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# Words of Truth

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## I Thessalonians 2:17-20

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We have considered the affection of Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus earlier in this chapter (I Thessalonians 2:7-11). Now, we will look further into their care for the saints in Thessalonica. Notice: *“But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy”* (I Thessalonians 2:17-20).

If you will recall, earlier in the establishment of the work in Thessalonica, Paul had to be sent away by night (Acts 17:1-10). I am not sure that this is what is being referred to here in this context. It is certainly possible that Paul returned to Thessalonica at some other time. At some point the saints in Philippi sent financial support to Paul in Thessalonica (Philippians 4:16). Paul, Silvanus, Timotheus are not able to be physically present in Thessalonica at the time they are writing this letter. However, they were with them in heart (cf. II Corinthians 7:3). Paul spoke to other congregations saying that he was absent in the flesh, but present in the spirit (I Corinthians 5:3 and Colossians 2:5).

Now, think about something concerning the Apostle Paul specifically. Daily, he faced a sort of anxiety that no “preacher” today really faces. Consider: *“Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches”* (II Corinthians 11:28). I work to help brethren in a few different locations. However, none of them are dependent upon me in any way as congregations were upon Paul. I cannot even imagine the stress that put upon him. Yet, he was not focused on the stress it caused him. Instead he was conflicted when he was not able to be among the saints. Notice: *“For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh”* (Colossians 2:1). He could not be in two places at once. So, his level of care for all the congregations he labored with weighed heavily upon him. While we cannot say Silvanus and Timotheus faced the exact same pressure, they did face some of it. Paul said Timothy shared the same level of care for brethren as he did (Philippians 2:19-23).

Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus wanted to be with their brethren in Thessalonica. We know the importance of seeing brethren face to face (II John 1:12 and III John 1:13-14). That does not apply only to teachers of the Gospel. All brethren need to be present in each other’s

lives. That is a large part of why we are instructed of God to assemble together in person (Hebrews 10:23-25). These brethren made haste to see the saints in Thessalonica. Again, this was not a unique desire just for the saints in Thessalonica (Romans 15:23).

Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus were hindered from coming to Thessalonica. This was not only the case with the saints in Thessalonica. For example, we can see that Paul was hindered from visiting the saints in Rome (Romans 15:22). The one causing the hinderance was Satan. Satan was personally at work in the first century (Luke 4:1-13, Luke 22:31-32, and I Peter 5:8-9). However, it is possible that this is a figure of speech too. Satan can be used as a figure representing evil (Acts 26:18 and I Timothy 5:11-15). With Ananias, it was said that Satan had filled his heart to lie to the Holy Ghost (Acts 5:3). However, Satan was not controlling him or anything like that (Acts 5:4). Such was a figure of speech. You are either a servant of God or a servant of Satan based upon what you do (I John 3:1-10). So, whether or not Satan was personally hindering Paul or evil stood in his way, I cannot tell for sure from this text. As was discussed already in this chapter, the Jews were standing in the way of the Lord's work very often (I Thessalonians 2:14-16). Calling those Jews who did such things Satan would certainly be a just charge if that is what was happening in this text (John 8:44; cf. Matthew 16:21-23). Thankfully, we do not literally have Satan hindering us today (II Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6). As we move away from thoughts about Satan, let's turn our attention back to what the saints in Thessalonica meant to Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus.

We know the first hope of all Christians is our Lord (II Thessalonians 2:16 and Titus 2:13) and the salvation that awaits us through Him (I Peter 1:3-9). As teachers of the Gospel, Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus also found hope, joy, etc. (cf. Philippians 4:1) through those they taught. In particular, through looking forward to the salvation those that they taught would receive. These brothers did not want their labor to be in vain. Paul expressed that to multiple congregations in the first century. Notice: *"I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain... Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain"* (Galatians 4:11 and Philippians 2:14-16). We will see that concern expressed to those in Thessalonica in the next chapter (I Thessalonians 3:5).

Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus gloried in the saints in Thessalonica (II Thessalonians 1:1-4). Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus were able to find joy in their brothers and sisters in Christ in Thessalonica (I Thessalonians 3:8-9). When a faithful teacher of the Gospel of Christ sees those they teach be faithful, there is a great sense of joy (Philippians 2:2). John wrote this: *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth"* (III John 1:4). Faithful teachers of today feel the same way. Those they teach are either a great joy or a great disappointment. What are you to those that have labored that you might be saved?