

1Th. 3:1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

1Th. 3:2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

1Th. 3:3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

“Wherefore” – Because of the opposition the Thessalonians were facing and the fact that they were accusing Paul of selfish motives.

It would seem that Paul and his co-laborers were so concerned about the spiritual well-being of the Thessalonian believers that they decided to send Timothy back to them. This would be at great sacrifice to Paul since he so valued Timothy’s assistance. Timothy was to reinforce the teaching of God’s truth and to strengthen and encourage the faith of the believers in the light of the opposition they were facing. Only when we are firmly rooted in the truth of our faith do we have the ability to withstand attacks that come because of that faith. That ability is provided through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Paul also reminds the believers that they had been taught that those who chose to follow Christ would suffer affliction. The Greek for the word *affliction* includes persecution, pressure, anguish, and trouble. The Lord never promised us that we would not suffer; in fact, He said we would. He did, however, promise that He would always be with us and through Him we would overcome.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Matt. 28:20 lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world.

1Th. 3:4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

Paul continues to emphasize the fact that the tribulation they were facing was to be expected. The fact that it came to pass as he had predicted should actually have been a proof to the Thessalonian believers that Paul was teaching the truth.

1Th. 3:5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

Still, Paul was greatly concerned about the Thessalonian believers and determined to get information by sending a trusted “fellowlaborer” to ascertain the facts concerning their faith. Was it strong? Was it weak? Was it wavering?

“the tempter” – The same Greek word is used here as was used in reference to Satan when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness.

Matt. 4:1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Matt. 4:3 And when the **tempter** came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

Satan and his followers are always trying to undermine the purposes of God. He puts special emphasis on attacking those who identify with Christ in faith.

1Pet. 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

“our labour be in vain” – I’m firmly convinced that this is not a reference to the security of the true believer. It connects more clearly to me with Jesus’ teaching of the parable of the sower.

Matt. 13:18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

Matt. 13:19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

Matt. 13:20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

Matt. 13:21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

Matt. 13:22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

Matt. 13:23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it*; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Sometimes the seed of truth is planted into ground that is rocky or thorny. Those who sow the seed aren’t necessarily aware of the type of ground those who respond to them are. It takes time for this to be manifested.

1Th. 3:6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also *to see you*:

Paul was very happy to note that Timothy had returned with a good report of the spiritual well-being of the Thessalonian believers. Not only was their faith strong, but they evidenced their spiritual health by their expression of love toward one another. Evidently, those who had tried to assail Paul’s character were unsuccessful. Timothy also reported that their memories of Paul’s ministry among them were good and that they were looking forward to seeing him and his team again. Paul then assures them that they also wanted to fellowship with them.

1Th. 3:7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

1Th. 3:8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

Paul and Silas were experiencing affliction and distress of their own. The good report from Timothy concerning the healthy faith of the Thessalonian believers brought great comfort and encouragement to Paul and Silas. The example of other believers who are strong in their faith always provides incentive for others

who observe that testimony to live up to their example. Many of the saints I feel led to encourage provide that type of example for me. I may not understand why God is allowing these believers to experience the trials that cause them such suffering, but I encourage them in the truth of God's word and the privilege they have to honor God through their response. I also pray for them to be strengthened through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and through expressions of love from other believers.

The Greek word for *affliction* is the same one used in verse 3. The Greek for the word *distress* seems to add the idea of being constrained through necessity. The account of Paul's visit to Corinth didn't really enlighten me regarding that thought. One of the meanings Webster gives for *distress* is "a state of danger or necessity." That would seem to connect to the Greek and would indicate that Paul's ministry in Corinth, which was greatly needed, was one in which his presentation of the gospel message and continued teaching of the Corinthians jeopardized his safety.

I like the wording of the NLT for verse 8.

It gives us new life, knowing you remain strong in the Lord. Paul again emphasizes the power of a positive testimony in the lives of fellow believers. To "stand fast" is to persevere, to be unmovable, to be firm.

1Th. 3:9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

Personal note: I love the King James, but sometimes the other versions are much easier to understand. It's interesting that sometimes it is one version and sometimes another that I feel is giving the best insight into the truth being stated. I just feel strongly that the KJV is the one that God preserved for us English-speaking peoples for so long. I am thankful for the variety of translations, but I wish they were all more unified in the ideas expressed. I think the differences in the shades of meaning often corrupt or obscure the actual truth of the scripture.

I like the wording of the CJB for this verse.

Indeed, how can we thank God enough for you or express to our God all the joy we feel because of you?

It is very true that we are greatly encouraged when we know that the Lord has been able to use us for ministry in the lives of others to His glory.

1Th. 3:10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

Paul, Silas and Timothy prayed for the Thessalonians daily. Their specific emphases were:

- To get to visit them again.
- To give them more complete understanding of the truth associated with the gospel teaching.

The Greek for *faith* is a reference to what you are persuaded to as truth, your moral conviction of what is true. I'm sure that even Paul didn't understand everything about God's truth, but he certainly understood more than most ever have. I have been helped many times through the thoughts of others, but I try to

be very careful to discern what is true through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I pray often for the Lord to protect me from deceit and /or error and to hear and understand with spiritual ears and understanding.

1Th. 3:11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

Since I am not a Greek scholar, I am always interested to get insight from those who are. JFB made an interesting comment here that supported one of my thoughts as I read through the verse ignoring the punctuation. (I often try to read through it different ways that would eliminate where man has inserted his own understanding. This is where I believe any translation from the original language causes us to get an incomplete understanding.)

“It is a remarkable proof of *the unity of the Father and Son*, that in the Greek here, and in 2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17, the verb is *singular*, implying that the subject, the Father and Son, are but *one in essential Being*, not in mere unity of will.”

In chapter two Paul mentioned that they were not allowed to visit them again as yet because of Satan’s hindrance. He knows that if God so chooses to direct their path toward Thessalonica, Satan can do nothing to prevent it. This statement is also recognition of the fact that the will of the Father and the will of the Son are always in unity (which is supported by the explanation of JFB above).

1Th. 3:12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all *men*, even as we *do* toward you:

In this little section of prayer for the Thessalonians Paul is concerned that their love for one another as a family of believers will continue to grow. The word “men” is added by the translators, and I believe is misleading here. The Greek for the word *all* states “the whole.” This seems to indicate that the word *all* is referring back to “one another” as representative of the body of Christ. Paul is encouraging the Thessalonian believers to have the same kind of love toward all fellow believers that Paul, Silas and Timothy have for them.

This is a very needful prayer. Unity in the body of believers will never be possible until we love one another in Christ in the way that He loves us. The lack of unity in the body is one of the reasons our testimony before the unbelieving world is not as powerful as it should or could be. The Lord Jesus Himself declared this truth. It was one of His requests to the Father as He prayed for one of the last times before enduring the cross for my sin.

John 17:20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

John 17:21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

John 17:22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

John 17:23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

1Th. 3:13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

Paul's focus in praying for them to increase in love for one another was that they would be strengthened in their faith living a life of holiness before the Father so as to be without fault when the Lord Jesus comes with His saints. Love is the fruit of the Spirit from which all the other spiritual traits in our life emerge.

Gal. 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love....

I can clearly see the subject verb agreement in this verse—fruit is.

Gal. 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance:**

Until we can first learn to love others in Christ, we will never be able to experience true joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance.

I liked a comment David Guzik made referencing this verse.

"It is our hearts that must be made holy first. The devil wants us to develop a holy *exterior* while neglecting the *interior*, like whitewashed tombs, full of death (Matthew 23:27)."

"saints" = sacred (physically, pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially, consecrated):—(most) holy (one, thing), saint.

The Greek for the word *coming* makes direct mention of Christ coming to "punish Jerusalem, or finally the wicked." Paul teaches elsewhere that some believers will not die, but will be transformed when Christ comes for His own.

1Cor. 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

1Cor. 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1Cor. 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

As was noted earlier in this study, Jesus taught that He was going to prepare a place for believers in His Father's house and would come again to take them to be with Him in that house.

John 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

Scripture also declares that the Lord Jesus will come to rule on the throne of David for 1000 years.

Rev. 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

Rev. 19:16 And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Rev. 20:6 Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

I have problems with connecting this verse with all of these references in trying to interpret believers as saints if applied to one specifically. The word *saints* is used in the epistles 43 times. In scanning through these verses, almost all of them are a reference to believers. The only way I can rectify the statement is to take the "coming" of Christ as a whole. When Christ comes for His own, which will be at a time when some believers are yet physically alive, He will take them to the Father's house and return with them in glory to establish His earthly kingdom. Those who return to reign with Him will be irreproachable, faultless, holy before any who enter the kingdom. Simplistic maybe, but that's what I see at this point. I'm sure I have much to learn yet regarding this subject, and I look forward to the enlightenment.

One truth I do know--If we truly believe that Christ could come during our lifetime, it is a great motivation to be living a holy life of submission and obedience to Him rather than being distracted by or involved in the things this world has to offer.