

### Comments on 1 Thessalonians 3

The subject of this chapter starts in 2:17. The text of 2:17 through 3:10 form a poetical unit, based on repetition of pairs of phrases through the text, as follows:

2:17-2:20 "see your face with great desire...in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming"

3:1-4 "could no longer forbear...we should suffer tribulation [Gr: [thlibo](#)]"

3:5-7 "could no longer forbear...in all our affliction [Gr: [thlipsis](#)] and distress..."

3:8-13 "that we might see your face...in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"

The poetical structure highlights the spiritual connection between Paul and the ecclesia at Thessalonica, despite their physical distance, emphasizing their unity in present suffering. And while they presently are being harassed by the Adversary (cf. 2:18), they will be together in the presence of the Lord in eternity (cf. 2:29, 3:13).

The structure works through their interactions in a time linear sequence with 2:17-2:20 being Paul's visit to Thessalonica being interrupted because of persecution; 3:1-4 is Paul's concern over the ecclesia resulting in Paul sending Timothy to them; 3:5-7 is Timothy returning to Paul with a favorable report; and 3:8-13 being Paul's rejoicing over all of them being united again at the Last Day.

<sup>1</sup> Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; <sup>2</sup> 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: <sup>3</sup> That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. <sup>4</sup> 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.

v1-4 As Paul and his traveling companions were separated from the ecclesia at Thessalonica because of persecution (cf. 2:17-20, cp. Acts 17:1-9), they couldn't stand not knowing how the ecclesia was doing (v. 1). So, Paul sends Timothy to them to strengthen and encourage them (v. 2), so they would not loose

their faith because of persecution. Persecution was destined to happen (v. 3). Paul warned them back when they first met that they would be persecuted, and that is exactly what happened (v. 4).

v4 "for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto", meaning they were forewarned by Paul that persecution was an inevitable part of their conversion. They choose to live the Gospel, and those who do not persecute them over it.

<sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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: <sup>7</sup> Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

v5-7 Paul couldn't stand not knowing how the ecclesia at Thessalonica was doing, fearing their faith had failed (v. 5), he sends Timothy, and Timothy returned with a good report of their faithfulness to the Lord and charity to one another, and that they had remembered what Paul had taught them, and they were also eager to see Paul again (v. 6). As such, Paul is very pleased, and their faith is a great consolation in the face of the great adversity Paul is suffering (v. 7).

<sup>8</sup> For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. <sup>9</sup> For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; <sup>10</sup> Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith? <sup>11</sup> Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. <sup>12</sup> And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: <sup>13</sup> 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.

v8-13 Their faithfulness has renewed Paul's missionary life (v. 8). Paul gives thanks to God over their faithfulness, and is filled with joy (v. 9). He has prayed constantly for them, hoping that he might see them again to help them continue in the Gospel (v. 10). Paul hopes God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ will continue to guide Paul's way to them (v. 11). He hopes the Lord will continue to bless them with increased love towards each other and all people, even as the Lord has blessed

Paul with the same love for them (v. 12). Such that their religious convictions are solid and sure, so that at the Judgement Day they will all be united together with all of His saints.

In contrast to 2:17-20, where Paul expresses his concern over them and his frustration at being thwarted by the Adversary and his minions, here, Paul rejoices. Timothy's report fills Paul with joy and it pours out effusively in these verses.

v8 This verse probably means that Paul's hope and faith is renewed in hearing of their faithfulness. He expresses doubt in v. 5 (cp. 1 Cor. 15:10, 1 Cor. 15:58, Gal. 4:11, Phil. 2:16), worrying that his preaching to them has been pointless, as they've succumbed to the pressures of persecution and abandoned the faith. But, in hearing they remain faithful, he realizes all of his suffering has been worth it.

Paul's humanity shows through the text as he confesses the persecution and adversity is wearing him down. But, successes like this bolster his conviction to the work of spreading the Gospel.

v13 Paul wants to see them again in mortality, but knows it may not happen. However, he does anticipate seeing them again when they are all reunited in the afterlife, being redeemed by the Lord and counted among His sanctified ones.

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