then there was that joy, the great joy.

You know, when people get married, and a little child comes into the home, that's great joy. And, people that haven't got children really don't understand that. And, people that have never won souls for Christ don't know the joy that's associated with it.

It's a great thrill to win souls for Christ. There's joy in it. My father was just talking to me about fishing.

And, I used to love to fish. I remember catching the first fish up in Calhoun, a little rowboat with my older brother and I. And, I got this trout, you know, and I'm so excited. He went over the other side, and I nearly tipped the boat.

And, glad I got him into the boat. He was on the hook good, only that I would have lost him. But, you know, when I got that fish into that boat, I couldn't get him off the hook fast enough, and get the bait on, and get that line back up again.

That's, that's the joy, is it, catching a fish. Well, there's a far greater joy catching men. Come here after me, and I'll make your fishes of men.

Catching live men for the Lord Jesus. He said that, you are joy. What a joy.

And, you're going to feel joy at the just deceit of Christ. And, His coming, when He comes with it, all that is wanted to be sent to the Lord. Bringing His seeds with Him.

Coming with rejoicing, bringing His seeds with Him. Brethren and sisters, have you got your seeds to bring with you? Have you those that will be your joy up there? I'll tell you, Paul was just not, just merely an, not merely an instrument. He was a co-worker with the Lord Jesus.

He said, we'll work it together with Him. And, this is a great work. Many people play down soul winning, and reaching people for Christ.

They say, oh, it's these simple-minded fellows. They can preach the gospel, and they can win souls, but we more, you know, established Christians, we teach the Word. Sometimes, there's that idea around, you know.

Never play down soul winning, or reaching others for Christ. This is so great. This is what theists, to the heart, have got to.

How are you going to teach Christians, unless you first get them saved? You see? A lot of folks glad to teach the Christians, but who's going to win them? God uses all the men to win them, and to bring them in. Now, Paul was not only a teacher, but he was also a soul winner. Now, where? In the presence of the Lord.

That's where he's going to be. He had no doubt about his own salvation. He had no doubt about their salvation.

You're going to be my joy, my crown of rejoicing. Where? In His presence, at His coming. He was sure of their salvation.

That's why he was sure of his own, and there he would get the crown, the presence of the Lord Jesus. These would know, these would know that Paul's reward was at the same time. You see, he would hear the Lord's, well done.

Isn't that a wonderful thing, that the Lord Jesus comes again, and the believers are with the dead of age, and we which are alive are caught up, and as you're caught up, you see these around you that God used to impartly, at least, to bring them to Christ. That's the picture here. Christ is coming again.

His crown, ye are our crown of rejoicing at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think this is going to be a wonderful day. Believers go in for soul winning, reaching others, witness.

Now, only the Lord can save soul. I realize that, but He does use men as instruments. We sow the seed, we talk to them, bring them up to a point where we many times ask them, after they understand the gospel, will you now accept Christ as your Savior? And that's a glorious thing, to kneel down with some sinner that truly means and is repentant, and see him maybe with tears running down his cheeks, confessing his need and his sin, and receiving Christ as his Lord and Savior, and then to see him going on afterwards.

It's a real joy in this life, and it's going to be a real joy at that day when we meet the Lord Jesus. For what is our hope for joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not neither ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus, tight at his tummy? For ye are our lowly, and joy are you our lowly crown. The believers were his lowly crown.

That's the real climax, isn't it? Now, we've hurriedly come into chapter three, the connection with Paul as the pastoral care and concern for these Thessalonians. It starts with Timothy's mission. Therefore, he says, when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone.

You remember Paul was at Athens, and he felt so out of place. He was so alone there. He had walked there and footed miles, and he was so alone there, and Timothy's companionship was so much to him.

It was his son in the faith, and yet his love was so intense for these Thessalonian Christians that Paul was willing to deprive himself of the fellowship of these believers, and endanger Timothy too to go back to Thessalonica with a such persecution. He had so much love for them. Love expressed itself in a real way.

He didn't just sort of write a letter we'd really love you and pray for you, and then left him at that. Oh no, his heart was right with them. He said, I'm asking for you, but I'm really there with you in actuality, and I just can't get peace.

I can't rest. I'm so concerned about you that I had to let Timothy go, and that's what he did. A very important mission that Timothy had to fulfill.

It really involved great personal inconvenience both to himself and to Paul. Now look at verse 2, and I sent Timothy. Timothy was a man you could always depend on.

He said to the Philippians, I have no man that's like-minded, who will naturally care for your state like Timothy said to the Philippians. Here's Timothy again, a faithful brother, one that's reliable, one that can be counted on, one that can take things in hand just like Paul did, and he calls him our brother. Again, that

lovely endearing title.

I think there's only one other place he calls Timothy thus. Usually he calls him his son in the faith, and minister of God, a servant of God. He's God's deacon.

He's God's servant. He's not just Paul's associate. He's not just a servant of Paul, but he's something more.

He's a servant of God, and he's our fellow laborer or worker. He wasn't just one that's alongside with Paul, sort of all dressed up, white collar type of a preacher only. No, he's a fellow worker.

Somebody said the Lord didn't pray that there'd be more just preachers sent into the fields, but laborers. Pray ye the Lord of the harvests that he would send laborers into the thing. Sometimes laborers are few.

By nature, many of us, we're lazy, and the work of the Lord is a work, hard work. He's my fellow worker in the gospel of Christ. He's my associate.

He's one that works right shoulder to shoulder with me, and you see two oxen or two horses pulling a plow. Timothy wasn't just like you see sometimes one horse would have to lick the head of the other one. I've seen farmers playing with horses, you know, years ago, and one horse would be way ahead and the other one would be laughing behind.

No, Timothy was just shoulder to shoulder with Paul. He's a fellow worker. He put his shoulder to the wheel, as it were, and he did his share.

Good for us all to do all share. That's the only way the work of God goes on. There's a lot of many times there's shirkers in the work of God.

There's no room for shirkers. There's room for workers, and notice what he would do for them. In verse 2 and verse 4, the ministry of Timothy, it's all there.

His qualification, he was a brother. He was a minister of God. He was a fellow laborer in the gospel, and then his ministry was this.

First was to establish them, to establish you. Now, every Christian needs to be established, and I think many times that's where we fall down. We lead people to Christ, and then we fail to follow them up.

Paul was concerned about the establishing of these Christians, calling them, rooting them, and calling them in the faith. He's going to come to establish you. Now, Timothy was able to do that because he was a true minister of God.

He knew the Word of God. Secondly, and to comfort you. That was the encouragement.

In the faith of persecution, when they have to be discouraged, he's going to come to comfort you or encourage you is another translation concerning the faith. That's something we need, men that'll encourage us. Sometimes, you know, you get brethren that are sort of watchdogs in the assembly.

So, we'll have the ear open for error, you know. Somebody says the prayer's just a little bit out of line. Speak it up enough, brother.

You were a little bit off in doctrine in your prayer, you know. Brethren like that. They're watchdogs.

They're watching all the time. We have a brother in Orlando. He was a good student of the brethren, but he had that tendency, too, you know.

Hey, Sven, I wish you'd speak to brother so-and-so. Did you hear what he said in his prayer this morning? I said, leave him alone. Just pray for him.

He'll learn. He's an intelligent Christian. He'll learn what you need to do when a fellow gets up, and he takes part in meetings.

He's a new believer, and he says all kinds of things that are wrong, and so on. If you hear him say one thing right, call him and say, brother, I'm joyous of what you said, and encourage him in that good thing he said. Don't never mind the other things.

He'll learn as he goes on. Some Christians have been discouraged when somebody has found fault with them, sort of jumped on them with both feet, and they flattened them, and they were never able to recover. Be slow to criticize.

Be quick to encourage. He says, I've sent somebody to encourage you. That's what young believers need.

You can send your discouragement without getting it from the brethren outside, you see. We need the encouragement inside from the people of God. Just pray for them, and encourage them in any way you can.

No man should be moved by these afflictions. He was going to straighten them in the face of this persecution. For ye yourselves know that we are appointed to these things.

This is the common law of every Christian, even now. A certain amount of persecution. Paul predicted it.

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that you should stop the tribulation. He had predicted that you're going to suffer persecution, and he said that to Timothy, they that live godly, they shall. There's no doubt about it.

They shall suffer persecution, and his prophecy came true. Even as it came to pass, and you know, God's word will always come to pass, and as God spoke to Paul that he believed that he was going to suffer persecution, it came to pass. God's word will always be fulfilled.

Now, for this cause, he says again in verse five, you get his heart coming up like it did in verse one. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your fate, lest by some means attempt to have tempted you, and our labor be in vain.

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