



Chapter Three

Chapter three is a continuation of Paul's thoughts that began in chapter two. In 2:17 he began explaining his longing to return to Thessalonica, and how their efforts were thwarted by Satan (2:18). Chapter three begins where Paul begins explaining how and why he and Silas sent Timothy to check in on them (3:5).

Paul's love for the Thessalonians should challenge us to examine how we love one another and the people in our communities.

1 Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, 2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, 3 that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. 4 For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. 5 For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

Because of his great affection for the Thessalonian believers, Paul sent Timothy to *establish and exhort* them in their faith. Paul and Silas were willing to be left alone in Athens so that Timothy could return to Thessalonica and check in on their progress in the faith. This was dangerous for Timothy since they left Thessalonica because of a riot against them (Acts 17:10). At work in these verses is a love and concern that makes them willing to risk suffer for the sake of others.

Q: These verses show us a picture of Timothy running toward potential danger so that he could help the Thessalonian believers. Why is it important that we learn how to risk suffering for the sake of others? (See also *Galatians 6:2*)

Paul was fearful, perhaps because Satan had blocked him from returning to Thessalonica (2:18), that the tempter was busy destroying the work that he, Silas, and Timothy had begun. Their abrupt departure left little time to do any discipleship beyond establishing their new-born faith in the Gospel. Because of the affliction they were enduring from their own countrymen (2:14), it seemed probable that they might not have a strong enough faith to continue standing firm.

Q: Judging by Paul's sense of urgency, how important is the role of in-depth discipleship with new believers? (See also *1 Corinthians 3:1-3*)





6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you— 7 for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. 8 For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord. 9 For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, 10 as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?

The value of a good report cannot be understated. Timothy came back to Athens with a great report for Paul and Silas. It was a report so good, that it encouraged them and strengthened them while they were in their own distress and affliction. We should never discount the value of our faithfulness to Jesus. It reaches well beyond our own personal experiences and feelings. It can impact the journey of others, as the Thessalonian believers did for Paul and Silas.

Q: Do you think a report of your faith would strengthen another believer who is under affliction? (See also *Galatians 6:6*)

6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you— 7 for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. 8 For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord. 9 For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, 10 as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?

Timothy's encouraging report filled them with such joy that their greater problem became finding adequate words to express their thanksgiving to God in prayer. Paul, Silas, and Timothy prayed for the Thessalonians day and night, but their prayers became preoccupied with finding ways to express gratitude to the LORD for their faithfulness.

Q: When was the last time your prayer life became preoccupied with gratitude? What prompted such thanksgiving before God? (See also *Ephesians 5:4, 18-21*)





However, despite the good reports, Paul knew that they still had much to learn. He was motivated to return because he had a desire supply what is lacking in your faith. His teaching, though enough to clearly give them the Gospel, was cut short. They needed a fuller more robust teaching to help them keep moving from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity.

Q: The Gospel is both the foundation and the deep well of our spiritual journey. What does it mean for Paul to supply what is lacking if they had already received the Gospel? (See also Hebrews 6:1-3)

11 Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, 12 and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, 13 so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Paul breaks into a prayer for his readers. He prays that God would clear a path for his eventual return to Thessalonica, but he also prays that until then the LORD would cause them to increase in love for each other and everyone. Growing like this in love would do two things. It would establish them as blameless and holy when Christ returns.

Q: How does loving people make us blameless and holy? (See also Matthew 22:37-40)

Notes

A large area of dotted lines for taking notes.





A large rectangular area filled with a grid of small, evenly spaced dots, intended for handwriting practice.

