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# Words of Truth

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## I Thessalonians 3:9-10

By: Brian A. Yeager

*“For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith”* (I Thessalonians 3:9-10)? Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus were always thankful for their brethren in Thessalonica (I Thessalonians 1:1-3 and I Thessalonians 2:13). So, why did they have this question about what thanks they could render to God again for the Thessalonians?

The idea being conveyed in this context is that there is no thanksgiving that is sufficient in comparison to the joy that the Thessalonians had brought to Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus. Remember what we read in chapter two: *“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 2:19-20). For those teaching the Gospel, our purpose in this life is found in those we teach. That was pointed out in one of the verses we covered in our last article (I Thessalonians 3:8). Think carefully about the following: *“Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men... Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man. I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you. Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation... For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again”* (II Corinthians 3:1-2, II Corinthians 7:2-4, and Philippians 1:21-26).

The brethren in Thessalonica were a source of joy for Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus. They joyed before God for their sakes. Think about what that means. The phrase “we joy” is translated from the Greek word “χαίρω.” One definition of that term is this: “To be full of ‘cheer’, that is, calmly happy or well off; impersonal especially as a salutation (on meeting or parting), be well: - farewell, be glad, God speed, greeting, hail, joy (-fully), rejoice” (Strong’s # 5463). When considering the wording it shows the depth of joy Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus

had over their brethren in Thessalonica. It is similar to what Jesus said about Abraham looking forward to His [Jesus] day. Take thought on this: *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad”* (John 8:56).

*(NOTE: \*Let me know if you are reading these articles. If only a few are reading, I will not be continuing them much longer).*

They (Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus) prayed night and day, with thanksgiving, that they might see the faces of their brethren in Thessalonica. I am going to hold off on addressing why they prayed to God for that. We will address God’s role in their coming to Thessalonica more in depth when we look at verse eleven in our next article. God did have a role in where men went to preach and teach. To the saints in Rome, Paul wrote: *“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed”* (Romans 15:30-32). Why didn’t they just keep writing letters? Why was it so important to come to Thessalonica in person? They already had a report from Timothy (I Thessalonians 3:5-6). Wasn’t that enough? Obviously, it was not enough to just hear about them. They had a great desire to see the saints in Thessalonica (I Thessalonians 2:17).

Writing is a good way to teach. However, it is far inferior to teaching in person. Notice what was written in second and third John: *“Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full... I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name”* (II John 1:12 and III John 1:13-14).

The reason Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus wanted to see the saints in Thessalonica was to perfect that which was lacking in their faith. Remember, the New Testament writings were not complete at this time. That is obvious as this is the first letter of two to this congregation besides the letters written afterward. Congregations did share the epistles that were written to them (Colossians 4:16). However, this is still in the age of miracles wherein things were not completely revealed as of yet. So, they only had partial knowledge at that period of time (I Corinthians 13:8-13). The word translated “might perfect” [καταρτίζω] means: “To complete thoroughly, that is, repair (literally or figuratively) or adjust: - fit, frame, mend, (make) perfect (-ly join together), prepare, restore” (Strong’s # 2675).

Growing in knowledge is significant for all Christians (II Peter 3:18). It was much more difficult when all things were not revealed and that which was revealed was not easily obtainable. What was lacking though was not just knowledge. Their lack was in their faith. However, the two are tied together. Faith comes through the word of God and teachers are a significant part in that process (Romans 10:14-17). So, these brethren wanted to complete that which lacked (cf. Colossians 1:27-28). That needed to be in person.