

Prompted by his concern for their faith persisting, Paul frets about two powerful negative influences:

1. That Affliction would lead to their Defection.

^{3:14} *Therefore when we could bear it no longer, ...² and we sent Timothy, four 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, ...*

a. Paul's Principle: Affliction / persecution is not extraordinary, but a normal part of being a first century Christian convert.

- Family, friends, business associates, Rabbis, Jewish sub-culture: Offended by their Belief.
- If Affliction is anticipated, one can more easily understand it and endure it.
- In Judea (see 2:14-16) and Thessalonica it was mainly from Jews, in Ephesus it was from Gentile silversmiths, in Jerusalem, Saul after approving the stoning to death of Stephen, had entered houses and dragged off men and women to prison (Acts 8:1-3).

b. What about being a Christian today? Have you sensed or experienced affliction because of your faith?

2. That the tempter's Enticements would prompt Drift.

^{3:5} *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.*

^{2:18} *because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us.*

a. Biblical Principle: Satan is a powerful creature that seeks to devour Christians by tempting them away from the ways of God. (Rom. 16:20; 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 2 Thess. 2:9)

We are vulnerable to temptation in three areas: (1) What we see and Covet, (2) Pleasures our appetites crave, and our (3) Boastful Pride / Self-Sufficiency.

- Gen. 3:1-6 ⁶ *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit...*

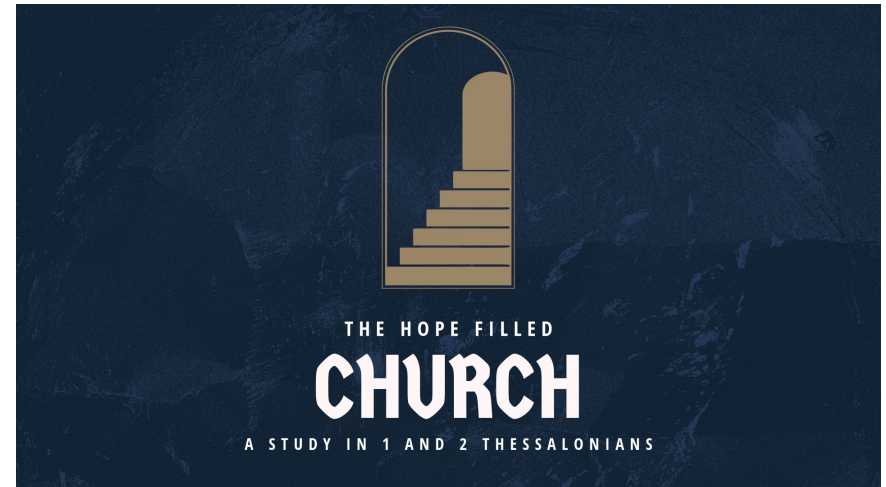
- Matt. 4:3-10 *And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."*

⁵ *Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple⁶ and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up. ..."*

⁸ *Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."*

- 1 John 2:16 *For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.*

b. What about us today? Have you sensed or experienced being tempted toward what you know is evil?



1Thess. 2:17 - 3:13
But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, ¹⁸ because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us.
¹⁹ For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

we were torn away from you: In Acts 17:10 Luke relates how the gospel messengers were obligated to leave the city because of the rising violent movement against them and their converts. This separation was extremely painful for the founders of the church and is described here as "being made orphans". In this letter Paul is highly expressive of his desire to be with the converts in Thessalonica and protect and prepare them for affliction and satanic influences that might cancel their faith.

desire to see you face to face: The apostles had not forgotten the Thessalonians and made real efforts to return after their importune departure. Paul expresses how he carried them around in his heart and intensely wanted to see them. They made travel plans and attempted to put them into action, but the opposition was formidable.

but Satan hindered us: He tells the Thessalonians that he tried to return on more than one occasion but that he and the apostolic team could not reach their goal because "Satan hindered us". So great was their effort that only Satanic opposition could explain why they did not return! Warfare imagery is embedded in the metaphor, Satan himself being their adversary. The battle was over the souls of the Thessalonian believers whom Satan would tempt to commit the sin of apostasy (3:5).

boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming: Paul and his companions explain one of the reasons why they wanted to see them. The church is the source of their joy, both now in the present (2:20; 3:9) and in the future when Christ returns (2:19). Christ's return motivates Paul. The

^{3:1} Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, ²and we sent Timothy, four brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, ³that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. ⁴For 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. ⁵For 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. ⁶But 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— ⁷for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. ⁸For now we live, if you are standing fast in

"coming" of the Lord Jesus is a theme referred to over and again in these letters (3:13; 4:15; 5:23; and 1:9; 2 Thess. 2:1, 8).

sent Timothy, four brothers: In spite of the Satanic opposition, they did manage to send Timothy (and four others), the junior member of the apostolic team, back to the city "to strengthen and encourage you in your faith" (v. 2) and "to find out about your faith" (v. 5). The verb to strengthen means "to establish" and is employed frequently in those contexts where someone is in danger of falling in some way or another.

afflictions: Part of the basic catechism for new believers was instruction concerning the sufferings they were going to endure and for that reason no one should have been surprised when it happened. Suffering persecution was not understood as an extraordinary event but that to which Christians are called or destined.

fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you: In Matthew 4:3, Satan is known as "the tempter" whose mission is to tempt people to sin (see Matt. 4:1; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2; 1 Cor. 7:5; Rev. 2:10). The temptations of the tempter were not simply to commit some sin or sins but rather to commit the sin of apostasy (Luke 8:12; 1 Pet. 5:8), which is implied in this context by the references to their stability and continuance in the faith (3:2, 6, 8). The issue is not only moral lapses but continuance in faith. Paul knew the machinations of Satan (2 Cor. 2:11), the tempter, but he was unsure whether he had met with success in Thessalonica ("and our labor would be in vain"). The temptation, while inevitable, was resistible. But the possibility of apostasy was a clear and present danger.

Timothy...reported: This letter was penned right after Timothy's return. Paul had feared the worst (3:5), but the news was the best. When Timothy witnessed the Thessalonians' faith in God (1:8), their mutual love (3:12), and their love for God (2 Thess. 3:5), it was evident that

the Lord. ⁹For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, ¹⁰as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? ¹¹Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, ¹²and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, ¹³so 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.

they had not yielded to the tempter but had tenaciously held to the gospel (3:2–5, 8). They had the marks of true Christianity. The tempter's schemes were unfruitful, and the apostle's fears were not realized.

the joy we feel: You can't miss the warm concern Paul has for the people of this church. He has feared that their faith would be lost because he and his team had been forced away. He has now heard from the returning Timothy that all is well and he is filled with joy and thankfulness to God.

we pray earnestly: It's always good to look at what Paul prays for: 1) Here he prays for the ability to go back and teach; 2) in verse 12 he asks God to cause them to increase in love for each other and the establishment of their hearts leading to holy living.

the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints: In this brief passage Paul refers to the "parousia" or second coming of Jesus Christ two times (2:19, 3:13). The concept of the imminent coming of Jesus motivates Paul greatly. He wants the church and himself to be ready for this event.

Themes (you can't miss) in this passage:

- **Parousia** - the second coming of Jesus Christ. The "coming" of the Lord Jesus is a theme referred to over and again in these letters (3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1, 8).
^{2:19} For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming?
^{3:13} 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.
- **Pastoral Concern** - ^{2:17}...we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face,... ^{3:5}...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.
- **Persecution** - Oppression due to religion or faith - taught by Paul, as a certainty.
^{3:3-4} that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. ⁴For 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.
- **Satan** - An evil, supernatural being that wars against God by tempting his people.
^{2:18} because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us.
^{3:5b} I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.