



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V25 N9 February 26, 2023

NOT HOME YET

“Topping Off the Tank”

1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Joy

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

John 15:11



What is Paul's desire for all believers?

Paul enjoyed an especially close *friendship* relationship to the church at Thessalonica – a relationship that brought him great joy. He refers explicitly to that joy when in his first letter, he asks them *rhetorically*, “How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?” (1Th 3:9). His relationship to the Thessalonians was much like his relationship to the Philippians – a relationship that also brought him great joy. In his opening thanksgiving and prayer for them, Paul writes: “I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Php 1:3-6). His joy was the kind of joy parents find in their children, teachers find in their students, coaches find in their players, and mentors find in their protégés.

In fact, Paul compares his relationship to the Thessalonian believers to that of a nursing mother – “Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you” (2:7-8) – and to that of a father – “We dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children” (v. 11). Parents see potential in their children and live to see that potential fulfilled. If you are a parent, you know what I mean. New parents entertain the thought that their young heirs are gifted and have their suspicions confirmed when their children start reading early and later do well in school. Academic skills appear in some children early on, artistic and musical talents in others, athletic skills in still more. And when parents recognize the signs of these, they *encourage, comfort, and urge* their children (cf. “father” in 2:2). They *encourage* them to explore and pursue their giftedness, *comfort* them when they experience disappointment, and encourage them to never give up. All this with a view to seeing them

grow, develop, and ultimately realize their full potential – taking pride in and celebrating their every accomplishment along the way. Parents want their children to know that they love them, and they want their children to reciprocate that love. Paul wanted the same from the Thessalonians. Upon Timothy’s return after being sent to “strengthen and encourage” (3:2) the church, Paul writes: “But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, for this reason, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord” (3:6-8).

Just as parents’ hearts burst with pride and joy over their children’s academic achievements, their artistic and musical attainments, and their athletic accomplishments, knowing that all of their and their children’s hard work has paid off, so also, was Paul’s heart filled with pride and joy knowing of the Thessalonians’ faith and love – faith in Christ and love for him. He writes: “Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. *For now we really live*, since you are standing firm in the Lord” (3:6-8). The news Timothy brought rejuvenated Paul – “for now we really live.” “Paul had been given a new lease on life. To know they continued ‘standing firm in the Lord,’ unmoved by affliction and unshaken by his detractors, was enough to stimulate Paul to renewed activity” (Robert L. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, 266) – just as good news about children rejuvenates their parents.



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

6 But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. 7 Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. 8 For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. 9 How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? 10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. 12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. 13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 6.
- Bracket "to us from you" in v. 6.
- Box "just as" indicating *comparison* in vv. 6, 12.
- Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 7.
- Circle "distress" and "persecution" in v. 7.
- Circle "encouraged" in v. 7.
- Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 7.
- Circle "really live" in v. 8.
- Box "since" indicating *reason* in v. 8.
- Bracket "night and day" in v. 10.
- Underline "clear the way" in v. 11.
- Box "so that" indicating *purpose/result* in v. 13.
- Underline "blameless and holy" in v. 13.
- Bracket "with all his holy ones" in v. 13.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Explain the *contrast* introduced by “But” in verse 6 (cf. v. 5b).
2. Timothy came to *where* (“to us”) from *where* (“from you”)?
3. Timothy brought “good news” about the Thessalonians’ “faith and love.” What “good news” did he bring?
4. Describe the effect Timothy’s good news had on Paul, implied by “now we really live.”
5. *Contrast* what “standing firm in the Lord” looks like — *then* and *now*.
6. Put the point of Paul’s *rhetorical* question (v. 9) in your own words.
7. Explain why Paul used “clear the way” in his petition to God (cf. 2:17-18).
8. Explain the *comparison* in Paul’s first prayer request (v. 12).
9. What does Paul want the Thessalonians to be *ultimately*?
10. **Discussion:** “In the presence of” (v. 13) implies *judgment*. Talk about *who* will be judged and *why*.

Commentary On The Text

The first three chapters of Paul's letter to the Thessalonian church are intensely personal, rooted in experiences surrounding his evangelistic campaign in the city and the Thessalonians' remarkable response to the gospel (chap. 1). In it he refers to the integrity of his appeal, their reception of the gospel as the word of God rather than the word of men, and their imitation of the willingness of God's churches in Judea to suffer persecution. He goes on to refer to his forced separation from them, which left him as well as his new converts feeling like orphans (chap. 2), and his effort—motivated by an intense longing to see them—to minimize its negative consequences by sending Timothy to “strengthen and encourage” them (chap. 3).

This should come as no surprise, since letters are typically personal, given that they amount to continuing conversations between people who are apart. One author writes: “A letter was frequently defined as one half of a dialogue. A substitute for one's presence, a letter was expected to contain what one would have said had one been present and to say it in a style appropriate to the occasion . . . It was widely assumed that a major function a letter was to maintain friendship” (Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, 69). Paul feared that his forced separation from the Thessalonians—followed, no doubt, by rumors that he did not really care for them, had no interest in returning to them, and had come the first time only to satisfy his selfish ambition—had irreparably damaged his relationship to them. Timothy's report dispelled Paul's fears and impelled him to immediately write his letter in reply. 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13 can easily be divided into two parts. The first part (vv. 6-10), comprised of two long sentences in Greek (vv. 6-8, 9-10), describes how Timothy's report was received by Paul and Silas. The second part (vv. 11-13), another long sentence in Greek, contains Paul's twofold petition, containing a request for himself and a request for his readers.

Timothy's report contained good news regarding two things, namely, the Thessalonians' relationship to Paul and their faith and love. It was both *personal* and *spiritual*. Regarding the first, Timothy reported that the Thessalonians held fond memories of Paul and longed to see him again, implying their friendship remained intact. One commentator writes: “Timothy's report of the kindly feelings of the Thessalonians toward him (‘pleasant memories,’ ‘long to see us’) assured Paul that they had not written him

off as an exploiter, disinterested in their welfare. They still maintained a warm sport for him, matching his own tender longing to see them” (Robert L. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, 265).

Regarding the second, Timothy reported that the Thessalonians were “standing firm in the Lord” (v. 8). According to another commentator: “Stand in the Lord” [cf. NET] uses a typically Pauline verb, “to stand” (*stēkō*); it has the sense “to be firmly committed in conviction or belief” (so BDAG)” (Gary S. Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, ZECNT, 141). And another explains adding: “They maintained their solidarity with the Lord despite the persecution (2.14) and in the face of Satanic attacks, which were designed to separate them from their faith in the Lord (3:5)” (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC, 170-71). Put differently, they did not waver in their faith—neither in *what* they believed nor in *how* they behaved.

Hearing Timothy's report rejuvenated Paul (v. 8), and Silas, too, who were facing “distress and persecution” in Corinth, the exact nature of which cannot be determined for certain (see note). The sense of Paul's exclamation expressed in a *rhetorical* question (v. 9) might be rendered, “We cannot thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of God because of you.” However, his *rhetorical* question comes across as more powerful than a simple declaration of gratitude. Verse 10 serves a twofold function. It brings verses 6-9 to an appropriate *conclusion*, and it provides a suitable *transition* to verses 11-13). Paul, Silas, and Timothy prayed frequently that they might see the Thessalonians in person and might supply what is missing in their faith. After all, the Thessalonian believers were but a few months old in the Lord.

For themselves, Paul prayed that God, both the Father and the Son, would clear the way of barriers Satan had put in the way of their return to Thessalonica. For the Thessalonians, he prayed that the Lord would make their love increase and overflow to others, just as, his did for them. And that he would strengthen them, so that they might be “blameless and holy” in the presence of God when Jesus comes, for at that time they will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, along with all “those who have fallen asleep in him” (see 4:14) to be rewarded for their good works (see 2Co 5:10; cf. 1Co 3:11-15). Paul's prayer wish for them applies to us too.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 6 **But** “But contrasts Paul’s previous anxiety with his present relief at the report of Timothy who returned to Paul in Corinth” (Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 698). “The coming of Timothy with news of the way in which the Thessalonian converts had not only stood firm, but had gone on in the faith, had acted on him like a tonic. He wrote immediately with a full heart” (Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, 105).

v. 6 **to us from you** I.e., to us in Corinth from you in Thessalonica. Timothy was sent by Paul and Silas from Athens to Thessalonica (3:1-3). After completing his mission “to strengthen and encourage” the church there, he rejoined Paul in Corinth (Ac 18:5). “Pleasant memories’ have to do with good friendships, family gatherings, good times together, and the like; this word has to do with the fact that their memory of Paul is a good one, not clouded with doubts and misgivings—which of course has been part of the concern right along . . . Furthermore, Timothy has reported that Paul’s longing to see them, which has found such intense expression throughout the immediately preceding narrative, is reciprocated from their end . . . It must have been a special delight, therefore, for him to have learned that his longing for them [2:17-18] was reciprocated from their end” (Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, 123-24).

v. 7 **distress, persecution** “The two terms are *thlipsei* and *ananke*. The first has been used of the Thessalonians’ own ‘affliction’ (1:6; 3:3-4). The second is a synonym (cf. 1 Cor 7:26). Both words can indicate the imposition of either emotional or physical distress and are used in tandem in the LXX (see Job 15:24; Pss 25:18; 119:143 in the NIV) and again by Paul in 2 Cor 6:4” (D. Michael Martin, 1, 2 *Thessalonians*, NAC, 106). “Here are words that we are hardly prepared for, especially if our understanding of Paul’s time in Corinth were based solely on Luke’s brief account in Acts 18:1-18 (of an 18-month stay), where there are only two hints of persecution (vv. 6 and 12-13)” (Fee, 124). Luke records that the Jews became “abusive” (v. 6) and hauled Paul before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia (vv. 12-13).

v. 7 **encouraged** “Timothy had gone to the church to strengthen and encourage them ‘in their faith’ (v. 2) as well as ‘to find out about their faith’ (v. 5), but now the founders are encouraged ‘about their faith’ since it held and was intact . . . They and the Thessalonians shared faith, afflictions and now encouragement. The continuing faith of the Thessalonians (vv. 6a, 7b) is also bound tightly with the relationship this church enjoyed with the founders (vv. 6b, 7a) This shared faith was the foundation on which their relationship rested. True faith and true community go

hand in hand” (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC, 169-70, italics added).

v. 8 **really live** “For them to ‘live’ is not physical life, but a life of joy” (Gary S. Shogren, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, ZECNT, 141). “Paul ‘really lives’: this is, joy in living was enhanced by the knowledge that his converts persevered in the faith” (Martin, 107). “They were both oppressed by their circumstances (v. 7) and distressed by their concerns for the church (vv. 1, 5). Now they recover from their anxiety and have renewed hope [and joy?] in the middle of their own afflictions, all because of the Thessalonians” (Green, 170).

v. 10 **night and day** An example of *merism*, a figure of speech using two contrasting extremes to express a whole. Here it means “continually” (cf. 1:2; 2:13; 5:17). “Not prayer at two set times, but frequent prayer (see 1:2-3)” (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on 1Th 3:10).

v. 11 **clear the way** Paul asks God to remove the obstacles Satan placed in the way of them returning to Thessalonica (cf. 2:18).

v. 13 **blameless and holy** “The local force of *emprosten* (‘in the presence of’) obtains whenever this preposition relates appearance before a judge (Matt 27:11; 25:32; Luke 21:36; 2 Cor 5:10; contrast 1 Thess 1:3; 3:9; 1 John 3:19) (cf. BAG, p. 256). Earlier Paul has made ‘our Lord Jesus’ the judge at this scene (1 Thess 2:19). This is no contradiction. The unity of the Father and Son, just seen in v. 11, allows a joint judgeship. The *bēma* of Christ (2 Cor 5:10) is also the *bēma* of God (Rom 14:10), because Christ in his present session is with the Father in his heavenly throne (Rev 3:21; cf. Rom 8:34; Heb 1:3; 10:12). This hearing will take place at the future ‘visit’ (*en tē parousia*, ‘in the coming’) of the Lord Jesus (cf. 2:19). For the Thessalonians Paul prays for a favorable verdict at that time” (Thomas, 268).

v. 13 **holy ones** Cf. “saints” (ESV, HCSB, NET, NKJV). “The holy ones accompanying Christ at His coming are probably the souls of the saints who have departed this life and gone to be with Christ, whose bodies will be resurrected when He comes (4:16). That is, they are Christians rather than angels” (Constable, 700; see also William Hendriksen, *Exposition of 1 and II Thessalonians: Commentary on 1 Thessalonians*, NTC, 92-94). Some argue for angels (see Fee, 135-36); others for both angels and humans (see Morris, 114-15; Green, 181).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Stand firm in your faith and in your expression of love for others so that you may be blameless and holy at the judgment seat of Christ.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

How do you respond to affliction or suffering? Are you a grumbler who asks God “why?” Do you grin and bear it while putting your best face forward so others will never know? Do you hit your knees in prayer? At different times in my life, I can claim all these responses to suffering, but wish I had a more natural bent to responding faithfully, like my friend, Julie. She was such an incredible witness while she was going through cancer treatment. It was a huge encouragement for her family and biblical community to watch her turn a terrible situation into a positive opportunity to glorify God. Her experience encouraged me and spurred me on to live more boldly and faithfully. Though we don’t like hardships, either for ourselves or our kids, we know facing our struggles with faith is a catalyst for growth. So, why do we wish away trials for our kids? Instead, we should want our kids to be faced with difficult situations that cause them to struggle. When our kids have hardships, we have the perfect opportunity to guide them to Jesus. In sharing stories of our own personal trials, we can be confident they will get a glimpse of the abounding love and unending compassion of our heavenly Father. Within reason, invite your kids into your struggles and model a trusting faith in Jesus. Have them pray with and for you. You are a model of how Jesus’ love is greater than any trial we may experience. Encourage them to endure hardships with joy, knowing they can have hope because of Jesus. We’re praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-10

1. What news did Timothy bring to Paul?
2. How did the Thessalonians feel about Paul?
3. What was Paul’s reaction in hearing this good news of the Thessalonians?

What Do You Think?

If the Thessalonians were strong in their faith, why did Paul want to see them and supply what was lacking in their faith?

What Do You Do?

Whose faith encourages you to stay strong in your faith? Draw a cartoon story of how this person demonstrates faith and encourages you.

CORE COMPETENCY: Joy

I am happy on the inside no matter what’s happening on the outside.

MEMORY VERSE: Matthew 5:16

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week’s verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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