

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Second Coming Letters of Paul – Part 7

First Thessalonians

I. Exposition of Chapter Three.

A. **Verses 1-2 – “Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith,”**

1. Paul’s concern for the young Thessalonian believers is seen in the fact that he, and probably Silas and Timothy, decided it would be good to send Timothy to them.
2. **“...to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith.”** – The word **“encourage”** means exactly that with the added idea of **“to call near.”** The word **“establish”** means; **“to cause someone to become stronger in the sense of more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief”**¹ This shows that simply accepting Christ as Lord is not enough. It’s only the beginning with one’s walk with God. It’s imperative that every believer becomes increasingly strong in their faith. **Psalm 112:1-8** gives the way and some of the results of having our hearts established.
 - a. **Verse 1 – “...delights greatly in His commandments.”** – This means you must spend time in the Word of God and take great pleasure in it. This would include being a doer of the Word of God as well (see **Matthew 7:24-27**).
 - b. Some of the results:
 - 1) Descendants will be mighty and blessed – **verse 2.**
 - 2) Wealth and riches – **verse 3.**
 - 3) Enabled to live righteously – **verse 3.**
 - 4) Light arises in darkness – **verse 4.**
 - 5) Graciousness and Compassionate – **verse 4.**
 - 6) Generosity – **verse 5.**
 - 7) Good judgment in business – **verse 5.**
 - 8) Never be shaken – **verse 6.**
 - 9) Never be afraid of evil tidings – **verse 7.**
 - c. We need our hearts established especially as we see the coming of the Lord approaching. **James 5:7-8.**

B. **Verse 3 – “...that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.”** – The **“afflictions”** are referring to the persecution once again. The word **“shaken”** means; **“to be so emotionally disturbed as to give up one’s beliefs”**² Concerning afflictions, the Fire Bible asserts:

“Believers must not be surprised when they encounter trouble and opposition, nor should they feel that these things have no part in the Christian life. Trials will come. (1) God’s people who refuse to conform to the accepted beliefs, behaviors and lifestyles of the world will ‘suffer affliction’ (v. 4; cf. Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:18; 2 Tim. 3:12...) (2) These extreme hardships must not be confused with God’s displeasure or judgment that will eventually come on those who reject Christ (5:9; Matt. 24:21; 2 Thess. 1:6; Rev. 3:10).”³

C. **Verses 4-5 – “For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.”**

1. It’s very clear that Paul was concerned that these believers not fall away from their faith in Jesus Christ. The phrase, **“I sent to know your faith”** can be understood as Paul wanted to be sure they were remaining strong in their faith.
2. **“...lest by some means the tempter had tempted you...”** - Satan is called the tempter in **Matthew 4:3** and **I Corinthians 7:5**. Dr. Utley writes:

“This Greek word translated ‘tempt’ connotes tempting ‘with a view toward destruction,’ the opposite of ‘approved’ in 2:4”⁴

¹Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 677.

²Ibid., 373.

³*Fire Bible: English Standard Version*, Donald C. Stamps, Gen. Ed. (Springfield, MO: Life Publishers Int’l, 2011), 2074.

⁴Robert James Utley, *Paul’s First Letters: Galatians and I & II Thessalonians*, vol. Volume 11, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1997), 99.

D. Verse 6 – “But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you—”

1. Timothy brings back good news to Paul. They were remaining strong in their faith and love, and they were retaining fond memories of Paul and Silas. In other words, the persecution and opposition were not causing them any regret for having received the Gospel. The NIV Study Bible states:

“brought good news. The only place where the Greek for this phrase is used by Paul for anything other than the gospel. Three things caused him joy: (1) ‘your faith’ – a right attitude toward God; (2) ‘your...love’ – a right attitude toward man; (3) ‘you long to see us’ – a right attitude toward Paul.”⁵

E. Verses 7-9 – “therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God,”

1. Wherever Paul went, he went through **“affliction and distress”** to some extent. At the writing of this letter, he was in Corinth (**Acts 18:1-17**). In the midst of trouble, all of us are strengthened when we are **“comforted”**, as Paul was by the news Timothy brought. This is the same word translated **“encouraged”** in **verse 2**.
2. **“For now we live,...”** – Some translations translate **“For now we live”** as, **“For now we really live”**. In other words, Paul was filled with relief and joy to hear the good news concerning the Thessalonians. A burden had been lifted off of him!
3. **“...if you stand fast in the Lord.”** – The words **“stand fast”** mean; **“to stand firm; to persevere; to persist”⁶**
There are many exhortations to stand fast in the Scriptures.

“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.” – I Corinthians 16:13

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” – Galatians 5:1

“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,” – Philippians 1:27

a. Putting on the whole armor of God is how we stand – **Ephesians 6:10-18**.

F. Verse 10 – “Night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?” – Paul still wanted to go there and minister to the believers. He felt the need to **“...perfect what is lacking in (their) faith.”** The word **“perfect”** means; **“to strengthen, perfect, complete, make one what he ought to be.”⁷**

Dr. Thomas Constable writes:

“These Christians were doing well, but they needed to grow more. They were only baby Christians at this time. They lacked maturity. Paul prayed that he might return to the Thessalonians so that he could equip them to become more completely mature believers.”⁸

G. Verse 11 - “Now may our God and Father Himself, and the Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you.” After telling them that is praying for them, he now writes a prayer. First that God would **“direct our way to you (them)”** – According to The Complete Biblical Library, this phrase includes, **“...the idea of making a straight path and removing obstacles.”**

H. Verses 12-13 – “And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” – Paul continued by praying for two more things:

1. That they would **“...increase and abound in love to one another and to all...”**
2. That the Lord may **“establish...hearts blameless in holiness...”**

“Paul often considered Christ’s return when he prayed (cf. Phil. 1:10). He considered it an unnecessary tragedy if some were caught unprepared when the Lord returns by living unfaithfully, without passion or in outright rebellion against God...We must be wholeheartedly devoted to Christ and determined to avoid all that offends him...The phrase ‘with all his saints’ refers to Christ’s followers who have passed from this life and are already with the Lord in heaven.”⁹

⁵NIV Study Bible, (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1985), 1823.

⁶Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

⁷Ibid.

⁸Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Thessalonians* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2022), 38.