
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 3:1-3

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At the end of the previous chapter we read that Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus wanted to come see their brethren in Thessalonica (I Thessalonians 2:17). However, they were hindered from doing so (I Thessalonians 2:18). The saints in Thessalonica meant a lot to these three brothers in Christ (I Thessalonians 2:19-20). What we are going to study through in this article picks up from where we left off in the previous chapter. Notice: *“Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto”* (I Thessalonians 3:1-3).

Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus reached a point wherein they could no longer forbear not seeing how the saints in Thessalonica were doing. In the fifth verse of this chapter these brothers stated this: *“For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain”* (I Thessalonians 3:5). In both passages of Scripture, the word translated “forbear” [στέγω] means: “to roof over, that is, (figuratively) to cover with silence (endure patiently): - (for-) bear, suffer” (Strong’s # 4722). From these passages and the wording used, we can see these brothers were really worried about whether or not the saints in Thessalonica were continuing in the faith. So, they needed Timotheus to go and personally see how things were going.

From what we have read we can see that Paul and Silvanus decided to stay in Athens alone while sending Timothy to Thessalonica. There are several recorded times in the New Testament wherein Paul sent Timothy to places in his absence (Acts 19:21-22, I Corinthians 4:17, and Philippians 2:19). There were times wherein Timothy also was left in places to continue the work he and Paul started (Acts 17:14 and I Timothy 1:3-7). Timothy was a fellow-laborer with Paul and Silvanus. Think about what Paul said regarding Timothy to the saints in Rome: *“Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you”* (Romans 16:21). Strong’s defines that term translated “workfellow” [συνεργός] as: “a co-laborer, that is, coadjutor: - companion in labour, (fellow-) helper (-labourer, -worker), labourer together with, workfellow” (# 4904).

Once Timothy arrived in Thessalonica, the expectation was that he would establish the brethren concerning their faith. The word that is translated “establish” [στηρίζω] is defined as:

“To set fast, that is, (literally) to turn resolutely in a certain direction, or (figuratively) to confirm: - fix, (e-) stablish, stedfastly set, strengthen” (Strong’s # 4741). It is the same word translated “strengthen” in an instruction for Peter to “*strengthen thy brethren*” (Luke 22:31-32). Later in this chapter of Thessalonians, it is stated that the Lord would make them increase, abound in love, establish their hearts, etc. (I Thessalonians 3:11-13; cf. II Thessalonians 2:13-3:3). When we put all of that together, we see such was done through Timothy coming to Thessalonica.

Timothy would also come to comfort the brethren in Thessalonica. In part, this was needful so that the saints in Thessalonica would not fall due to the suffering of Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus. We will consider more on that shortly. There is more to their need of being comforted that is later revealed in this letter. For example, there was some confusion regarding what will happen when the Lord returns (I Thessalonians 4:13). Once clarifications were made (I Thessalonians 4:14-17), this was written: “*Wherefore comfort one another with these words*” (I Thessalonians 4:18). After further instructions (I Thessalonians 5:1-10), this was written: “*Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do*” (I Thessalonians 5:11). From that, we can deduce that these brethren needed to be comforted from within and without the local body for at least a couple of reasons. Having faithful teachers certainly can help with that (Colossians 4:7-8; 4:11). The Scriptures are also a source of comfort (Romans 15:4). Just remember, they did not have all of the Scriptures in their hands as of yet as they were not all written. Furthermore, what was written was not widely published or distributed. That brings us back to this context and why they needed established and comforted.

These brethren were dependent heavily upon Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus to teach them. These three brothers could not be in all places at all times. As an Apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul had a much greater work and concern than just one congregation (Mark 16:14-20, Acts 9:1-15, and II Corinthians 11:28). Since the brethren in Thessalonica knew what Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus were facing there was reason for concern. Think about at least one reason for concern among the saints in Thessalonica. What if Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus were all killed? Who would teach them? Who could pick up where Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus left off? While we could reason that the Lord would send another Apostle, how soon would that be? Would the relationship be the same?

We cannot relate to the stress the saints in Thessalonica faced. If faithful teachers of the word of God today were to die, everyone still has the Scriptures readily accessible. Sure, having faithful teachers of the word of God is very helpful especially to those who are unlearned (Acts 8:30-38). However, it is the Scriptures that make us wise unto salvation and fully equip us to do all good works (II Timothy 3:15-17). Even without a teacher you can search, read, and understand the Scriptures on your own to continue in the faith (John 5:39, Acts 17:10-11, and Ephesians 3:1-11). You have all the revelation of God. They did not. Be thankful that you have an advantage in having the full revelation of God today.