

Timothy's Mission to Thessalonica
Paul's Longing To See The Brethren At Thessalonica

3:1-5

1TH 3:1 Therefore when we could endure [stand] it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone;

1. "Therefore when we could endure it no longer" - "Endure" is from "stego" [**steh** goh] meaning "to cover, to conceal, to keep off, to endure." "Endure" or "bear" is an excellent translation. See 1 Cor. 9:12; 13:7.
 - a. "We" is not defined, but the next verse makes it clear that Timothy is not included.
 - b. Most believe Paul was at Corinth at this time of the writing of this epistle.
 - c. He had traveled from Athens to Corinth.
2. "we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone" - Acts 17:15
 - The word "alone" is the plural of the Greek "monos" [**mah** nahs] and refers to Paul and Silas. It is possible it is a literary "we" but this is not likely.
 - Athens was a horrible place to be left alone or to have many others with you. (Acts 17:16). It was a city full of immorality and idolatry and dangers for believers.
 - The absence of Timothy created a great void in the work there, and his presence was greatly missed at Athens.
 - There seems to be a sadness in Paul's words "we could endure it no longer."
 - Paul was more effective when other faithful workers were present to help him.
 - There is strength in numbers.

Note from Acts

1. Paul wanted Timothy and Silas to come to Athens. (Acts 17:15).

Acts 17:15 Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.

- a. Paul had been escorted to Athens to make sure he arrived safe, and desired for Silas and Timothy to join him there.
 - b. He wanted these men to travel with him to Corinth that was also a very wicked and immoral city filled with idolatry and immorality and hostility towards Christians.
 - c. They came from Athens, but Timothy was sent right back to Thessalonica.
2. Later Paul sent Silas on to Berea or Thessalonica in Macedonia. (Acts 17:10).

3. Then both Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia to Corinth. (Acts 18:5).

Acts 18:5 But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul *began* devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

4. It was vital that the Jews and all men accept Jesus as “the Anointed One,” that is, the King. (Acts 2:36; Jn. 20:30-31).
5. Correctly we emphasize Jesus was the Son of God, but incorrectly we lack emphasis that Jesus was “the Christ.”

1TH 3:2 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,

1. “and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ”
 - b. Paul frequently gave this young evangelist important assignments. See 1 Tim. 3:1-13 - appointment of elders and deacons.
 - c. He was sent to further build up the church at Thessalonica.
 - d. It is quite clear that younger men grounded in faith are a great asset to the kingdom.
2. “to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith” - “sterizo” [stay ree zoh] - “establish, support, strengthen.”
 - a. They had faith and it was growing, but they were very new in the faith. The church was about two years old.
 - b. They needed to grow in faith if they were going to overcome the evil one and remain faithful to Christ.
 - c. The church would not have had elders at the early date though some Gentiles churches had elders appointed after only being in existence a few years.
 - 1) Acts 13 & 14 record the 1st missionary journey - dated about A.D. 45 to 49.
 - 2) Some of these men had only been elders a few years.
 - d. A church without elders is much easier to overcome or led astray than a church with strong leaders.
 - e. This is why God wanted elders appointed in every church. (Acts 14:23).
 - f. Elders had to teach the flock of God and guard it against false teachers.

1TH 3:3 so that no man [one] may be [overly] disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this [persecution].

1. “so that no man may be disturbed by these afflictions” - Paul did not want them to be overly disturbed by the persecutions he and others were suffering.
2. “for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this” - Persecution was inescapable.
 - a. Persecution had been the plight of the apostles and many or most other Christians.
 - b. Jesus had warned the apostles and others would be persecuted. (Matt. 5:10-12; Jn. 15:20-23).

c. Paul gave this warning to Christians. (2 Tim. 3:12).

2 Tim. 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

d. “All” is likely a hyperbole like the “all” of Matthew 3:5. See Matt. 3:7.

e. Peter had warned Christians not to be surprised by persecution. (1 Pet. 4:12).

1TH 3:4 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.

1. “For indeed when we were with you” - Paul is remembering his time at Thessalonica. and the advanced forewarning he and his fellow-workers would suffer.
2. “we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction” - Paul had forewarned them of the afflictions they must suffer for the sake of Christ.
3. “and so it came to pass, as you know” - They knew Paul’s forewarning had not been vain words, but had witnessed persecution and had heard reliable reports of it.

1TH 3:5 For this reason, when I could endure [stand] it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter [the devil] might have tempted you, and our labor should be in vain.

1. “For this reason, when I could endure it no longer” - Lack of news about the church there was more than Paul could bear.
2. “I also sent to find out about your faith” - Lit. “to know the faith of you.”
 - a. It was urgent to his peace of mind that he learn about the spiritual condition of the church there.
 - b. Wolves were all around them, but they were abiding in the faith.
 - c. Wolves could also enter the leadership. (Acts 20:29).
3. “for fear that the tempter might have tempted you” - See 1 Thess. 2:18

1 Thess.2:18 For we wanted to come to you--I, Paul, more than once--and *yet* Satan hindered us.

- a. Paul wanted to make sure the tempter had not overthrown them.
- b. New converts without proper instruction and nurturing by true spiritual leaders can be quickly destroyed.
- c. They must be equipped with the knowledge and tools to overcome Satan.
- d. Here are some tools to fight Satan.

Prayer	Putting on the whole armor of God	Christian fellowship (Acts 2:42, 46).
Knowledge of God’s word	Drawing near to God (Jas. 4:7).	Reverence for God and His commandments (Eccles. 12:13,14).
Christian growth	Resisting the devil (Jas. 4:8).	Involvement in God’s work.

4. “and our labor should be in vain”
 - a. There are times when one labors in vain, but Paul did not want his labor to be futile.
 - b. He was genuinely concerned about their spiritual welfare.
 - c. The words “in vain” indicates these brethren could turn from the faith and be lost.
 - d. This is sad and tragic, but it must not destroy us. (1 Cor. 3:15).

Joy At Coming Of Timothy And Good News About Thessalonica
3:6-10

1TH 3:6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you,

- Lit. “the faith of you and the love of you.”
1. “But now that Timothy has come to us from you”
 - a. “Us” seems to refer to those who were with Paul at the time of the writing of this epistle.
 - b. Many scholars believe Paul was at Corinth, and this appears to be the case.
 - c. He was at Corinth for 18 months a short time after leaving Thessalonica. (Acts 18:11).
 2. “and has brought us good news of your faith and love” - Paul was thrilled that Timothy had brought him the good news that these brethren were abiding in faith and love.
 - a. “Faith” was not some subjective feeling, but it was trust in Jesus and His word.
 - 1) “Faith” comes from hearing God’s word. (Rom. 10:17).
 - 2) It is by “faith” we please God. (Heb. 11:6).
 - 3) It is by an obedient faith we are justified. (Rom. 5:1; 1:5; 16:26; Gal. 5:6).
 - 4) It is by “faith” that we overcome the world. (1 Jn. 5:4,5).
 - b. “Love” is the badge of discipleship and the greatest of all gifts. (Jn. 13:34, 35; 1 Cor. 13:13).
 3. “and that you always think kindly of us” - He was also pleased that they thought kindly of himself, Silas and Timothy.
 4. “longing to see us just as we also long to see” - They had a strong desire to see Paul, Silas and Timothy again.

1TH 3:7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith;

1. Their faith was an inspiration and great comfort to these men who were facing persecution.
2. Success gives one the courage to faithfully endure amid hardships.

3. Nothing is more rewarding and comforting than to know our converts or those we have encouraged are faithful.
4. It is quite disheartening when one's children or converts or Christian brothers and sisters fall from the faith.
5. Our faithfulness does not depend on the faithfulness of others. (Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10).

1TH 3:8 for now we really live, if [since] you stand firm in the Lord.

1. "for now we really live" - NIV has the same translation.
 - a. "Live" is used in the sense of "comforted." (1 Thess. 3:7).
 - b. Their spirit was greatly revived by the faithfulness of these brethren.
2. "if you stand firm in the Lord" - "If" is used here with the meaning of "since." See NIV
 - a. Paul is not doubting their faith. (1 Thess. 1:3; 3:7).
 - b. They enjoyed great comfort knowing these brethren stood "firm in the Lord."
 - c. Standing "firm in the Lord" meant they were in a saved condition, but a lack of faithfulness meant their souls were in jeopardy.
 - d. These brethren were committed to Jesus and His word.

1TH 3:9 For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account,

1. "For what thanks can we render to God for you" - They were eager to thank God for the faithfulness of the Thessalonians.
2. "in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account" - This "thanks" was motivated by "all the joy" these brethren created in them.

1TH 3:10 as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?

1. "as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face"
 - a. They did not pray merely once to see them, but "night and day" prayed to see them.
 - b. They were very persistent in praying they would again have fellowship with these brethren.
 - c. Jesus wants us to be persistent in prayer. (Lk. 18:1; 11:5-10; Matt. 7:7-11).
2. "and may complete what is lacking in your faith?" - Their faith was growing, but it was not complete. "katarizo" [kah tah ree zoh" means "to supply, complete, adjust."
 - a. The church still needed instruction and personal encouragement.
 - b. It was a very young church, and it had not reached spiritual adulthood.

- c. Paul did not feel his letters alone were sufficient to complete [supply] what was lacking in their faith.
- d. They needed more spiritual guidance from the apostles and others who were mature in faith.

Paul's Ernest Prayer For The Thessalonian Christians
3:11-13

1TH 3:11 Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you;

- 1. "Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord"
 - a. He had an intense desire that God direct himself and his companions to Thessalonica.
 - b. He also wanted direction from "Jesus our Lord."
- 2. "direct our way to you"
 - a. Paul knew the physical directions to Thessalonica, and was not seeking physical directions.
 - b. He was prayerful God would give them the opportunity to return to these beloved brethren.

1TH 3:12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you;

- 1. "and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another"
 - a. "Increase and abound" are nearly synonyms, but "abound" seems to be a little stronger than even "increase."
 - b. The Lord expects our love to grow for one another and to be known for our love of brethren. (Jn. 13:34, 35).
 - c. This does not occur by accident, but it is a deliberate and constant action.
- 2. "and for all men, just as we also do for you"
 - a. The Christian's love is not limited to other Christians, but it is to manifest to all men.
 - b. The Christian is to "do good to all men." (Gal. 6:10).
 - c. The Christian has a special obligation "to the household of faith." (Gal. 6:10).
- 3. The Christian must even learn to love his enemies. (Matt. 5:43-48; Rom. 12:18-21).
 - a. Love for enemies is not an emotional attachment.
 - b. It is doing good even to those who despise and hate us. (Rom. 12:18-21).

1TH 3:13 so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. "amemptos" [ah mehm ptahs] - "blameless, faultless."

- 1. "so that He may establish [strengthen] your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father"
 - a. He wants "the Lord" to bring about hearts that were blameless in holiness.

- b. They were to be holy as God is holy. (1 Pet. 1:16).
 - c. God is sinless (Jas. 1:13). but man can never be sinless. (Rom. 3:23; 1 Jn. 1:8, 10).
 - d. “Holiness” denotes Christians are to live transformed lives. (Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:1-17; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).
2. “at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints” - Jn. 14:3; 2 Pet. 3:10-13; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 1:7; Rev. 1:7).
- a. “Saints” is not likely a reference to Christians in this verse though it often refers to Christians. (Rom. 1:7; 8:27; 12:13; 15:25).
 - b. “Saints” [holy ones] refers here to Christ returning with His “holy angels” at the end of time.
 - 1) The word “saint” is from “hagios” [**hah** gee ahs] meaning “holy one.” It can refer to God’s children or it can refer to angels
 - 2) It is used in the plural by Jesus to refer to His “holy angels.”

Mk. 8:38 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the **holy angels**." See Lk. 9:26

- 3) “The archangel” [Michael] will come at that time. (1 Thess. 4:16; Jude 1:9; Rev. 12:7).
- 4) Angels are mentioned in regard to Christ’s coming in 2 Thessalonians 1:7 - “revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.”
- 5) Christ will also come with “all” His angels. (Matt. 13:49; 16:27; 25:31; Mk. 8:38).

Matt. 13:49 So it will be at the end of the age; **the angels** will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous,

Matt. 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father **with His angels**, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.

Matt. 25:31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and **all the angels with Him**, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

Mk. 8:38 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the **holy angels**."

- 6) The angels of heaven are innumerable. (Rev. 5:11).

Rev. 5:11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,

Note: A “myriad” was 10,000 and “myriads of myriads” would be 10,000 times 10,000 plus “thousands of thousands” that is a number exceeding 100 million. “Myriad” is from “murias” [moo ree **ahs**] literally meaning “ten thousand,” but can have the meaning of “innumerable.”

- 7) Revelation 5:1 is affirming that the angels of heaven are innumerable.

- 8) More details on this subject will be discussed when 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is examined.
- 9) Some believe the word “saints” refers to the righteous spirits who have been in “Abraham’s bosom” or others think heaven itself.
- 10) The righteous are not now in heaven (Jn. 3:13), but are in “Abraham’s bosom.” (Lk. 16:19-25).
- 11) It is possible the spirits of the righteous return with Jesus since they are not now in their resurrected transformed bodies.
- 12) The details of how the departed souls are reunited to their bodies is not revealed in the Scriptures.

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