

LIVING THE CHRISTLIFE
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1 Thessalonians 3:1-13
Long-Term Ministry

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.

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?

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.

—1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 (ESV)

v 1 – When we could bear it no longer...

Paul's (and others') concern for the Thessalonians was almost more than they could bear
He had tried to leave to visit them but was prevented by Satan (2:18), we do not know the details

“take no worry for tomorrow” does not mean we should be without concern for others

we were willing

“we” – perhaps Paul and Luke, perhaps others

We thought it best to be left behind – a sacrifice, out of concern for the Thessalonians

and we sent Timothy

Silas appears to have travelled with Timothy

Paul later went to Corinth, where...

When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.—Acts 18:5

God's co-worker in the gospel of Christ

And so are we

What should this do for our perception of who we are? God's co-worker.

“that no one be moved by these afflictions”

Both the afflictions of the Thessalonians and also of the apostles

Paul had explained to them that persecution and suffering would occur

They may have done a better job of that than we do!—it is certainly the opposite of
“guilting” those who are suffering or of giving false promises

Paul feared for the survival of the church at Thessalonica—and God's answer was for Paul to
send Timothy to help and find out—not give a revelation about it

“For fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you...”

The work of God is done in an adversarial environment

The life of the Christian is lived in an adversarial environment

It is indeed spiritual warfare—which makes it more intense and dangerous, not less

Spiritual warfare takes on both physical dimensions but also includes direct assault on the
person

The devil is an evil, powerful spirit—we are to be vigilant and know that Christ in us is
greater; but we are being foolish and unbiblical not to take him seriously

Recognizing that there is a devil explains many things and helps us to know how to
confront them

v 6 – The triumph of the Gospel

The Church—although under attack of every kind—was alive and healthy, characterized
by faith and love

vv 7–10 this news meant everything to Paul and the others

In their love and concern they were blessed and comforted

It helped them in the midst of their own troubles to know that the church was well and
that their labors for Christ were not in vain

This filled them with joy, such that there were at a loss for words (v 9)

They earnestly prayed and longed to see them again—and to encourage them in the faith

vv 11-13 – Paul's benediction

A prayer that they might be reunited

To increase and abound in love

For one another and for all

This is the main thing. We know it, but do we live it?

To establish your hearts blameless in holiness

This goes directly to the kind of persons they are

God looks at the heart

He must establish our hearts – but we have to surrender

In holiness – this to everyone in the church

Our hearts are to be holy – not evil. This matters. And it matters a lot.

At the coming

That we may be a people, prepared by God in our hearts and lives, for his
kingdom

This is our calling