

A Study of 1 & 2 Thessalonians

(NIV 1984)

“To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

- 1 Thessalonians 1:1b and 2 Thessalonians 1:1b

1 THESSALONIANS 3:1-5

The break between chapters 2 & 3 interrupts the flow of Paul’s argument. Here, as indicated by the NIV’s thematic headings, Paul continues his account of his absence from the Thessalonian church during their persecution. The specific subject to which Paul returns is an explanation of Timothy’s visit to the Thessalonians as a substitute for his own presence. This, he says, was intended to strengthen them to remain faithful in persecutions which they suffered as an essential part of their experience as Christians.

1) Note v.1. Where does Paul say he was when he sent Timothy to them?

2) Note v.1. Did this leave Paul completely alone or was Silas or Luke with him?

Note Acts 17:14-16; 18:1, 5

Scholars have attempted to discern Luke’s origins based on the use of “we” in the book of Acts. These are known as the “we passages” (Acts 16:1—17; 20:5-15; 21:1-8; 27:1-18).

3) Note v.2. What term of relationship does Paul use for Timothy?

4) Note v.2. Paul says that Timothy is also what? In spreading what?

5) Note v.2. Paul sent Timothy to accomplish what 2 tasks?

“strengthen” – an expression which implies making the believers firm or unchanging in belief despite difficulty

“encourage” – the same expression which Paul used to describe his own work “as a father with his own children” (1 Thess. 2:11-12)

Here, the encouragement is particularly on behalf of the Thessalonians’ faith, specifically so that instead of abandoning their faith in persecution, they will grow stronger. (cf. Romans 5:3-5)

6) Note v.3. Paul sent Timothy so that the Thessalonians would not be what?

Timothy’s mission was to prevent the persecution of the Thessalonian Christians from harming their faith. Such harm could come in several ways. One, of course, is the pressure to disavow one’s faith and so avoid the persecution that comes because of it. More complex (and the issue which is perhaps more at hand as Paul discusses the problem) is the challenge that suffering creates for the very core of the Christian faith. If one believes that Jesus Christ has established the rule of God among His people, that one is reconciled to God and receives the fullness of God’s blessings in Christ, then persecution and suffering are difficult to understand. The suffering believer is tempted to conclude that God has abandoned him or her, or that the Gospel was false from

the start; that it in fact does nothing to change the basic human condition. Such doubts may have arisen in the Thessalonian church, prompting Paul's discussion here.

7) Note v.3. What do they know quite well?

8) Note v.4. Paul says that he had kept telling them what? When did he do this?

See 2 Timothy 3:12

See again Romans 5:3-5. What does suffering produce?

See Acts 5:41. When does suffering bring about rejoicing?

See Acts 14:22. We must go through what? To enter what?

9) Note v.4. What did they well know?

10) Note v.5. When he could stand it no longer, he sent to find out what?

11) Note v.5. Who does Paul fear might have tempted them?

See Matthew 4:1, 11. Do you really think the tempter will seek to tempt any of us?

12). Note v.5. What would have made Paul's efforts useless?

1 THESSALONIANS 3:6-10

Paul indicates in this section that his hopes rather than his fears for the Thessalonians were realized when Timothy returned to recount their steadfastness. The language here is based on Paul's earlier statements: it focuses on the Thessalonians as his source of joy before the Lord because they represent the fulfillment of his Divine commission. Implicitly, Paul continues to drive home how important it is that they remain firm in their faith. This section also begins the transition to the later section of the letter. Up to this point, Paul has focused primarily on the past, but with the prayer of verse 10 in this section, the focus shifts to the future, where it will remain for the rest of the letter.

1) Note v.6. Who has just arrived? From where did he come?

2) Note v.6. What kind of news did he bring? About what?

3) Note v.6. What kind of remembrance did the Thessalonians have concerning Paul and the other missionaries?

- 4) Note v.6. How did the Thessalonians now feel about Paul and the other missionaries?
- 5) Note v.6. How does Paul say the missionaries feel about the Thessalonians?
- 6) Note v.7. What relationship term shows the type of relationship that exists between the missionaries and the Thessalonians?
- 7) Note v.7. What 2 terms does Paul use to describe some of the difficulties he and the other missionaries were facing as he waited for the news from the Thessalonians?
- 8) Note v.7. What brought encouragement to the missionaries?
- 9) Note v.8. Paul says that the missionaries now what?
- 10) Note v.8. How are they standing? In Whom?
“Lord” – evokes Christ’s authority over every aspect of their lives
- 11) Note v.9. What did Paul say they wanted to do?
- 12) Note v.9. What word tells of the feelings that the missionaries have before God because of the Thessalonians?
- 13) Note v.10. How often does Paul say they prayed concerning the Thessalonians?
- 14) Note v.10. What 2 words tell of the intensity of that prayer?
- 15) Note v.10. What 2 things does Paul say had priority in the missionaries’ prayers?
- 16) Note 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 8-10; 2:13-14, 19-20; 3:6-9. Do the Thessalonians have faith?
- 17) Note 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 3:2-3, 5, 10; 4:1. Is faith expected to develop/grow/mature/move toward completion?
- 18) Note Romans 10:17. For us today, how does God supply what is lacking in our faith?