

# 1 Thessalonians 3:1-10

## A Strong Faith - 1

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## Introduction

This passage has to do with the faith of the Thessalonians. Their faith was strong, and Paul wanted to make sure that it remained strong. He stressed their faith five times in these ten verses (2, 5, 6, 7, 10).

The one thing needed by Christian believers is a strong faith: a faith that honestly knows Christ and knows what it is to walk in Him day by day, trusting Him, His care and comfort and strength. What we need is a faith that stands fast, endures, and perseveres, and that grows stronger and stronger in Christ. The stronger we believe and the more faith we have, the more we can conquer in life and do the things that we should do. A strong faith in Christ enables us to triumph over the trials and temptations of life and to fulfill our purpose in life.

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## Introduction

Many of the believers in Thessalonica had a strong faith; therefore, their faith stands as a model for us. What is a strong faith?

1. Paul's extreme anxiety for the church: they were suffering fierce persecution (vv. 1–2).
2. A strong faith is not moved by trials (vv. 3–5).
3. A strong faith bears an excellent testimony (v. 6).
4. A strong faith stirs the hearts of others (vv. 7–10).

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Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, <sup>2</sup>and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, <sup>3</sup>that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. <sup>4</sup>For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. <sup>5</sup>For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain. <sup>6</sup>But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also *to see you*—  
<sup>7</sup>therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. <sup>8</sup>For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. <sup>9</sup>For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, <sup>10</sup>night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?

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## Stand Fast – Paul’s Anxiety

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Paul had deep concern for the church at Thessalonica. The believers were suffering fierce persecution by both the Jewish and Gentile citizens of the city. Remember: the Jews had opposed Paul when he was in Thessalonica. They had aroused people to riot against Paul and the church. Because of the uproar, Paul was forced to flee for his life. He had hoped that his absence would squelch the persecution. But his plan failed; the persecution continued and apparently increased. The adversaries were determined to stamp out the church and destroy the gospel of Christ.

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Paul had gone to Athens, but his heart was in Thessalonica, longing for the believers who were suffering the fierce attacks of persecution. Note what he says: he had reached a point when he could no longer endure the suspense over their welfare. When Paul had left them, they were standing fast in their **faith**. Were they still standing firm, or had they given in to the persecution? Paul could bear it no longer; he had to do something. He desperately wanted to return and stand by their side, but he knew he could not. His return would only add fuel to the persecution. What then could he do? He would do the next best thing: send his right-hand man, Timothy (v. 2).

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Timothy was a dependable servant of the Lord. He was ...

- a brother to Paul
- a minister of God
- a fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ

If anyone could help the believers, he could. Note: Paul sent him to establish and comfort the believers in their faith.

⇒ The word establish means to support and strengthen.

⇒ The word encourage means to comfort and exhort.

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## Stand Fast Against Persecution

1 Thessalonians 3:3-5

That no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. <sup>4</sup>For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. <sup>5</sup>For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.

**What is a strong faith?** A strong faith is a faith that is not shaken by trials.

The word shaken is taken from a word that means to wag the tail like a dog. The word has multiple means, but the context here means, “to lead astray by some deceptive strategy.

⇒ There was an attack of spreading lies and rumors about the minister Paul.

⇒ There was the usual shameful treatment.

⇒ There was physical abuse by mobs.

⇒ There was the use of civil authority and law against them if they continued to worship and speak about Christ.

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Paul says: “**No one should be shaken by these afflictions.**” But when the attacks are so severe and savage, how can the believer keep from being moved? How can he stand fast? By knowing three things.

1. **The believer must know that he is appointed to persecution.** Paul had taught the Thessalonians that they would suffer persecution if they accepted Christ. Why? Why does the world persecute the Christian believer so much?

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a. Believers are persecuted because **they are not of this world.**

They are in the world, but they are not of the world. They are separated from the behavior of the world. Therefore, the world reacts against them (John 15:19).

b. They are persecuted because believers **strip away the world's cloak of sin.** They live and demonstrate a life of righteousness. Such living exposes the sins of people (John 15:18, 22; 2 Timothy 3:12).

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c. They are persecuted because the **world does not know God nor Christ**.

They want no God other than themselves and their own imaginations. They want to do just what they want—to fulfill their own desires, not what God wishes and demands (John 15:21; John 16:3).

d. They are persecuted because the world is **deceived in its concept and belief of God**. They think God protects, provides, and gives no matter what a person's behavior is, just so the behavior is not too far out. They think God will accept and work all things out in the final analysis. However, the true believer teaches against this. **God is love, but He is also just and demands righteousness**. The world rebels against this concept of God (John 16:2-3).

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**2. The believer must know that the temptation to cave to persecution is of the tempter – Satan himself.** Satan wants the believer to hush up about Christ and to desert Christ. If Satan can rattle the believer to turn away from Christ and the church, then he is able to use his desertion to affect many lives. Satan is able to destroy the faith of both the believer and those who look up to him, such as children, family, and friends.

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3. **The believer must know that the labor and message of the minister is not empty.** Christ died for our sins that we might not perish. Christ gives us eternal life—gives us the privilege of living forever and ever in the new heaven and earth that He is to create. But if we desert Christ, then all the labor that has gone into leading us to Christ is empty. The work of the minister and of those who have taught us will have been useless. We must not, therefore, give in to the temptation to move away from Christ. We must stand fast in afflictions, no matter how severe and savage. Standing fast in persecution is the sign of a strong faith.

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## So What ...

None of us what to go through persecution. We want to be liked, appreciated, and treated kindly. However, we need to realize that if we stand up for Christ, it will get the world's attention. We need to remember two important facts.

1. **Jesus stood up for us when He was persecuted and crucified.** We should be willing to stand for Him because of what He did for us without compromise. This is a mark of a true believer.
2. **People are watching.** How will they come to know Christ, if we are unwilling to take a stand and speak. It is one thing to speak when things are easy, but it takes a true and strong Christians to stand strong when things are tough.

**Let's stand firm together!**

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