

Continuing our study of the next major section of 1 Thess., Staying in Touch, 2:17 - 3:13.

Paul focuses on bringing matters up to date, so to speak, focusing on the circumstances that led him to write the letter.

The section ÷ easily into 4 parts.

1<sup>st</sup> part, 2:17-20, last time.

➤ In these vv, Paul mainly explains why he and Silas had not been able to revisit the audience personally, although they had longed to do so.

2<sup>nd</sup> part of staying in touch, 3:1-5, the sending of Timothy.

➤ Team was concerned about the Thessalonians' loyalty to Jesus so sent Timothy.

➤ Today.

3<sup>rd</sup> part of staying in touch, 3:6-9.

➤ Here we have Timothy's good report about their loyalty and love.

And the 4<sup>th</sup> part of staying in touch, 3:10-13.

➤ Team's prayer for these believers.

Today, 2<sup>nd</sup> part of staying in touch, 3:1-5, the sending of Timothy. 1/9

## Overview.

➤ Theme, loyalty.

▷ Sp., team was concerned about the Thessalonians' loyalty to Jesus.

➤ Break it down.

▷ 3:1-2a, Paul notes that they sent Timothy.

▷ 3:2b, states the purpose of sending Timothy, to strengthen & encourage them about their loyalty.

▷ 3:3a, Explains the goal of Timothy's strengthening and encouraging them.

➢ That they not be shaken

▷ 3:3b-4, reminder of the inevitability of persecution.

▷ 3:5, Paul repeats the thought of vs 1, with a little more information.

## Restate theme.

➤ The team's concern was that these new believers may have renounced their belief in Jesus due to persecution.

▷ The concern: committed apostasy.

➤ Implication: the threat of apostasy due to persecution is real. 2/9

Details of the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of staying in touch, 3:1-5, the sending of Timothy.

3:1-2a, Paul notes that they sent Timothy.

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. <sup>2a</sup> And we sent Timothy, our brother and coworker for God in spreading the good news about Christ.

And we sent Timothy, our brother and coworker for God in spreading the good news about Christ.

➤Coworker with Paul & Silas for God.

▷All believers are coworkers for God in spreading the good news about Jesus.

→We have all been commissioned.

➤The good news about Jesus.

▷The good news of God's redemption of sinful humanity through the life, death and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ.

▷The good news that God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

▷The good news that this is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

In 3:2b, states purpose for sending Timothy.

In order to strengthen and to encourage you about your loyalty. 3/9

I.e., to strengthen them and encourage them to remain loyal to Jesus.

➤ Again, the team's concern was that these new believers may have renounced their belief in Jesus due to persecution.

➤ And here's a point of application.

▷ It seems clear from this passage that initial faith in Jesus for salvation counts for very little if that commitment does not endure through thick and thin.

Timothy sent to strengthen them and to encourage them to remain loyal to Jesus.

➤ Strengthen means to cause someone to become stronger in the sense of more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief.

▷ Part of the way this is done is most likely through giving godly counsel, building believers' confidence in God and his word, and, grounding them in the word.

➤ Then we need to maintain that confidence.

→ And that comes through continuously walking closely with Jesus and the constant study of and obedience to his word.

➤ Encourage means to instill someone with courage or cheer.

▷ Perhaps cheer is in view here.

▷ They needed to be encouraged to stay the course.

➤ Timothy was going to be their cheerleader, if you will. 4/9

›Cheer them on to reach the goal.

›We need to do this for each other.

In 3:3a, explains the goal of Timothy's strengthening and encouraging them.

So that no one would be shaken by these afflictions.

›Vb for **shaken** means to be so emotionally disturbed as to give up one's beliefs.

›Again, the danger of falling away due to persecution.

›Parable of the sower, specifically seed on the rocky ground.

▷Matt. 13:20-21 (NIV), The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

Vv 3b-4, adds a reminder as to why not be so emotionally disturbed as to give up one's beliefs.

I.e., the inevitability of persecution.

▶<sup>3b-4</sup> For you know quite well that we are destined for them. <sup>4</sup>In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.

▶The implication seems to be that when persecution is expected, it won't take you by surprise & shake the foundations of your commitment to Jesus.

The NT makes the matter quite clear. 5/9

➤ 1 Pet. 4:12 (NIV), Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

▷ The implication here is that fiery trials in our lives should be expected, not treated as something out of the ordinary.

▷ And that fits the fact that we live in a sinful, hostile world that hates us.

➤ We are temporarily residing in a fallen, hostile world, to which we do not belong.

➤ And the natives of this world and the ruler of this world, Satan, hate us.

▷ So, rather than acting as if something strange or unusual were happening to us, we should very much expect to undergo fiery trials.

➤ Jesus Himself prepared us to expect persecution and fiery trials.

▷ Jn. 15:20b, If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

▷ Not mere possibility. ☞ Describing actual facts.

➤ If they persecuted me, and many of them did, they will also persecute you.

▷ The response to the church's mission will match the reaction to Jesus' ministry, namely, persecution.

But consider this awesome truth.

➤ We don't go through trials and persecutions alone. 6/9

▷Is. 41:10 (CSB), Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand.

▷Is. 43:2-3a, When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

▷And in Ps. 23:4 (LEB), Even when I walk in a dark valley, I fear no evil because you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

In 3:5, Paul repeats the thought of vs 1, with a little more information.

He peaks behind the scenes and exposes the one orchestrating the persecution.

➤So then, when it became impossible for me to bear, I sent Timothy to learn about your loyalty, fearing that the tempter may have tempted you, and all our toil wasted.

Once more, the team's concern was that these new believers may have renounced their belief in Jesus due to persecution.

➤That they may have committed apostasy.

The possibility of apostasy is expressed in the final part of the verse.

➤Fearing that the tempter may have tempted you, and all our toil wasted.

➤Paul expresses his apprehension, which was rooted in his knowledge of Satanic activity.

➤The Thessalonians' contemporaries were driving the persecution forward. 7/9

▷But the power of the tempter orchestrated this battle for their souls.

▷And now he converted the persecution into a temptation.

▶Attacked on 2 fronts.

▷Outright persecution and temptation to give up.   ↪ Job's wife.

In Matthew 4:3, Satan is known as "the tempter," whose mission is to tempt people to sin.

▶In the context of 1 Thess 3:1-5, the temptation was not simply to commit some sin or sins.

▷Rather, the temptation was specifically to commit the sin of apostasy.

▶The issue was not only moral lapse but continuance in their commitment to Christ.

▷What was at stake was the salvation of the Thessalonians.

▷Paul knew the machinations of Satan.

‣But Paul was unsure whether Satan had met with success in Thessalonica.

▶The temptation, while inevitable, was resistible.

▷1 Cor. 10:13 (CSB), No temptation has come upon you except what is common to humanity. But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to bear it.

▷The temptation to give up, while inevitable, was resistible.

‣But the possibility of apostasy was a clear and present danger. 8/9



➤ Every one of us needs to be aware of all of this & take it with the utmost seriousness.

Notice the phrase, *fearing that the tempter may have tempted you.*

➤ Lest somehow the one tempting tempted you.

▷ Pictures him persistently engaged in the effort to destroy the faith of the Thessalonians.

➤ My . . ., Satan is persistently engaged in the effort to destroy our commitment to Jesus as well.

▷ Heed Peter's words in [1 Pet. 5:8-9](#).

➤ *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.*

▷ These two imperatives, *Be sober-minded; be watchful*, are virtually synonymous in meaning

➤ A doublet.

➤ *Be extremely vigilant!*

▷ We need to listen to and follow Peter's exhortation.

➤ For our spiritual welfare. 9/9