I. Review and Intro

A. Last week Mark walked us through the previous chapter in which Paul talked about his great love for the church in Thessalonica. Towards the end of chapter 2 Paul references how himself and Silias were taken away from them after only being with them a short time. He told them how much he wanted to come back but Satan had hindered him (time and again) from coming back to them.

B. Context - In Acts 17 we read about Paul and Silas' short time in Thessalonica and the sudden and violent events that led to their departure. The events of their leaving give us great insight into the next portion of our study. (Acts 17:1-9)

1. The Birth of the Church - Some Jews, a great number of devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women.

2. Backlash from Envy - Unable to defeat Paul ideologically, they turn to subversion. They "take" (recruit *agoraioi)* low-life instigators, unemployed loiterers, and mercenaries hanging around the marketplace to instigate a public riot.

3. Jason and Others Persecuted - The mob converges on Jason's home. In that culture, the host of guests was legally and morally responsible for the actions of their guests. Jason and others are literally dragged before city officials and forced to post large financial bonds securing the cease and desist order of Paul, Silas, and the public preaching of Christianity.

    a. Preach another King - The only legal enforcement of religion in a Roman "free city" was the prohibition of any religion that denied the worship and allegiance to the emperor as divine. This was viewed as national treason and was often punishable by death.

4. Paul and Silas Smuggled out of Town - Paul and Silas were immediately taken secretly by night out of the city of Thessalonica in order to save their lives.

II. Verse-by-Verse 1 Thess. 3:1-13

A. <u>No longer endure it (vs 1)</u> - In last week's study we encountered a "super saint" who kept getting hindered by Satan and was unable to get breakthroughs in an area that he wanted to and desperately prayed for victory in. Now, once again, we

see a "super saint" who is unable to remain patiently enduring the circumstances he finds himself in, and finds himself acting on what, he believes, to be best and needs to happen even though there has not been clear direction from the Lord.

1. There are many instances where God leads us and works in and through us by allowing us to act in our free will, based upon the convictions of our own leanings. This is the case here. Paul feels this is the right thing to do in this situation and acts with his own wisdom even though it diminishes another area of ministry.

B. <u>To establish and encourage you (vs 2)</u> - I believe that Paul meant to put these words in this specific progressive sequence. It is nearly impossible to encourage someone in something that they are not established in. Foundations must be laid before building upon them can begin.

C. <u>Christians are appointed affliction and tribulation (vs. 3-4)</u> - This is a crystal clear doctrine in our bibles and yet this a highly sensitive topic in the western church. Some believe that Christians shouldn't suffer affliction and that God wants to teach us only by His word, and not through trial or tribulation. Some believe that the only kind of affliction a Christian should experience is religious persecution.

1. *Thilipsis (translated affliction)* was used for such things as physical pain, emotional hardships, and suffering under temptation. *Pasko (translated tribulation)* was used for such things as physical sufferings unrelated to persecution, suffering under temptation, and hardships in a general sense.

2. The worst wrong belief and Satanic lie that exists is that affliction means God is angry at the believer. The truth is that affliction means that God loves us enough to give the best when we may only desire what is easy. The symbol of Christianity is a painful flesh-crucifying death on a cross and those who desire to follow Jesus must pick theirs up daily. (Matt. 13:1-23; Heb. 2:10, 5:8)

    a. Perfect Leadership and Timing - When God allows or brings tribulation and affliction into your life, you need to understand that it has been ordained for your good, not your destruction. You have been deemed ready for it and are able to overcome it through Him. To overcome it means to let it work in you for good, not necessarily that it goes away. (Rev. 2:9-11; 3:10-12)

D. For this reason He sent Timothy (vs 5) - In its context, Paul says he could no longer endure the thought of the Thessalonians facing affliction and tribulation without someone establishing them and encouraging them through it. We will spend the rest of this chapter on this theme.

E. Timothy has come to us, we are comforted by you in our affliction (vs 6-10) Timothy returned to Paul and told him of the continuing faith and endurance of the Thessalonians. Paul was strengthened in his affliction and tribulation. For him, it was like life from the dead.

1. Fosters Thanksgiving - One of the most difficult fruits of the Spirit to walk in during affliction and tribulation is thanksgiving. Here we see that one of the most powerful effects of hearing the testimony of another's season of affliction, and how God is working in it, causes us to be not only thankful to God for them, but also stirs up thanksgiving to God for our own season of affliction.

2. Fosters Intercession - Intentional mutual encouragement in times of trial fosters a heart of intercession. This is the nature of sharing testimony and vulnerability in community. It always strengthens and encourages ongoing intercession which in turn strengthens believers to withstand the afflictions they face.

F. Apostolic Prayer for Overcoming Affliction through Community (vs 11-13)

Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we *do* to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming (season of tribulation) of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.