

Studies in the Book of 1 Thessalonians
Lesson 3 - 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5
Hope for a Hopeless World
Paul's Desire

How Paul loved to call these saints “brethren”! He used the word twenty-one times in his two Thessalonian epistles. He saw himself as one of them, a part of the family. In vs. 17 he says that he was “orphaned” from them for a short time, like a child away from home. He loved them, prayed for them, and greatly desired to see them again. After all, the test of our spiritual life is not what we do when we are in church with “the family,” but how we behave away from church. Paul was not the kind of church member who “took a vacation” from the house of God. Why was Paul able to minister faithfully and lovingly to these saints? Because he saw them in the light of Christ’s coming. He was looking forward to the day when he would rejoice over them in the presence of Christ.

What an asset young Timothy was to Paul. Every Paul must have his Timothy and every Timothy his Paul. The younger person who works with the older. Paul knew how to select and train Christian leaders, and Timothy was one of his finest. This young man had proved himself for several years in his own local church before Paul enlisted him to be a helper. Young Timothy did not start his ministry by teaching or preaching; his main job was to help Paul in the tasks of daily travel and living.

God uses gifted believers to strengthen the church. If church members would “adopt” new Christians, encourage them, teach them, and fellowship with them, there would be fewer spiritual casualties. The mature saints in the church must help younger Christians to grow in Christ.

The believer is built up by the Word of God. Note how Paul reminds them of the Word he had already taught them. He had warned them that afflictions were coming. Timothy reminded them of the Word Paul had taught them, and this encouraged and established them.

He reasoned, which suggests debate or discussion; he opened the Word, which implies explaining its meaning; he alleged certain truths, which means he gave evidence for them or laid them out in an orderly way for all to see, and he preached, which means the proclaiming of the Gospel. The pastor and Christian worker must be sure to have a balanced ministry of the Word.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17- 3:5 and answer the following questions

1. How do you think Satan blocked Paul from returning to the Thessalonians? What do you think he means in verse 17-18?
2. Satan was able temporarily to stand in the way of Paul's plans to see the Thessalonians. In spite of Satan's temporary success, what do verses 19-20 indicate about the ultimate victory that awaited Paul?
3. How do think it might have affected the Thessalonians to have Paul tell them this in the midst of their struggles? "*For you are our glory and joy*"
4. What decision did Paul make according to 3:1-2? Why would this decision be so difficult at the time?
5. What two reasons can you find in 3:2 for Paul sending Timothy to visit the Thessalonians? Why do you think his visit was so important?
6. What can we learn from verses 3-4 about suffering for the cause of Christ?

7. Explain why it is helpful for Christians to know ahead of time that serving Christ is going to require sacrifice and hardship.

8. What can a strengthened faith prevent, according to 3:3?

9. Paul states in 3:3-4 that Christians are “*appointed*” to “*suffer tribulation.*” What’s the purpose of trials and tribulations?

10. Paul sent Timothy to find out how the Thessalonians’ faith was holding up in the face of severe persecution. Why does persecution sometimes make faith falter? What area does Satan tempt you to falter in your faith?

11. What sobering possibility is suggested in the words “*Our labor might be in vain?*” (See 3:5)

Purpose for Trials and Tribulations

What constructive uses for trials are mentioned in these Scriptures?

Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word. Psalms 119:67

Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Acts 11:19-21

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Romans 5:3-4

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18