

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
1 Thessalonians: Discipling Afflicted New Christians
Part IV: Directing Afflicted New Believers In Their Spiritual Warfare
(1 Thessalonians 3:1-13)

I. Introduction

- A. When afflicted new believers have been told that they face angelic conflict, it is imperative that stronger believers also minister to them in their spiritual battles, for not until they are proficient in applying God's Word and relying by faith on His gracious spiritual provisions do they defeat Satan, cf. 1 John 2:13b, 14b.
- B. Paul exemplified how to direct such afflicted new believers in angelic conflict in 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13, and we view that passage for insight and application in similar situations today (as follows):

II. Directing Afflicted New Believers In Their Spiritual Warfare, 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13.

- A. As we learned before, Paul's Thessalonian readers were new Christians who faced heated opposition from foes of Paul's ministry, and these foes were fueled by Satanic powers, 1 Thess. 2:18 with Acts 17:5-15.
- B. Though Paul had encouraged his readers in the angelic conflict in 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20, he realized they needed help from more mature believers to be stabilized in their angelic conflict issues (1 Thess. 3:5), so he took steps to direct them in the spiritual warfare as outlined in 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13 as follows:
 - 1. First, Paul sent coworker and minister of God in Timothy to meet these Thessalonian Christians unopposed by Paul's foes there so he might personally establish and comfort them in the faith, 1 Thess. 3:1-2. Thus, new believers need more mature believers to interact with them in person to direct their thinking so that they might be established and comforted in their angelic conflict struggles.
 - 2. Second, Paul reminded these afflicted new converts of his former teachings that such angelic conflict afflictions would come, that it was part of the Christian ministry he faced so they would not be deeply disturbed by their presence, 1 Thessalonians 3:3-5. Thus, new believers need more mature believers to ratify their need to recall past Bible teachings to stabilize and direct them regarding the angelic conflict.
 - 3. Third, Paul reported how joyful he was that the Thessalonians had been found by Timothy to be trusting God and longing to see him as Paul and his team were his readers, 1 Thessalonians 3:6-8. Thus, new believers afflicted in angelic conflict issues need stronger Christians to encourage them over the positive steps they have taken in faith in God and His Word.
 - 4. Fourth, Paul explained to his afflicted new believer readers the extensive prayer he was making in their behalf for the Lord to build them up in specific ways in view of the angelic conflict, 1 Thess. 3:9-13:
 - a. Paul reported he thanked God for the true conversions of his new Christian readers, 1 Thess. 3:9.
 - b. He added that he always prayed that he might be able to meet with them to repair and restore what might have been frayed of their faith in the angelic conflict they faced, 1 Thess. 3:10; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., ftn. to 1 Thess. 3:10. Ryrie claims "perfect" (KJV) means "to make complete as one might repair fishing needs (Matt. 4:21) or restore saints (cf. Gal. 6:1; Eph. 4:12)."
 - c. Paul included his prayerful hope that God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ might direct the way of his ministry team to his afflicted new Christian readers so they might minister to them, and that God might make his readers increase and abound in love toward all men, even as Paul's team did toward his readers, 1 Thessalonians 3:11-12. This directive is incredibly important, for new believers may be tempted to retaliate with malice or hatred toward ungodly persecutors, but such a response is itself spiritual defeat opposite the "conquering" attitude of love even for one's foes.
 - d. In the end, Paul prayed that God might thus establish the hearts of his readers to be unblameable in separating themselves from sin in the sight of God at the coming of Christ with His saints, 1 Thess. 3:13. Thus, Paul directed his readers to focus on the all-important goal of staying upright in the midst of angelic conflicts where one is tempted to retaliate against evil with evil, Romans 12:18-21.

Lesson: *To direct afflicted new believers in their angelic conflict struggles, Paul (1) sent Timothy to interact with them to guide their thinking, (2) he led them to recall past Bible teaching in order to stabilize and direct them, (3) he encouraged them in the Biblical steps they had taken and (4) he led them to counter the temptation to retaliate against evil with evil by loving all men in the power of God.*

Application: *May we direct afflicted new believers who face angelic conflict the same way Paul did!*