

1 THESSALONIANS 3  
1 AND 2 THESSALONIANS



I & II THESSALONIANS

T. M. Moore

*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*1 Thessalonians 3  
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## 1 Thessalonians 3: Introduction

In 1 Thessalonians 3 we see Paul as shepherd of the Lord's flock, praying for, reaching out to, and encouraging those entrusted to his care. His love for the Thessalonians is palpable, and his earnest desire for them to press on in the faith is unmistakable.

We are all shepherds of someone else – perhaps many people. We can learn from Paul how to do this work in our own Personal Mission Fields. And the more we shepherd the people to whom God sends us, the more they will increase and abound in the love of Jesus.

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## 1 Return Visit

*Pray Psalm 23.1-3.*

The LORD is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.  
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside the still waters.  
He restores my soul;  
He leads me in the paths of righteousness  
For His name's sake.

*Read 1 Thessalonians 3.1-3.*

*Reflect.*

1. Two verbs summarize Timothy's mission to the Thessalonians. What are they, and what does each mean?
2. What kinds of *afflictions* have we been *appointed* to endure?

*Meditate.*

Paul regarded himself as a shepherd to the Thessalonians, and he understood that it is the duty of a shepherd to look well to know the condition of his flocks (Prov. 27.23). Knowing that when he left Thessalonica the believers were already beginning to experience persecution, Paul had them on his mind throughout his mission in Greece.

When he could "no longer endure it," he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to find out how they were doing. Timothy had two objectives in his mission: to *establish* the church and to *encourage* them in their faith.

*Establish* (στηρίζαι, to strengthen or make firm) has the sense of firming up a foundation, making sure the basics are in place and those who originally believed them still did.

*Encourage* (παρακαλέσαι, to entreat, exhort, encourage) suggests going forward to the next stage in a progression, not remaining on the foundation, but building on it.

We can see that Paul is doing something like this in 1 Thessalonians, reviewing the *foundation* of the Gospel and the Thessalonians' initial response, and urging them on to the *next stage* in their walk with and work for the Lord. We all need both of these works in our life – the continuous *shoring-up* of the foundations of faith and life in the Kingdom, and the constant *encouragement* to keep growing and reaching out for more of our eternal life in Christ. Without these, we can be *shaken by* the various afflictions, obstacles, hindrances, setbacks, and disappointments that come with living in a fallen world.

*Prepare.*

1. How do you maintain these disciplines of being established in the faith and encouraged to grow in it?
2. God has appointed you as a shepherd to the people in your Personal Mission Field. What is your practice of looking well to know the condition of your flock?
3. Paul sent Timothy to *encourage* the Thessalonians, and Timothy's report of their love for him *encouraged* him. Encouragement seems to be pretty important in the life of faith. Explain.

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*Paul says that Timothy is coming to strengthen the Thessalonians with his words, stabilizing the thinking of the Thessalonians by his presence with them, lest they collapse under the weight of their tribulations. Paul describes this collapsing as a "commotion," being caught up in the passions of your persecutors. Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428 AD), Commentary on 1 Thessalonians*

*You have appointed me as a shepherd in Your flock, O Lord; show me how to establish and encourage Your sheep as I...*

*Pray Psalm 23.*

Seek the Lord's shepherding presence for yourself, then ask Him to guide you in your work as a shepherd today.

*Sing to the Lord.*

**Psalm 23** *(The Gift of Love: Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire)*

Because the Lord my Shepherd is I shall not want, for I am His!  
He makes me lie in pastures full; I rest in Him by waters still.

My soul He quickens and will bless; He leads in paths of righteousness.  
Though I may walk in death's dark vale, I shall not fear – He will not fail!

The Lord is ever by my side; His rod and staff with me abide.  
A table rich for me He spreads; with oil my Lord anoints my head.

Goodness and mercy, full and free, shall ever after follow me,  
and in the house of God, my Lord, shall I abide forevermore!

## 2 Afflictions and Tribulation

*Pray Psalm 59.16, 17.*

I will sing of Your power;  
Yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning;  
For You have been my defense  
And refuge in the day of my trouble.  
To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises;  
For God is my defense,  
My God of mercy.

*Read 1 Thessalonians 3.4, 5.*

*Reflect.*

1. What kinds of *afflictions* and *tribulation* should Christians expect?
2. How can we grow through affliction and tribulation, rather than be shaken by them?

*Meditate.*

Paul's concern for the Thessalonians grew out of his understanding of the situation he'd left behind in that Macedonian city. Already, those who had come to faith were being persecuted. From what he'd seen and experienced there, he must have imagined the situation could only have worsened.

We must not allow afflictions – whether they come from people or spirits – to shake us, that is, to cause us to slink back from faith. Afflictions and tribulation will come, and if we prepare for them, we can actually grow through them, rather than fall into fear and sin.

Paul told the Thessalonians, and now he tells us: Don't expect your life as a believer to be all fun and feeling good. Afflictions and tribulations will come. We are *appointed to this*. Indeed, as John indicated in Revelation 1.9, trials of various kinds are par for the course in our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God. We need patience to endure, keeping our eyes on the Lord Jesus, and remembering how, in the midst of His greatest afflictions, He looked forward to the joy that awaited Him (Heb. 12.1, 2).

In fact, suffering for the Name of Jesus should encourage us, as it did the first apostles (cf. Acts 5.40-42), for it confirms God's Word to us as well as our Kingdom-and-glory calling in Jesus Christ.

*Prepare.*

1. Paul advised the Thessalonians to expect afflictions and tribulations. How would you counsel a new believer to prepare for these?
2. We must not allow our faith to be shaken by afflictions and tribulation. In fact, we must seek to grow through these into greater maturity in the Lord. What kinds of growth should we expect to realize through afflictions and tribulation?
3. Believers in other parts of the world are daily afflicted with persecution and trials of various kinds. Do you pray for them? What are some things you might pray for persecuted believers?

*You shouldn't be troubled, Paul says, for nothing strange, nothing contrary to expectation is happening. These words were*

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*sufficient to encourage them. Christ spoke to his disciples in the same way and for the same reason. For hear him saying, "Now I have told you before it came to pass, that when it has come to pass you may believe." For greatly indeed, greatly does it tend to the comfort of others to have heard from their teachers what is to happen. John Chrysostom (344-407 AD), Homilies on 1 Thessalonians 3*

*Trials and afflictions await me today, Lord, and I want to grow through and not be shaken. Help me to prepare now as I...*

*Pray Psalm 59.1-17.*

You may expect to be troubled today, if only by spiritual forces of wickedness in high places. Pray for yourself, and pray for those believers in other countries who are oppressed and persecuted for their faith. Call on the power, mercy, and defense of the Lord for yourself and all believers.

*Sing to the Lord.*

**Psalm 59** (*Neumark: If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*)

Deliver me from all my foes, Lord; set me on high secure away.

From all who seek to work me woe, Lord, deliver me from day to day.

For, lo, they seek to take my life; fierce foes advance to bring me strife!

Not for transgressions they assault me, nor any sin which I have done.

With nothing they can charge or fault me, and yet to trouble me they run.

Arouse Yourself, O Lord, awake, and come with haste my foes to break.

Like dogs at large within a city, they bark and howl fierce threats at me.

They boast of evil without pity, but You, O Lord, their treach'ry see.

Because of them I watch for You, O God my strength, forever true!

My God in steadfast love will meet me, and let me look triumphantly

on all my foes, who would defeat me did not He shield and shelter me.

That men may know Your pow'r, O Lord, subdue and rule them by Your Word.

But as for me, Your strength I'm singing; with joy I sing Your grace, O Lord!

My trials and troubles I am bringing to know the shelter of Your Word.

O God, my strength, I sing Your praise; You are my stronghold all my days.

### 3 Encouraged

*Pray Psalm 113.1-3.*

Praise the LORD!

Praise, O servants of the LORD,

Praise the name of the LORD!

Blessed be the name of the LORD

From this time forth and forevermore!

From the rising of the sun to its going down

The LORD's name *is* to be praised.

*Read 1 Thessalonians 3.6, 7.*

*Reflect.*

1. Is there a difference between *comfort* and *encouragement*? Are they the same? Is one more important than the other?

2. Timothy was an agent of encouragement for Paul. Should you be an agent of encouragement to the people in your Personal Mission Field?

*Meditate.*

It's difficult for us to imagine how great Paul's concern for the Thessalonians must have been. He prayed for them continually (1 Thess. 1.2), shared in their sufferings (1 Thess. 2.14-16) to the point of being afflicted and in distress (1 Thess. 3.7); he longed to see them again and to make sure of their wellbeing (1 Thess. 1.17-20); and finally, when he "could no longer endure it," he sent his trusted colleague Timothy to learn about their condition, hoping and praying as he did that he would find the Thessalonians unshaken and steadfast (1 Thess. 3.1-3).

Timothy could not have brought a better report for Paul's encouragement. The Thessalonians were standing fast in faith and love (v. 6), and they fondly remembered and eagerly longed for Paul, as he did for them. Paul was greatly encouraged (*παρεκλήθημεν*, *comforted* NKJV) by this news. I prefer the translation *encouraged* here, because Paul didn't merely breathe a sigh of relief and say, "Thank You, Lord." He was emboldened to act on the Thessalonians' behalf, and wrote these epistles to *encourage* them to press on to a greater measure of salvation and life together.

Imagine for a moment how pleased Timothy must have been to see Paul so encouraged by his report. God has sent His Spirit into our hearts as the Encourager (*ὁ παράκλητος*). His work is to infuse our hearts with *courage* to overcome fears, anxiousness, doubts, reluctance, complacency, and indifference, and to transform us into the image of Jesus Christ and equip and move us for good works. And it pleases the Spirit to do His work, at least in part, through us, as we *encourage* one another as Timothy did Paul.

*Prepare.*

1. What encourages you? What makes you want to go out and praise the Lord and do something in His Name for others?

2. Do you think that whatever encourages you might encourage others as well? How can you become more consistently encouraging to the people in your Personal Mission Field?

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3. Paul sent a letter to the Thessalonians to encourage them – a letter which is now part of the Word of God. Should we expect to find encouragement in the Word of God? Can you give an example?

*Paul's intention was to stir up the Thessalonians to perseverance. And, assuredly, this must have been a most powerful excitement, when they learned that the holy Apostle felt so great consolation and joy from the advancement of their piety.* John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on 1 Thessalonians 3*

*Make me a more encouraging person, Lord, so that Your Spirit in me will...*

*Pray Psalm 113.4-9.*

In what ways does this psalm – with its focus on our exalted Lord and His grace reaching down to us – encourage you? Might you use it to encourage another believer today?

*Sing to the Lord.*

**Psalm 113** (*Armageddon: Who is on the Lord's Side?*)

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!

From this day forever, magnify His fame!

From the time each morning when the sun is raised

to its evening waning, let His Name be praised!

*Refrain vv. 1, 2*

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!

From this day forever, magnify His fame!

High above the nations, on Your glorious throne,

Who is like You, Savior, ruling all You own?

Sovereign and all-knowing, over all above,

praise to You is owing for Your perfect love!

*Refrain*

Though You rule from heaven, looking down on earth,

praise and thanks be given to Your holy worth!

Down You reach to touch us, clad in ash and dust,

Raising us with such as in Your favor trust.

*Refrain*

Seated now with princes 'round Your glorious throne,

we by grace are lifted to become Your own.

Barren women, joyous, glad their children bear;

joining in the chorus, they Your praise declare.

*Refrain*

## 4 Now We Live

*Pray Psalm 26.2, 3.*

Examine me, O LORD, and prove me;  
Try my mind and my heart.  
For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes,  
And I have walked in Your truth.

*Read 1 Thessalonians 3.8.*

*Reflect.*

1. In Greek there are two forms for the conjunction, *if*. One means something like *if and it is most likely so that*, and the other means *if and it's possible that it might not be so*. Which of these do you think Paul uses here? Why?
2. Do you think Paul should make his own condition of feeling fully alive dependent on whether or not others are standing fast in the Lord? Should you do that?

*Meditate.*

There is unfathomable depth to this one verse. We cannot in this space unpack everything that Paul intends here, but we must consider at least these few matters.

First, note how Paul says “we live” because the Thessalonians stand fast in the Lord. How invested was Paul in the people he served? Gladly, he told the Corinthians, he would “spend and be spent” for their souls (2 Cor. 12.15). How he loved these people, though he barely even knew them! But they had come to Jesus under his ministry, and now they were part of him, embedded in his heart; they were a source of joy and purpose by believing and standing fast in the Lord.

Do we love people like this? Love them so much that we weep while they remain outside the Lord, or sorrow when they falter in the faith, or rejoice as we see them growing in the Lord? The Lord has made us His people and members of His Body, and we are meant to derive strength and life from one another, and to give these to one another as well. We are vessels through whom the Lord flows His life to others. Pray that God will help you love like Paul!

But there is a note of tenuousness here. Timothy had made a good report, and Paul rejoiced. But standing fast in the Lord is a lifetime commitment, an every day and every moment commitment. Paul says “now we live, *if* (Greek: *ἐάν*, if, and it's possible that it might not be so) you live” (emphasis added). Just because the Thessalonians had stood fast for the time was no guarantee they would stand fast for the duration. We must always pay attention to our lives and how we spend our time (Eph. 5.15-17). Just when we think we're standing firm, we can fall precipitously, calamitously, and eternally (1 Cor. 10.12; 2 Tim. 4.9; Heb. 6.4-6). Is Paul suggesting that we can lose our salvation? No, but he is cautioning us against being overly confident on the basis of a few indications of faith in the past. We must be *always* pressing on, *always* standing firm, *always* seeking the Kingdom and glory of God, or we may someday discover, in spite of all our shocked protestations, that the Lord never knew us, because we never truly knew Him (Matt. 7.21-23).

*Prepare.*

1. How can we grow in love for people so that we are as invested in them as Paul was in the Thessalonians?
2. We can be sure of our salvation (1 Jn. 5.13), but we must work at that assurance continually (Heb. 6.9-12).

Are these contradictory ideas? Explain.

3. Should your standing fast in the Lord be a source of encouragement and rejoicing to others? To whom?

*The attitude of a teacher should be such as to regard his disciples as everything. "Now we live," Paul says, "if you stand fast in the Lord." And again, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ?" You see Paul's concern in this matter, his regard for the good of his disciples, not less than for his own. John Chrysostom (344-407 AD), Homilies on Second Timothy 2*

*Lord, help me to love like Paul. This day help me to love especially...*

*Pray Psalm 26.*

Let the Lord use this psalm to search your soul and prepare your heart to love Him and your neighbors.

*Sing to the Lord.*

**Psalm 26** (*Aberystwyth: Jesus, Lover of My Soul*)

Vindicate me, Lord on high; I have walked within Your Word.

Never wav'ring, though I sigh, I have trusted You, O Lord!

Prove me, Lord, prove even me! Test my heart and try my mind.

Let Your steadfast mercy be in the path for me to find.

Men of falsehood will not sit in my presence, nor will I

Suffer any hypocrite to find favor in my eye.

All the wicked I abhor; 'round Your altar let me stand,

Loudly singing evermore of Your gracious, mighty hand.

Lord, I love Your dwelling-place, there where all Your glory shines,

Keep my soul before Your face, lest for sinful ways it pine.

As for me, in righteousness, I shall walk on level ground;

Save me, Lord, renew and bless! Let me with Your Church be found!

## 5 Thanks and Rejoicing

*Pray Psalm 42.1, 2.*

As the deer pants for the water brooks,  
So pants my soul for You, O God.  
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When shall I come and appear before God?

*Read 1 Thessalonians 3.9, 10.*

*Reflect.*

1. Why did Paul want to see the Thessalonians again? What does that mean?
2. Our joy is in the Lord (Ps. 16.11). But Paul rejoiced because of the Thessalonians. Should we look to people for our joy?

*Meditate.*

In so many ways, Paul sets the bar high for all who follow him as he follows Christ (1 Cor. 11.1). In these verses we are offered some insight to Paul's prayer life, especially for the people he served. He prayed "night and day" for them. He prayed "exceedingly" to see them again. He could not find words sufficient to express his gratitude for the Thessalonians and their faithful witness for Christ (v. 9).

We note that Paul's prayers were continuous (cf. 1 Thess. 5.17), intense, filled with thanksgiving, and provided entry into the Lord's presence with joy. Wouldn't it be great to have a prayer life like that?

Paul longed to return to Thessalonica and visit the brethren there to "perfect" them in their faith. What? They were already the talk of Greece and beyond. Their witness was firm. Their courage was unstinting. They bore up under persecution. And they were an example of love and good works for all believers. That's all very good. But it's never good enough. There is always more for our life in Christ, exceedingly abundantly more (Eph. 3.20). We are the recipients of a "great salvation" (Heb. 2.3), although much of the time we seem to act only like it's "pretty good" or "good enough."

When we long to improve our salvation toward the perfection of Jesus Christ, day by day, starting each day in God's Word and prayer and journeying in prayer and His Spirit throughout the day, then we'll begin to know more of that great salvation which is available to us in Jesus – salvation for which we will give unceasing thanks and in which we will know exceeding joy and rejoicing.

It is the work of shepherds to lead God's people to a more "perfect" faith, and it is our privilege to encourage one another to press on together.

*Prepare.*

1. Whom can you encourage today to know more of our great salvation? How will you do that?
2. What can you learn from Paul's prayer life to enhance your own?
3. Do you have a sense of what is "lacking" in your faith? How are you planning to grow in your walk with and work for the Lord in the coming weeks and months?

*Paul is desirous to have opportunity given him of supplying what is wanting in the faith of the Thessalonians, or, which is the*

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*same thing, completing in all its parts their faith, which was as yet imperfect. Yet this is the faith which he had previously extolled marvelously. But from this we infer, that those who far surpass others are still far distant from the goal. Hence, whatever progress we may have made, let us always keep in view our deficiencies, (ὀστέρηματα,) that we may not be reluctant to aim at something farther.* John Calvin (1509-1564 AD), *Commentary on 1 Thessalonians 3*

*I want to grow, Lord, and to increase in all aspects of my great salvation. Help me today to...*

*Pray Psalm 42.*

Let this psalm teach you to hunger and thirst for the Lord, so that you make time throughout the day to seek Him in prayer. Let Him lift your soul into His joy, and linger there with praise and thanksgiving.

*Sing to the Lord.*

**Psalm 42** (*Nettleton: Come Thou Fount*)

As the deer pants for fresh water let my soul, Lord, pant for You!  
Let my soul thirst as it ought to for the Savior, ever true!  
Tears by day have been my portion, tears by night have been my food,  
While my foes add to my sorrow, saying, "Where now is your God?"

Now I pour my soul out in me as these thoughts come to my mind.  
And I long to once again be where true worship I might find.  
Oh my soul, be not despairing! Hope in God, and praise His Name!  
For the Lord, your burden bearing, will restore your peace again.

Oh my God, my soul is weary, therefore I remember You.  
Let Your grace and goodness near be, and Your promise, firm and true.  
Lord, when trials and fears surround me, Your commands will be my song;  
When distresses sore confound me, Your great love will keep me strong.

Lord, forget me not in mourning 'neath my foes' oppressing hand.  
See their mocking, hear their scorning; help my weary soul to stand.  
Hope in God, praise Him forever when despair on you has trod.  
Look to Jesus; never, never doubt your gracious, saving God.

## 6 Increase and Abound

*Pray Psalm 139.1-6.*

O LORD, You have searched me and known me.  
You know my sitting down and my rising up;  
You understand my thought afar off.  
You comprehend my path and my lying down,  
And are acquainted with all my ways.  
For *there is* not a word on my tongue,  
*But* behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.  
You have hedged me behind and before,  
And laid Your hand upon me.  
*Such* knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
It is high, I cannot attain it.

*Read 1 Thessalonians 3.11-13.*

*Reflect.*

1. Why should “increase and abound” be a characteristic of our walk with and work for the Lord?
2. What is the relationship between blamelessness, holiness, and love?

*Meditate.*

Paul is succinct in putting forth his wishes for the Thessalonians. He wants to see them, and he asks the Lord to make that happen (v. 11). But he is more urgent that they know what their priorities must be as followers of the Lord.

Above all, they must be diligent to “increase and abound in love to one another and to all.” Paul had already reminded them of the love he’d shown them while there (ch. 2), and he has expressed his love in this chapter; so he doesn’t hesitate to put his example before them, so that they might follow him in loving as they should. They are to love one another first, and then their neighbors as the overflow of that mutuality of love by which they grow in Christ in His Body. By mentioning God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul seems to assume that love for God will be the driving force in nurturing such increasing and abounding love for others.

Blamelessness and holiness come by obedience to God’s Law and all His Word (cf. Ps. 1; Lk. 1.6; Rom. 7.12), the thrust of which overall is to grow us in love (Matt. 22.34-40; 1 Tim. 1.5). If the Thessalonians will concentrate on increasing and abounding in love, the Lord will make their “hearts blameless in holiness,” but increasingly, over time and not all at once. Their goal should be to continue increasing and abounding in love, blamelessness, and holiness until Jesus returns, becoming ever more like Him day by day.

When Jesus returns “with all His saints,” we’ll want to make sure we are recognizable as belonging to that company. We do not expect to attain perfection in this life; but we must not allow ourselves to fall into complacency about increasing and abounding in our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God. Just as Paul exhorted the Thessalonians, so he exhorts us.

*Prepare.*

1. How would you describe the state of blamelessness, holiness, and love in your life at this time? Are you

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increasing and abounding?

2. How can focusing more prayerfully and consistently on the people in your Personal Mission Field help you to increase and abound in love?

3. The Lord alone can cause us to increase and abound in love. We must seek Him earnestly in prayer and His Word, that He might teach and empower us for love. How can believers encourage one another to increase and abound in love?

*Here we have another prayer—that in the mean time, while his way is obstructed, the Lord, during his absence, may confirm the Thessalonians in holiness, and fill them with love. And from this again we learn in what the perfection of the Christian life consists—in love and pure holiness of heart, flowing from faith. He recommends love mutually cherished towards each other, and afterwards towards all, for as it is befitting that a commencement should be made with those that are of the household of faith, (Galatians 6:10) so our love ought to go forth to the whole human race. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on 1 Thessalonians 3.12*

*Lord, let me increase and abound in love today as I go into my Personal Mission Field, so that I...*

*Pray Psalm 139.7-24.*

Ask the Lord to fill you with His Spirit and shape You for His purposes today, so that you might go forth into your Personal Mission Field to increase and abound in love for God and your neighbors.

*Sing to the Lord.*

**Psalm 139** (Ripley: *Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah, O My Soul*)

You have searched me, Lord, and known me, when I sit and when I rise.  
From afar, my thoughts discerning, all my path before You lies.  
Every word, before it's spoken, You behold and know it well.  
Both behind me and before me, Your sweet presence I can tell!

Just to know this is more wondrous than my seeking soul can know.  
From Your ever-present Spirit there is nowhere I can go.  
Whether high above the heaven or below the earth in hell,  
even there Your hand shall lead me and Your Right Hand hold me well!

Neither light nor dark conceals me; day as night is with You, Lord!  
All my inward parts You fashioned by Your all-decreeing Word.  
Praise the Lord, for You have made me; all Your wondrous works I'll tell!  
All Your works declare Your glory, and my soul knows this full well!

All my unformed frame You witnessed when You destined all my days.  
Precious to me, Lord, Your precepts; all Your wondrous Word I praise.  
More than sand, Your thoughts to me, Lord, far too vast their sum for me!  
When the morning breaks upon me, in Your presence I shall be.

Let the wicked come to judgment – flee from me, all who cause pain!  
Lord, with malice they oppose You, while Your Name they take in vain.  
Shall I hate all those You hate, Lord, all who rise against Your face?  
Let them be my foes forever who reject Your saving grace.

Search my heart, O Lord, and know me, as You only, Lord, can do.  
Test my thoughts and contemplations, whether they be vain or true.

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Let there be no sin in me, Lord, nothing that Your Spirit grieves.  
Lead me in the righteous way, Lord, unto everlasting peace!

## 7 A Shepherd's Care

*Pray Psalm 48.9-11.*

We have thought, O God, on Your lovingkindness,  
In the midst of Your temple.  
According to Your name, O God,  
So is Your praise to the ends of the earth;  
Your right hand is full of righteousness.  
Let Mount Zion rejoice,  
Let the daughters of Judah be glad,  
Because of Your judgments.

*Read 1 Thessalonians 3.1-13.*

*Reflect.*

1. How would you describe Paul's work as a shepherd of the Thessalonians, as you see it in this chapter?
2. What seem to have been the primary goals of his shepherding? What was he hoping to accomplish?

*Meditate.*

Paul was a model shepherd of the Lord's flock. Though separated from the Thessalonians, he did not cease either to pray or care for them. He sent Timothy to establish and strengthen their faith and help them continue in the Lord. And, upon Timothy's return, he wrote this epistle, to remind the church of God's grace to help them through a difficult time, strengthen them for what lay ahead, and instruct them for continuing growth and ministry.

In just a short time, Paul managed to establish a relationship of love with the believers in Thessalonica. He loved them, as they knew, and as he reminded them in chapter 2; and he was greatly cheered when Timothy reported their continuing love for him. True shepherding begins just here, with relationships of mutual love and trust.

Paul called on the Thessalonians to press on in their faith and to grow in love. We must not allow trials or persecution to shake us off the foundation of Jesus. There's no standing still in the life of faith. Either we are moving forward to "increase and abound" in all aspects of our walk with and work for the Lord, or we are becoming stagnant and slipping. By keeping our focus on the soon return of our Lord Jesus, and encouraging one another in love, we can persevere through whatever trials or difficulties we may endure, strong in faith and growing in the Lord, expanding our witness to Jesus in all we do.

We are all shepherds of one another in the Body of Christ, so we all have much to learn from Paul's ministry to the church in Thessalonica.

*Prepare.*

1. Do you see yourself as a shepherd to the people in your Personal Mission Field? Should you? What do you learn from Paul about shepherding others in 1 Thessalonians 3?
2. Summarize Paul's prayers for the Thessalonians (vv. 9-13). How does this guide you in praying for the people in your Personal Mission Field?
3. How can believers help one another to increase and abound in love, blamelessness, and holiness?

1 Thessalonians 3  
1 and 2 Thessalonians

*Now, as the ministry of a man is inferior to the efficacy of the Spirit, and to use the common expression, is subordinate to it, nothing is detracted from it. When he says that he prayed night and day beyond all ordinary measure, we may gather from these words how assiduous he was in praying to God, and with what ardor and earnestness he discharged that duty.* John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on 1 Thessalonians 3.10*

*Lord, make me a faithful shepherd of the flock You have entrusted to me. Help me today to...*

*Pray Psalm 48.1-14.*

As you pray through this psalm about the Church, pray for the people in your Personal Mission Field, and ask the Lord to give you specific guidance for encouraging them today.

*Sing to the Lord.*

**Psalm 48** (*Cwm Rhondda: Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*)

Great is God, now greatly praise Him in the city of the Lord.  
Holy she, His lovely mountain, great and glorious by His Word!  
God her King is great within her, He, her Stronghold ever sure!  
He, her Stronghold ever sure!

Earthly kings, amazed and wond'ring, look upon the Church with fear.  
See them flee in dread and anguish, knowing that the Lord is near.  
For the city of the Savior God will keep forevermore!  
God will keep forevermore!

For Your grace and lovingkindness we proclaim Your matchless worth!  
As Your Name is, great and boundless, let Your praise fill all the earth.  
Let Your people sing rejoicing for the judgment of Your truth;  
For the judgment of Your truth.

Walk about the blessed city, see her beauty, see her power.  
Count her ramparts, filled with glory, look on ev'ry mighty tower.  
Tell her glory to the nations: God will guide her evermore;  
God will guide her evermore!

*1 Thessalonians 3  
1 and 2 Thessalonians*

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. What role should prayer play in your work in your Personal Mission Field? How can you improve your prayers for the people to whom God sends you each day?
2. What are the keys to increasing and abounding in love?
3. How do you maintain focus on the fact that Jesus is coming again? How can focusing on this help you in times of trial or difficulty?
4. What are you learning from Paul about shepherding the people God has entrusted to your care?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this chapter? How are you working to implement that lesson in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.