

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" - Their suspense and separation from these dear brethren had become intolerable.
 - "Endure" is from "stego" [**steh** goh] meaning "to cover, to conceal, to keep off, to endure."
 - "Endure" or "bear" are 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 in the "we" at Athens because he was not present or was not there very long.
 - b. Most believe Paul was at Corinth at the time of the writing of this epistle, but here he is referring to the earlier time he and Silas were at Athens.
 - c. Later 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 seems to refer to Paul and Silas.
 - It is possible it is a literary "we" [meaning Paul only], but this is not likely.
 - Athens was a horrible place to be left alone without any co-workers.
 - It would appear Paul was without both of them, at least for a while, "at Athens."
 - It is hard to be absolutely certain about every detail because these men were in and out of Paul's presence on various assignments to further the gospel.

Acts 17:16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols.

- It seems that Silas and Timothy came to Athens (Acts 17:15), but Timothy [on arrival] was sent back to Thessalonica.

Athens

- 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. It seems that Silas was in and out there that made the void worse.

- 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 safely, and desired for Silas and Timothy to join him there.
 - b. He wanted Silas and Timothy 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 to Athens, but Timothy was sent right back to Thessalonica.
 - d. It seems that Silas was not at Athens long and Paul was alone for a while.
2. Earlier Paul sent Silas on to Berea or Thessalonica in Macedonia (Acts 17:10), but after a while he joined Paul for a time in Athens.

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 anointed 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.”
 - a. He was the promised Messiah, the Christ that had been promised to both Jews and Gentiles.
 - b. He was the One God had anointed to be the Savior of mankind.

1TH 3:2 and we [Paul and Silas] sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you [believers] as to your faith,

1. “and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ”

- a. Paul frequently gave this young evangelist important assignments.

- 1) He had been given the responsibility of proclaiming the good news of Christ and to encourage and build up these believers in the faith.

- 2) Paul had also given him the assignment of appointing elders and deacons in another place. (1 Tim. 3:1-13). He provided direction and leadership in these appointments, but he did not act alone.
- b. It is quite clear that younger men grounded in faith are a great asset to the kingdom.
 - c. **The church makes a grievous mistake when it fails to ground young men and women in the faith, and then use them to the glory of God.**
 - d. Timothy may have been as much as 40 when Paul instructed him to let no one despise his youth. (1 Tim. 4:12).
 - 1) The word “youth” denoted one who was as much as 40, but it could be used for one who was younger than 40 and even much younger. (Mk. 10:20; Lk. 18:21; Acts 26:4; 1 Tim. 4:12).
 - 2) Timothy’s exact age is not known when Paul wrote 1 Timothy 4:12.

Thessalonica Christians

2. “to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith” - “sterizo” [stay ree zoh] - “establish, support, strengthen.”
 - a. The believers, at Thessalonica, had genuine faith and it was growing, but they were still very new in the faith.
 - 1) The church there was about two years old.
 - 2) Savage wolves would love to devour them and savage wolves still delight in corrupting and destroying the people of God. See Matt. 7:15; 2 Cor. 11:14.
 - 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 this 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 Christians a few years when appointed elders.
 - 3) The words “not a novice [recent convert],” listed as one of the qualifications of being appointed an elder in 1 Timothy 3:6, is often pressed too far to mean one must have been a Christian a long time to be appointed an elder.
 - d. A church without elders is much easier to overcome or be 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. (Acts 20:28-30).

Acts 20:28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd [feed, protect, guide] the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
 Acts 20:29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

Acts 20:30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

- g. Elders must spend much time in the word in order to teach it correctly and to defend the truth.
- h. They must be on guard even in regard to fellow-elders. (Acts 20:29-30).
- i. It is urgent that we groom men for the eldership. Faithful and effective elders are needed, but they rarely happen by accident. The parents, the church and others need to take part in this grooming.

1TH 3:3 so that no man [person] 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”
 - a. Paul did not want them to be overly disturbed by the persecutions he and others were suffering.
 - b. This was Paul’ wish, but these brethren would find it impossible not to be disturbed,
- 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. 3:5-7.
 - 1) Not every Christian has been persecuted, but many have suffered persecution.
 - 2) Some past and present have been severely persecuted.
- e. Peter had warned Christians not to be surprised by persecution. (1 Pet. 4:12).

1 Pet 4:12 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;

1TH 3:4 For indeed when we were with you, [you remember] 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 [the suspense] no longer, I also sent [Timothy] to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter [the devil] might have tempted you, and our labor should be in vain.

Lack of News

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).

Acts 20:29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

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. **This is a lesson we need to learn and not neglect new converts.**
 - c. They must be equipped with the knowledge and tools to overcome Satan.
 - d. Here are some tools to fight Satan.

Prayer (Rom. 12:13; 1 Thess. 5:17).	Putting on the whole armor of God. (Eph. 6:10).	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.
Avoid evil companions (1 Cor. 15:33). See Psa. 1:1	Being faithful to the assembly. (Heb. 10:24, 25).	Constantly sharing our faith in the Lord.

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

1 Cor 3:15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

- d. **It is sad when those in Christ are “burned up,” and we must diligently work and diligently pray to prevent this horrible tragedy.**
- e. **It is of utmost importance that we teach and encourage and seek to be good examples for all especially for those new in the faith.**

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 [steadfast] 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.”
 - Timothy was with Paul and Silas at the time of writing this epistle.
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).
- Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please {Him,} for he who comes to God must believe that He is and {that} He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
- 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).

John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

John 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

1 Cor 13:13 But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

3. “and that you always think kindly of us” - He was also pleased that they “always” 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).

Rom 14:12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

2 Cor 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

1TH 3:8 for now we really live, if [since] you stand firm [faithful] 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).

1 Thess 1:3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

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

- 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 absolutely 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 Thessalonian Christians.
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.

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