

Destined for Tribulation

1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

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Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this.

1 Thessalonians 3:4-5

For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.

For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain.

Main Point

God has destined us for tribulation;
and though His design is our good,
Satan's desire is our destruction.



Destined for Tribulation God's design.

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have been *appointed* for this.**

*“Paul teaches that there is no reason why believers should feel dismayed on occasion of persecutions, as though it were a thing that was new and unusual, inasmuch as **this is our condition**, which the Lord has assigned to us.”*

John Calvin

1 Peter 2:20-21

But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

For **unto this you were called**,
since Christ also suffered for you,
leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.

In other words, suffering and tribulation are *by God's design*.

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Acts 14:21-22

After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”

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To prepare the churches he planted for the inevitable opposition that would come, Paul regularly taught them to expect tribulation.

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God's Design

God has destined us for tribulation.

God has designed suffering
for our sanctification.

God's design...

1 Thessalonians 3:3

...for you yourselves know that
we have been destined for this.

If He has destined us for tribulation,
it is by design and for good purpose!

His purpose?

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

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at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

The Lord's design for you is growth in love and holiness (your sanctification), and suffering is a key means to that end.

Jesus' Example...

1 Peter 2:21

For unto this you were called,
since Christ also suffered for you,
leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.

Hebrews 5:8

Although He was a Son,
He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.

How much more us?

Romans 5:3-4

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope.

1 Peter 4:12-13

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

Suffering serves the purposes of perfecting our faith and of teaching us obedience through opposition.

Destined for Tribulation

God's design

Satan's desire

1 Thessalonians 3:4-5

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Matthew 4:3

And **the tempter** came and said to Him, “If You are the Son
of God, command that these stones become bread.”



**Satan's Desire
To destroy you.**

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The nature of Paul's concern?

Matthew 13:20-21

The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

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Satan's Nature and Desire...

John 8:44

“He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.”

**Satan's nature is murderous,
and his desire is destruction.**

1 Peter 5:8

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert.

Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion,
seeking someone to devour.

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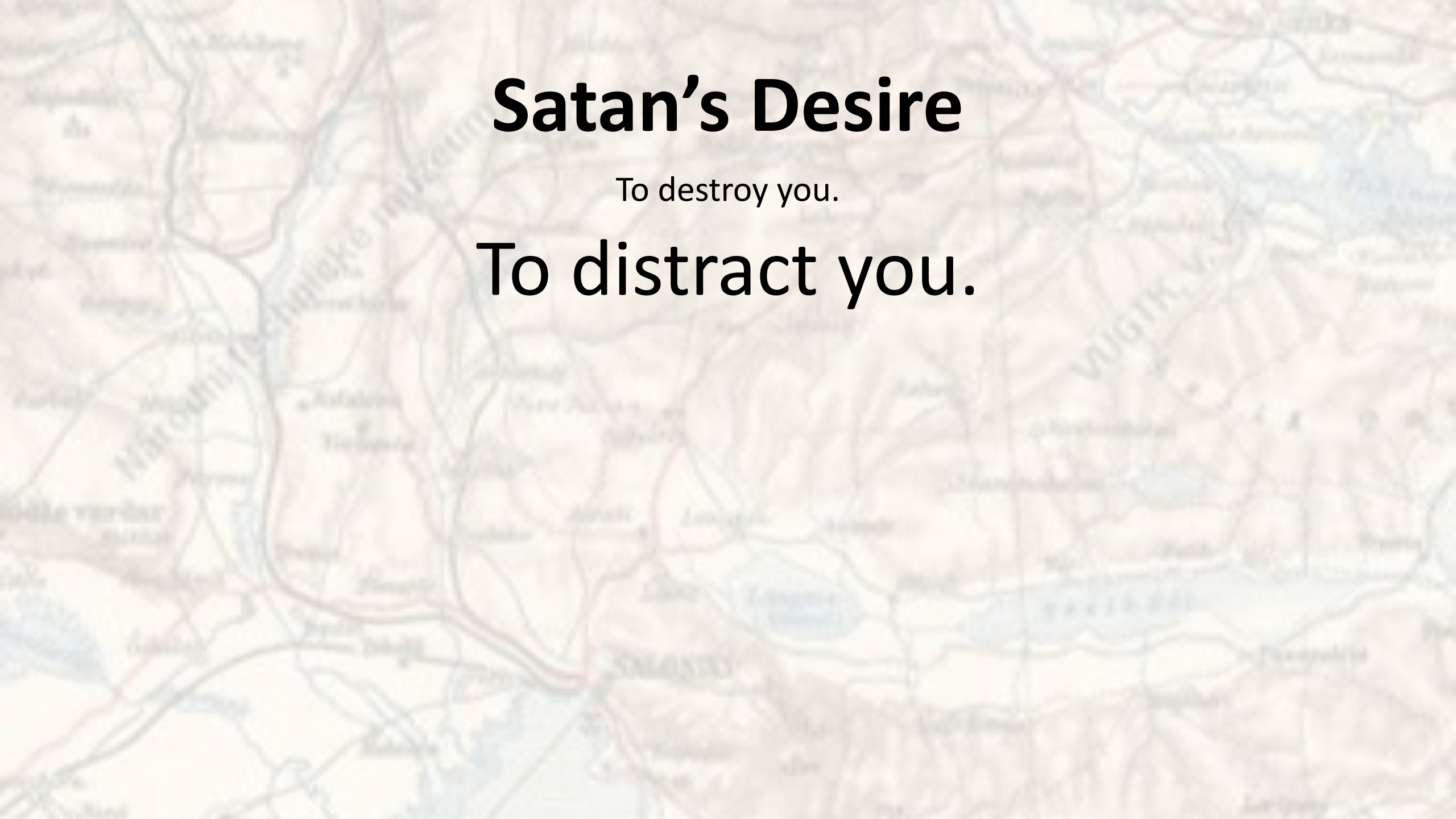
Be of sober spirit, be on the alert.

Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion,

seeking someone ***to swallow up.***

Satan hates God and, therefore,
God's image bearers; and his great desire
is the destruction of God's works.

In other words, his desire
is to destroy ***you!***



Satan's Desire

To destroy you.

To distract you.

Paul's concern...

1 Thessalonians 3:3

so that no one would be disturbed by these tribulations

1 Thessalonians 3:5

for fear that the tempter might have tempted you

Satan's desire is to destroy you;
but if he can't do that, he will be pleased
to disturb and distract you.

We are to take note of Satan's strategies.

Ephesians 6:11

Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

What are his devilish schemes?

Matthew 16:23

But He turned and said to Peter,
“Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me;
for you are not setting your mind on God's interests,
but man's.”

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Satan's desire is to shift your focus from the things of God to the things of the world, from God's ways to man's ways.

Proverbs 14:12

There is a way which seems right to a man,
But its end is the way of death.

Colossians 3:1-3

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ,
keep seeking the things above, where Christ is,
seated at the right hand of God.

Set your mind on the things above,
not on the things that are on earth.

For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Satan knows that “where your treasure is,
there your heart will be also.”

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God's design

Satan's desire

Our duty

Paul's aim in sending Timothy...

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Our Duty Perseverance

A Review of Paul's Concern

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The essence of Christian perseverance is persisting in faith despite difficulties.

1 Thessalonians 3:8

...for now we really live, **if you stand firm in the Lord.**

A Theme for Christian Living:

1 Corinthians 16:13

Be on the alert, **stand firm** in the faith,
act like men, be strong.

Ephesians 6:11

Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able
to **stand firm** against the schemes of the devil.

Philippians 4:1

Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy
and crown, in this way **stand firm** in the Lord.

We are called to stand firm in our faith.

God's design and our duty intersect
in the matter of our perseverance.

He has promised to preserve us.

We are called to persevere.

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Our Duty

Perseverance

Resistance

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have tempted you,**

and our labor would be in vain.

Implicit in this statement concerning
temptation is an expectation of resistance.

Ephesians 6:13

Therefore, take up the full armor of God,
so that you will be able to resist in the evil day,
and having done everything, to stand firm.

James 4:7

Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Ephesians 6:13

Therefore, take up the full armor of God,
so that you will be able to **resist** in the evil day,
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James 4:7

Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Resistance is our duty!

Here again we see the conjunction
of God's design and our duty.

He has promised to strengthen and protect
us and causes the devil to flee from us.

We are called to resist the devil
and turn away from his temptations.

Conclusion

Can you embrace suffering as a tool
in God's hands for your good?

Are you aware of Satan's schemes,
and are you actively resisting him?

Are you willing to do the hard work of
perseverance and resistance by faith?