



Knowing that the Thessalonians' faith was solid was the greatest joy for Paul

1 Thessalonians 3

1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

- Faithful pastors strengthen and encourage their flocks.
- Paul is still giving some background on events before this letter was written.
- He now describes the process of sending Timothy back to check on them.
- Paul had communicated his and his companions' deep love for the Thessalonians, describing their gentle care for them like that of a nursing mother, their loving encouragement like that of a father, and their sharing their whole lives with them (2:1–12).

1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

- Paul made every effort to see them, but Satan had thwarted every attempt (2:17–20).
- Twice Paul says, “When we/I could stand it no longer....” Paul couldn’t bear this worry about the Thessalonians.
- He trusted God to be with the Thessalonians and give them strength, but the apostle had the same kind of longing a parent would have for a child who was away and going through difficult times.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

- Paul had tried numerous times to go to Thessalonica and wasn't able to get there, but he believed Timothy could make it there on his own.
- While Paul and Silvanus were both full Jews, Timothy was half Greek and could more likely blend into a Greek city without being noticed.
- Paul and Silvanus would have drawn attention as they did in Philippi, where they were dragged before the magistrates, attacked, beaten, and thrown in prison for “disturbing the city” by “advocating customs that were against Roman law” (Acts 16:19–24).

1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

- Paul was afraid that the tempter (Satan) had tempted them to give up on their faith.
- Satan was the one who had been hindering Paul from coming to the Thessalonians
- He therefore deduced that Satan was also trying to tempt them to abandon their faith (verse 5).

1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

- Paul often uses the phrase “laboring / running in vain” (Galatians 2:2, 4:11; Philippians 2:16).
- This doesn’t mean Paul regretted his attempts to convert the Thessalonians or believed if they did turn away, that God would hold him accountable for their choice.
- “Laboring / running in vain” comes from the book of Isaiah, when Isaiah cried out to God, “I have labored in vain. I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity” (Isaiah 49:4).

1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

- Why was Paul so worried?
- The Thessalonians were going through persecution, and even though Paul and his coworkers had told them to expect it, he was worried they would turn away from the faith as a result (verses 3–5).
- Paul reminded them that persecution is part the Christian life.
- As he wrote in Romans, we share in Jesus' sufferings now in the certain hope of sharing in His glory in heaven. And the sufferings of this life are nothing compared to the glory of the next (Romans 8:17–18).

1 Thessalonians 3:6-10

- Best news pastors can hear is that their flock is standing firm in the Lord.
- Though they remained close in heart no matter how far apart they were, there was a comfort and joy that came from physically being together.
- Paul received comfort in his affliction when Timothy came back with his report. The Thessalonians would receive what was lacking in their faith when Paul came to see them.
- The issues of past and present had been central from the beginning of the letter to 3:9, but now, 3:10 points toward the future.

1 Thessalonians 3:6-10

- Verse 10 is the major turning point in the letter, and it shows us the letter's primary purpose.
- It would serve as an interim communication between Paul and the Thessalonians until his prayer was answered and they could be together again.
- When they were able to come, Paul would fill in the gaps in the Thessalonians' faith and answer any questions they might have.
- Until then, the apostle addressed the most urgent matters in this letter.

1 Thessalonians 3:6-10

- Paul had been worried about how the Thessalonians were enduring persecution.
- The news of their faith and love for Jesus and their longing to see the missionaries as much as the missionaries longed to see the Thessalonians assuaged his fears (verse 6).
- Paul continues the intensity of his language when he says, “For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord” (verse 8).

1 Thessalonians 3:6-10

- The Thessalonians' conversion wasn't just a momentary response to the Gospel but a true living faith that endured under persecution.
- Because their whole lives' purpose and desire was about the mission of spreading the Gospel, this news is the very breath of life to Paul and his coworkers.
- It was what they lived for. There was nothing for which Paul could thank God more (verse 9)

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

- Pastors pray earnestly for their flocks, night and day.
- In the last verse of the previous section (verse 10), Paul wrote that he prayed “most earnestly night and day” that he would be reunited with the Thessalonians.
- The Greek here literally means “exceedingly abundantly.”
- Though translated differently than in Ephesians 3:20 (“exceedingly abundantly”), *hyperekperissou* is the same as that used in in 5:13 (“very highly”).

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

- Paul often used superlatives, such as superabundant grace of God in Romans 5:20 and superabundant joy in 2 Corinthians 7:4.
- They longed “with great desire” (2:17) to be reunited with the Thessalonians.
- They labored and toiled night and day (2:9).
- They thanked God constantly (2:13).
- They were “torn away” from the Thessalonians and “endeavored the more eagerly” to see them face to face (2:17).

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

- We end this section with the prayer (after a very long opening thanksgiving).
- Ancient letters typically opened with a greeting, a thanksgiving, and a prayer.
- But in this letter, the thanksgiving is interrupted by several narrative sections, making the order thanksgiving (1:2–5a), narrative (1:5b–2:12), thanksgiving (2:13), narrative (2:14–3:8), thanksgiving (3:9–10), then, finally, prayer (3:11–13).

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

- At both the beginning and end of the prayer, Paul paired both God the Father and our Lord Jesus.
- Both the Father and the Son direct our way (verse 11), make us increase in love (verse 12), make us holy (verse 13a), and ultimately judge us on the last day (verse 13b).
- The final judgment is both “the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10) and “the judgment seat of God” (Romans 14:10).

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

- Notice what Paul and his coworkers prayed for:
 - That God may bring them together again (verse 11)
 - That their love would abound for each other and for all (verse 12)
 - That God would make them holy and blameless (verse 13)

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

- First, he prayed that the Lord would increase their love for one another (in Christian community) and for all (the world).
 - Paul wrote that without love, it's just empty ritual (1 Corinthians 13:1–3).
- Second, Paul prayed for God to establish the Thessalonians' hearts as blameless.
 - The heart is not only the seat of understanding and will but the place where the hidden motives of life and conduct take shape.



Temptation from
Satan and the world

Temptation

- Oscar Wilde – “I can resist anything except temptation.”
- Temptation is not sin but a call to spiritual warfare.
- We are to resist temptation and not give into it.
- In order to be successful, we need to understand how it works in our lives.
- Two key verses: 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 and James 1:14-15

1 Corinthians 10:12-13

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

Key Principles

- 1. Take Heed - Don't think you cannot fall.
 - If you think you are immune to temptation, you are probably in dangerous territory.
 - The Christian church is full of believers who thought “it could never happen to them.”
- 2. Temptations can overtake you.
 - This passage teaches that temptations can grab you and pull you down.

Key Principles

- 3. Your temptations are not unique.
 - Paul says that these temptations are “common to man.”
- 4. God is faithful.
 - Paul reminds us that God will not abandon you. He won’t let the temptations of the world destroy you.
 - We must also do our part in protecting ourselves from temptation.
 - Proverbs tells us that we should “guard our heart.”

Key Principles

- 5. God only permits what you can withstand.
 - God “will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.”
- 6. God provides a way of escape.
 - Often the way out is to get out.
 - In the next verse, Paul commands us to “flee from idolatry.”
- 7. God will help you bear it.

James 1:14-15

“But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.”

The Stages

- 1. The look.
 - Temptation often starts with “the look.” James says we are “carried away” or “drawn away.”
- 2. The lust.
 - James says he is drawn away “by his own lust.”
 - It only works because of desires we have (different temptation thresholds).

The Stages

- 3. The lure.
 - James says we are “enticed” - means to “put bait on the hook.”
 - Satan will bait the hook and draw you in.
- 4. The conception.
 - James talks about the stage in which “desire has conceived.”
 - The birth process is now bringing us closer to sin.

The Stages

- 5. The birth.
 - But that is not the end of the cycle. In some ways it is just the beginning.
- 6. The growth.
 - Sin doesn't usually stop there. Sin gives birth to more sin.
 - Often this becomes what is often called a besetting sin.
 - We now know more about this because of brain studies.

The Stages

- 7. The death.
 - Sin brings forth death.
 - This may be actual physical death (drug overdose, AIDS).
 - It may be spiritual or emotional death.
 - In any case, the result comes from giving into temptation and sin.

Stages of Temptation

Number	Stage	Scripture
1	The Look	“drawn away”
2	The Lust	“own lust”
3	The Lure	“enticed”
4	The Conception	“has conceived”
5	The Birth	“gives birth”
6	The Growth	“full grown”
7	The Death	“brings forth death”