

## 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

### Chapter 2

#### Verses 17-18:

--(17) **But we** . . . is in contrast with their persecutors.

--**taken away** could be translated *orphaned* or *bereaved*.

--Even though they had been separated prematurely, Paul had been removed from them in face, but not in heart. He deeply desired to get back to them personally.

--(18) Paul sees the work of the enemy in putting obstacles between them. He says that Satan **hindered** them—which was a Greek word used for the destruction of a road or a military roadblock.

--How? We are not told. Possibly because of the bond taken against Jason (**Acts 17:9**).

--It is important to note that Paul did not always attribute his obstacles or circumstances to the work of the devil (**Acts 16:6-7**) despite regularly coming into conflict with demonic activity. That said, we should never be shocked to find Satan working in close proximity to Christ or the Church.

--The New Testament recognizes Satan's work in Jerusalem (**Acts 5:1-10**); Cyprus (**Acts 13:10**); Corinth (**2 Cor. 2:1-11**); Ephesus (**Eph. 4:27; 6:11**); Galatia (**1 Pet. 5:8**); Smyrna (**Rev. 2:9-10**); Pergamum (**Rev. 2:13**); Thyatira (**Rev. 2:24**); Philadelphia (**Rev. 3:9**).

--If God is working something good, Satan will attempt to hinder.

#### Verses 19-20:

--Paul's ultimate joy was the work of God in the soul of man. He wasn't satisfied with being saved and getting to heaven alone! He couldn't wait to be standing in heaven, joyfully rewarded and forever together.

--Paul expects this to take place **at the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming**.

--The Greek word for **coming** is *parousia* and this is the first use in the NT.

--There are three main NT Greek words translated into our English word *coming*:

1) *Epiphaneia*: Has the main idea of *appearing*. The emphasis is our literally seeing Him.

2) *Apokalupsis*: Also translated *revelation*. The emphasis here is His unveiling in glory as opposed to humility.

3) *Parousia*: Which literally means *to come alongside of*. The emphasis is the person's presence with us. It was used of official visits of royalty or dignitaries. \*Like saying, "We would like to thank so-and-so for coming tonight."\*

--Paul's expression also infers two interesting things:

--First, Paul assumes recognition in heaven between us and those who were a part of leading us to Christ. They will have special business together before Jesus Christ (hopefully in collective joy and not sorrow or judgment—**Hebrews 13:17**).

-Second, heaven's greatest joy outside of communion with God is communion with the family of God. We won't love God so much that we will forget about others.

### Chapter 3

#### Verses 1-2:

--(1) Paul was in Athens waiting for Silas and Timothy (**Acts 17:15-16**) and it seems that at least Timothy must have made it there for a short while because Paul says here ***we could no longer endure it.***

--Unable to go back himself, Paul chooses to be alone for the betterment of the Thessalonian believers and sends Timothy back (like he does with Epaphroditus and Onesimus).

--It was a real personal sacrifice to send Timothy. He was a brother in Christ, a servant, and a fellow worker with God and in Christ (**1 Cor. 3:9; 16:10; Phil. 2:19-22**).

--Paul knew Timothy would help ***establish*** and ***encourage*** their faith.

--***Establish*** has the idea of supporting, buttressing, or strengthening.

--***Encourage*** is more the idea of exhorting than comforting.

--We all need people to help us press forward on the right path! This type of encouragement and care of believers is an understated part of the apostle's ministry. He was not just a "missionary" to the unsaved but a minister to the saved. (**Acts 14:22-23; 15:32, 35, 41; 16:5, 40; 18:18, 23; 19:10; 20:2, 7; Rom. 1:1; 16:25; Titus 1:5: etc.**)

--Paul was sending Timothy ***concerning your faith.*** . . . faith is spoken of in numerous ways:

1) Saving faith (**Rom. 3:22**).

2) Daily life faith (**2 Peter 1:5**).

3) "The" faith as a deposit of truth (**2 Tim. 1:13-14; Jude 3**).

4) The spiritual gift for acts of faith (**1 Cor. 12:9**).

--Here Paul is clearly speaking about our daily life faith. The outworking of God's inworking.

#### Verses 3-5:

--(3-4) Paul is afraid their faith will be ***shaken*** by their trials. The Greek word for ***shaken*** (*saino*) is used only here in the NT. It was literally used for a dog's tail wagging and became a reference for anything swaying back and forth. We might use the modern *wavering*.

--Paul is afraid their persecutions and sufferings will cause their faith to waver, so he reminds them of his initial warning to them.

--The tenses of ***we told you*** are *we kept telling you*. Paul told them ahead of time—not only to expect sufferings—but that each of us is ***appointed*** to a certain portion of suffering.

--This was the example of Christ, His apostles, and the early church. Expected sufferings for the cause of Christ was a constant part of their message from the beginning.

***\*John 16:33: These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.\****

**\*Acts 14:22: *Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”\****

**\*Philippians 1:29-30: *For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.\****

--See also: **Mt. 5:10-12; Acts 5:40-42; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12-13.**

--This was the message of Christ, the apostles, and the early church. It is God’s Word. To say otherwise, or refuse to say so, is an injustice to God, historic Christianity, and the Word of God. We need to hear this!

--Why? Because shallow roots will wither under the intensity of persecution. We each have an appointed post for God in this sin-sick world, and to live and salt and light will bring a portion of conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

--We must not be shaken when that happens.

--**(5)** Paul is saying he couldn’t take it any longer—he had to know how their faith was holding up, fearing Satan’s work to tempt them away from the faith.

--Paul didn’t want his labor to be *in vain* or *worthless*. Does that mean they lost their salvation? No! It means that their faith crumbled and didn’t mature into what it should rightly be. Paul wanted to see mature believers, independent and strong, a healthy and living church body, etc.

--When Satan tempts us, his goal is our faith—not simply a moment of sin. Sin harms us and others, clouds our spiritual vision, hardens our conscience, and turns us into double-minded, self-deceived, blind fools. Satan tempts us to sin for its effect on our faith.

--He sought to waver the faith of Eve, Job, Joseph, Daniel, Peter, etc.

**\*Luke 22:31-32: *And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”\****

--Peter failed, but he didn’t lose his salvation or his faith.

### **Verses 6-8:**

--**(6)** Timothy had just returned and Paul was overjoyed with his report. Their faith had not wavered!

--***has come***. . . is literally *has just come*, which gives us the sense that Paul wrote this letter immediately after hearing the good news.

--Faith and love are always tied together (**Gal. 5:6**).

--It was important for Paul to know that the Thessalonians ***always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you***. . . not because he was insecure, but because Paul knew connection with him was connection with his gospel and his God. \*Always a bad sign when people cut off their godliest friends.\*

--(7) This was God-sent good news coming at a time of **affliction and distress** for Paul. We don't know what his distress was—them, the issues in Galatia—but God was gracious in sending Paul comforting news of His good work.

--(8) For Paul to live was Christ and the work of Christ. That was all he was about! What he lived for.

--The Thessalonians were an unconquered citadel of faith in the middle of a real battle. In that, Paul rejoiced.

#### **Verses 9-10:**

--(9) This is obviously a rhetorical question. Paul cannot repay God for his joy in their faith.

--Paul was like a parent stressing over a lost child—now rejoicing over the child as found.

--Gratitude is always at its best when it is at its weakest in expression. Paul cannot possibly thank God as much as he should.

--Notice that there is not a doubt in Paul's mind that all the spiritual work and victory was God's. Timothy's report was not an occasion for personal credit or pride. Pride would have smothered his gratitude to God.

--(10) **night and day praying exceedingly**. . . means by night and by day—not necessarily all night and all day. It shows how heavy they were on his heart and mind, that in his constant communion with God, in the middle of the night or workday, he kept interceding for them.

--**perfect what is lacking in your faith**. . . means to mend, restore, set in order, or supply what was lacking in their daily faith. Paul wanted to see them fully equipped for all God had for them (Some of which he will do in the next few chapters).

#### **Verses 11-13:**

--(11) It is common for Paul to mention he is praying and then share some of the content of those prayers as he also does in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.

--First, Paul prays that God will **direct our way to you**. . . the Greek word **direct** means to navigate a straight path without a bunch of stops or detours.

--Notice, Paul is bringing his request and placing it in God's hands. He doesn't need to prescribe to God how best to make things work.

--It does seem like Paul's prayer was answered some five years later (**Acts 20:1-3**) and possibly even twice if **1 Timothy 1:3** is a subsequent occasion.

--(12) To **increase and abound in love** is to have love fill us and then overflow current boundaries to spill into new areas.

--Certainly, this was all the more important for the Thessalonians as their own countrymen were rejecting them. The family of God is our eternal family. Yet they were to love all men, even their enemies.

--This is true spiritual love. Natural love connects with those we think are nice, funny, like what we like, or have good auras. All things unsaved people love one another for. Spiritual love contemplates others as they are in Christ—as God sees and loves them.

--(13) What is the outcome of this love? ***So that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness.*** . . . God is looking to make our hearts stable, firm, or set in a blameless and holy life.

***\*Ephesians 3:17: that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love.\****

--The Greek word for ***holiness*** (*hagiosyne*) is only used three times in the NT—all by Paul (**Rom. 1:4; 2 Cor. 7:1**). The emphasis seems to be quality of holiness Vs. the progress of becoming holy.

--Paul is praying that the increasing love in their life will settle their hearts with a blameless and holy quality of life ***before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.***

--The coming of Jesus is again His *parousia*. Some try to translate ***all His saints*** as *all His holy ones* as in the angels, but that is not the context here. Also, Paul uses the Greek word *hagios* for *saints* many times in his epistles and never once for angels.

--Here is the picture: One day, Jesus Christ is going to come *for* His saints, and we will stand with Him and all the saints, before God the Father. When that happens, how can I possibly have a settled heart? When I look at God the Father, God the Son, and all my family in heaven, what will cause me to stand blameless and holy? Love. Did I love God. Did I love others?

--Did my love to God, to Christ, to the family of God, and all men, increase and abound? If so, my heart will be established blameless in holiness. Or will I stand before God, Jesus, and heavenly saints who received little love from me, wishing I could do it all over again?

--I find it so interesting that Paul makes a point to include our relation to the rest of the saints at the coming of Jesus Christ. Why? Because they are more important than Jesus? No! Because our love for one another is important to Jesus.

***\*Pink (Gleanings From Paul): "What is needed here is not so much exposition as the turning of these words into earnest supplication."\****