



The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians

The Concern for the Thessalonian Church

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

- I. THE CONCERN EXPRESSED (1 Thessalonians 3:1-5)
 - A. The Present Concern (1 Thessalonians 3:1-3)
 1. Paul's inability to forbear (1 Thessalonians 3:1)
 - a. When he, and those with him, could no longer forbear.
 - (1) The word *forbear* means to bear up against or abstain.
 - (2) In this case, it indicates that Paul had been concerned and wanted to know the well-being of the believers, but had waited as long as possible.
 - b. They thought it good to be left at Athens alone.
 - (1) Paul came to Athens (Acts 17:15).
 - (2) He called for Silas and Timotheus.
 - (3) It is likely at this point that Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica.
 2. Paul's sending of help (1 Thessalonians 3:2)
 - a. His name—Timotheus
 - b. His titles
 - (1) Our brother
 - (2) Our minister of God
 - (3) Our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ; Note: The Bible incorporates many compound words utilizing the word *fellow* (i.e., fellowservants (Matthew 18:28-29), fellowdisciples (John 11:16), fellowprisoners (Romans 16:7), workfellow (Romans 16:21), fellowhelper(s) (2 Corinthians 8:23; 3 John 1:8), fellowcitizens (Ephesians 2:19), fellowheirs (Ephesians 3:6), fellowsoldier (Philippians 2:25), fellowworkers (Colossians 4:11), and yokefellow (Philippians 4:3)).
 - c. His purpose
 - (1) To establish you; Note: From start to finish of First Thessalonians chapter 3, the mutual love binding brother to brother in the Lord permeates Paul's message. He began by reminding the saints that he sent Timotheus to establish them and comfort them concerning their faith.
 - (2) To comfort you concerning your faith; Paul, in his care for churches (2 Corinthians 11:28), often did things for the purpose of comforting the saints (Ephesians 6:21-22; Colossians 4:7-8).
 - (3) Note: Paul was extremely comfortable sending Timothy to minister to saints (Philippians 2:19-23).
 3. Paul's reason for concern (1 Thessalonians 3:3)
 - a. That no man should be moved by these afflictions



- b. Youselfes know that we are appointed thereunto
 - (1) The purpose of afflictions
 - a) On this side of eternity, very few really grasp the purposes or the benefits of suffering affliction.
 - b) Instead, most place a great premium upon trying to avoid troubles of any kind.
 - c) It would be much better if we recognized the biblical truth that “man is born unto trouble” (Job 5:7). In fact, the book of Job says “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1).
 - d) There is simply no way to avoid the afflictions and troubles that life brings.
 - e) Yet, the source of the troubles does vary considerably from one person to the next. One experiences afflictions because of personal sin, while another faces similar difficulties merely as an attack from the adversary, the Devil.
 - f) Although the initial cause varies, the end desire is the same: God wants man’s attention (Psalm 55:19).
 - (2) The appointment to afflictions
 - a) The appointed—“we”
 - b) The knowledge of the appointment
 - i) Youselfes know
 - ii) We told you before (1 Thessalonians 3:4).
 - iii) This theme was constant with Paul during his missionary journeys (Acts 14:22).
 - c) The gift of the appointment
 - i) It is given in the behalf of Christ to suffer for His sake (Philippians 1:29).
 - ii) Suffering brings one into the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings (Philippians 3:10).
 - iii) Infirmities and difficulties can bring with them the resting power of Christ (2 Corinthians 12:9).
- B. The Past Caution (1 Thessalonians 3:4)
- 1. The time of caution—“when we were with you”
 - 2. The expression of caution
 - a. We told you before
 - b. That we should suffer tribulation
 - 3. The fulfillment of caution
 - a. Even as it came to pass
 - b. And ye know
 - c. Note: The early believers could not afford to take the word of God given through the apostles lightly. The things spoken came to pass! In like manner, people today should be careful to take heed to the communication of God’s word.



- C. The Present Concern (1 Thessalonians 3:5)
1. When he could no longer forbear
 2. He sent to know their faith.
 3. Lest by some means the tempter had tempted them
 4. Lest his labour be in vain; Note: Paul understood that everything concerning Christianity is intertwined. For this reason, he pointed out that the Thessalonian believers' failure to be steadfast in their faith could cause his labour to have been expended in vain (see Galatians 4:11). Not only could labour be expended in vain, but rewards could be lessened (2 John 1:8).
- II. THE CONCERN QUELLED (1 Thessalonians 3:6-13)
- A. The Good Report (1 Thessalonians 3:6-8)
1. The messenger—Timotheus (1 Thessalonians 3:6)
 2. The message (1 Thessalonians 3:6)
 - a. Good tidings of their:
 - (1) Faith
 - (2) Charity
 - (3) Note: This involved two of the three great abiding virtues sought in churches in their maturation (1 Corinthians 13:13).
 - b. Good remembrance have the Thessalonians of the apostles
 - c. Good desires
 - (1) Desiring greatly to see the apostle and his helpers
 - (2) As Paul and his helpers desire to see the Thessalonians
 3. The result (1 Thessalonians 3:7-8)
 - a. The comfort given (1 Thessalonians 3:7)
 - (1) The source of comfort
 - a) We were comforted over you.
 - b) By your faith
 - (2) The conditions of comfort
 - a) In all our affliction
 - b) In all our distress
 - b. The life given (1 Thessalonians 3:8)
 - (1) Now we live
 - (2) If ye stand fast in the Lord
- B. The Prayerful Response (1 Thessalonians 3:9-10)
1. The thankfulness (1 Thessalonians 3:9)
 - a. The recipient of the thanks—"what thanks can we render to God"
 - b. The continuation of the thanks—"again"
 - c. The source of the thanks
 - (1) For you
 - (2) For all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes



2. The desire (1 Thessalonians 3:10)
 - a. The consumption of the desire
 - (1) Night
 - (2) Day
 - b. The expression of the desire—“praying exceedingly”
 - c. The twofold nature of the desire
 - (1) That we might see your face; Note: The report only served to put more of a desire in Paul’s heart to see the saints.
 - (2) That we might perfect that which is lacking in your faith (see 1 Corinthians 13:10; Colossians 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:17; James 1:4)

C. The Prayerful Desire (1 Thessalonians 3:11-13)

1. A reunion (1 Thessalonians 3:11)
 - a. The hope for reunion
 - (1) God Himself and our Father
 - (2) Our Lord Jesus Christ
 - b. The means of reunion—“direct our way unto you”
2. An increased love (1 Thessalonians 3:12)
 - a. The source of increased love—“the Lord make you”
 - b. The excess of increased love
 - (1) To increase
 - (2) To abound
 - c. The recipients of increased love
 - (1) One toward another
 - (2) Toward all men
 - (3) Note: The brotherly love binding one believer to another serves as the primary identifier of any true New Testament believer. Even prior to Christ’s crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, the Lord attested to such a bond when He said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). Following the commencement of the New Testament Church, the apostle John emphasized this truth in his epistles (1 John 2:10-11; 1 John 3:10-19; 1 John 4:20-21).
 - d. The pattern for increased love—“even as we do toward you”
3. Established hearts (1 Thessalonians 3:13)
 - a. The nature of their hearts
 - (1) Established
 - (2) Unblameable in holiness
 - a) Blameless is not sinless
 - i) Some people incorrectly conclude that someone is blameless only when he does nothing wrong, but the scripture teaches otherwise (Romans 3:23).
 - ii) This includes people like Zacharias and Elisabeth although the Bible does say that they were “blameless” concerning the commandments and ordinances of the law (Luke 1:5-6). How could someone be blameless



and not be sinless? To be blamed suggests a failure to make wrongs right. As such, one can deduce that when Zacharias and Elisabeth sinned against God, they did what the law required to make things right with God.

- b) Aspects of blamelessness
 - i) There are two areas in which one can be blameless.
 - (a) He can be blameless in his *practice*.
 - (b) He can be blameless *positionally*, but this is based on the finished work and righteousness of Christ.
 - ii) The second aspect is the subject of Ephesians 1:4 as is also the case in Colossians 1:22. In the context of that passage, it is clear blamelessness comes only through the reconciliation of Christ (Colossians 1:21). In Christ, believers bear no guilty responsibility for sins committed. Instead, believers are viewed and accepted in Christ's righteousness (Ephesians 1:6).
 - iii) Although the Bible makes a point that man's blamelessness at the coming of Christ will be a positional blessing based upon the work of God (1 Thessalonians 5:23, 1 Corinthians 1:8), the context of 1 Thessalonians 3:13 could be argued to be practical blamelessness.

(3) Before God, even our Father

b. The timing

- (1) At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints
- (2) At first glance, we might feel tempted to force this into a Second Advent return application.
 - a) After all, it is true the armies of Heaven will return to earth WITH Christ at His Second Advent (Revelation 19:14).
 - b) Both Enoch (Jude 1:14-15) and Zechariah (Zechariah 14:5) prophesied of the saints' return WITH Christ at that time.
- (3) Context, however, suggests a completely different meaning and application for the passage in First Thessalonians chapter 3.
- (4) This passage refers to a coming but to Christ's return to the Father "with all his saints" after the saints have been gathered to Christ in the clouds.
 - a) This truth was the focus of Paul's teachings expressed to the Colossians. Not only will the dead in Christ return with Jesus when He returns to the Father with the Church, but we too (those alive at His coming) will "appear with him [Christ] in glory" at Christ's coming and appearing before the Father (Colossians 3:4).
 - b) When Christ returns to the Father, we also shall appear WITH HIM IN GLORY. *Glory* does not refer to the Christian's state of being but to the Father's location. 1 Timothy 3:16 plainly points out the location of "*glory*" as Christ's abode after He ascended back to the Father.