

First Thessalonians 3:5-4:12

3:5 – Satanic activity is a concern among the Thessalonians just like it was the cause preventing Paul from returning to visit/strengthen the Thessalonians in 2:18. Paul didn't blame everything on Satan, but neither was he afraid to credit Satan as the cause of: 1) opposition to ministry, 2) opposition to hearing the word of God, 3) persecution manifested in people and situations.

In 3:2 Paul says Timothy was sent to strengthen the Thessalonians, but here in 3:5 he presents it from Paul's personal perspective: Timothy was sent to "find out about your faith."

In Isaiah 65:23 the eschatological people of the Lord will not labor in vain, yet Paul was concerned that his "efforts might have been useless" because of Satan's opposition and persecution.

3:6 – Verses 3:6-8 and 3:9-10 are two long sentences in the Greek.

Timothy has returned to Corinth with good news that the fragile Christian community in Thessalonica has not collapsed, but has actually taken root and is growing/producing. Paul releases a 4-5 verses expression of thanksgiving/praise for Timothy's report. The Lord is mentioned once and God is thanked twice, otherwise these verses contain repeated references to Paul, his ministry team and the Thessalonians relationship.

Timothy news is of two kinds:

- 1) Concerning the Thessalonians faith and love.
 - a. The Thessalonians had maintained faith in God in spite of persecution and hardships
 - b. The Thessalonians had maintained love for Paul in spite of slander and accusations
- 2) Thessalonians "have pleasant memories" (NIV) of Paul's time with them. The Greek here doesn't actually mean "pleasant memories" like family reunions, fun times, pot lucks, church softball games, etc. The Greek is talking about their impression of Paul as being genuine. They do not have doubts concerning Paul's motivation and character. They still trust Paul. This does not mean they want to have lunch with Paul to remember the good times and talk about when Paul played first base for their softball team and won the church picnic hotdog eating contest.

Timothy was sent to "find out about your faith" (3:5) and when Timothy does he brings back a positive report.

3:7 – (This is still part of the same sentence that began in verse 6 and will end in verse 8.)

Timothy's was sent to strengthen the Thessalonians in the face of their persecution, but now Timothy's positive report about the Thessalonians strengthens Paul in the face of his persecutions in Corinth. Luke does not give us many details concerning Paul's time in Corinth (Acts 18:1-18) other than:

- 1) It was for 18 months (Acts 18:11)
- 2) Splitting of the synagogue and some persecution from the Jews in Acts 18:6 – Jews became abusive and Paul walked out of the synagogue
- 3) The Jews of Corinth united against Paul to bring a legal charges against Paul before the proconsul Gallio in Acts 18:12-13

But, in this verse in First Thessalonians we find out there were other hardships and persecutions that Paul was enduring in Corinth while he waited and worried about the Thessalonian believers.

3:8 – (the last part of the one Greek sentence in 3:6-8) Paul is encouraged in his ministry because of the Thessalonians continued faithfulness. In fact, Paul says it is a matter of life and death for him. Instead of his persecutions in Corinth crushing him, these persecutions are now a source of life because the Thessalonians have persevered. They are standing firm! Paul is alive with hope and purpose! Now, the Thessalonians must continue! The conclusion of this long sentence sends Paul into the next long sentence expressing thankfulness to God!

3:9-10 – This sentence begins with a rhetorical question that tries to express Paul’s overwhelming thankfulness and joy concerning the Thessalonians continuing in the faith. Paul includes all his fears, worries and answered prayers so far mentioned in this letter in this sentence (or, two verses). The thanksgiving that Paul expresses involves thankfulness concerning the Thessalonians, but mostly Paul is thankful that his anxiety is relieved and he is no longer consumed with fear that the Thessalonians have failed in their faith. Yes! Paul worried! See 2 Corinthians 11:26-29 – “...besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches...”

3:11-13 – As is typical of Paul’s letters he prays after he has expressed thanksgiving for a resolved concern.–

3:11 – Prayer for the way to Thessalonica be “cleared.” The Greek phrase translated “clear the way” is *kateuthunai ten odon emon* and means “to make or to create a straight path” that someone can walk in. In context it refers to the leveling and removal of obstacles that Satan has used to prevent Paul from meeting with the Thessalonians.

3:12 – Prayer for the fruit of love be manifest. The Greek means to make more and to cause to overflow

3:13 – Prayer for strengthening so they will be able to stand (“blameless” and “holy”) before the Father when Jesus returns. Point here is they must be made ready and they must be prepared to stand before God. At the bema seat the motives of men’s behaviors will be exposed. (First Corinthians 4:5) (Job 12:21-22; Acts 17:11)

“coming” or “arrival” is from the Greek technical term *parousia* which was used to refer to the visit of a king or an emperor, and also for an appearance of a god visiting a man.

Amos 5:18 – “Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord.”

Zechariah 14:5 – and will come the Lord my God and all the holy ones with him.”

4:1 –

4:2 –

4:3 –

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