



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V25 N8 February 19, 2023

NOT HOME YET

“Weed Warning”

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Compassion

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

“How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.”

Psalm 82:2-3



What marks the relationship of believers in the body of Christ?

Christianity is a *relational* religion. It is a religion of the head and the heart. It's a religion of the head in that it is all about having a relationship with Jesus Christ secured through faith, which involves believing with our heads the gospel message about him. John's Gospel, the only one of the four Gospels written with the express purpose of revealing how eternal life is secured, maintains that it is obtained by “believing that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God” (Jn 20:31). Salvation is rooted in truth, the truth about who Jesus is and what he offers to those who believe in him. It's also a religion of the heart in that the love of Jesus for us produces in our hearts a love for others who also believe in Jesus—as well as others who may not believe. John writes in his first epistle: “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is made complete in us” (4:7-12); and “We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister” (vv. 19-21). When we listen to John, we are listening to Jesus, who left us with one new command, “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (Jn 13:34).

Compassion is love's child—just one of the

many virtues borne by love. Consider the number of virtues that cluster around a handful of occurrences of “compassion” in the New Testament: Ephesians 4:32, “Be *kind* and **compassionate** to one another, *forgiving* each other, just as in Christ God *forgave* you;” Colossians 3:12, “Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with **compassion**, *kindness*, *humility*, *gentleness* and *patience*,” and 1 Peter 3:8, “Finally, all of you, be *like-minded*, be *sympathetic*, *love* one another, be **compassionate** and *humble*.”

Love and its many virtues, including *compassion*, mark Paul's relationship to the Thessalonians. This is made evident in his words to them in 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13 (see esp. 2:17-20; 3:1, 3, 6-10). One commentator writes: “Paul's words for his converts here [2:19-20] are especially affectionate. His love for the Thessalonians was unusually strong. Their development was what he hoped for, their glorification was what he rejoiced in, and their ultimate victory would be a crown of glory for him. The Lord's commendation for Paul's ministry to the Thessalonians would, on the one hand, be like a crown that would make him justifiably proud when the Lord gave it to him. But it was the Thessalonians themselves that seem to be the crown in view. Paul was talking like a father again (cf. v. 11). Looking at the end of his ministry Paul said that he would take the greatest pride in these believers. They would be his crowning glory” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 1 Thessalonians,” 2023 ed., 33-34, planobiblechape.org/tcon/notes/pdf/1thessalonians.pdf). In his compassion for them, Paul continued to serve as a model to the Thessalonians. In his own words, “You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit” (1:6).



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5

17 But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. 18 For we wanted to come to you – certainly I, Paul, did, again and again – but Satan blocked our way. 19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? 20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

3:1 So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. 2 We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, 3 so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For you know quite well that we are destined for them. 4 In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. 5 For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain.

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

- Box "But" indicating *contrast* in vv. 17, 18.
- Circle "orphaned" in v. 17.
- Box "For" indicating *reason* in vv. 18, 19.
- Underline "hope," "joy," and "crown" in v. 19.
- Bracket "when he comes" in v. 19.
- Box "So" indicating *result* in 3:1.
- Circle "Athens" in v. 1.
- Bracket "our brother and co-worker" in v. 2.
- Underline "strengthen" and "encourage" in v. 2.
- Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 3.
- Circle "trials" in v. 3 and "persecuted" in v. 4.
- Bracket "For this reason" in v. 5.
- Circle "in vain" in v. 5.

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. Describe Paul's relationship to the Thessalonians based on his *tone* and his *words* to them (2:17-3:5).
2. *Figuratively* speaking, Paul says, "we were orphaned" (v. 17). What does he mean *literally*?
3. Given what Paul says in verse 18, what do you think the Thessalonians are hearing from their detractors?
4. Paul says, "For we wanted to come to you" (v. 18). Why?
5. Paul uses two *rhetorical* questions to make a point in verse 19. Why not *just* say, "Indeed you are our glory and joy" (v. 20), and leave it at that?
6. To what future event does verse 19 refer?
7. Paul, Silas, and Timothy leave Thessalonica together and later wind up together in Corinth. Trace their movements in between (see Ac 17:10, 14-15; 1Th 3:2; Ac 18:5).
8. *Why* is Timothy sent back to Thessalonica and *what* makes it necessary?
9. Explain what Paul taught the Thessalonians about trials and persecution.
10. **Discussion:** Paul speculates that their labors in Thessalonica might have been in vain. Is he concerned for the salvation of the Thessalonians? If not, what is he concerned about? Talk it over.

Commentary On The Text

About 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5, one commentator writes: "First Thessalonians has been called 'a classic of friendship,' and here is a passage where Paul's deep affection for his friends breathes through his words" (William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, 2nd ed., DSB, 224). His tone is warmly personal and his words deeply affectionate. In the first paragraph (2:17-20) he describes being forced to leave Thessalonica (Ac 17:10), the emotional toll that leaving took not only on him but also on Silas and Timothy (1Th 2:17), their repeated efforts to return to Thessalonica that were frustrated by Satan (v. 18), and how much the Thessalonian believers mean to them (vv. 19-20).

In the first paragraph (2:17-20), Paul writes that he, Silas, and Timothy were "torn away" from the church, which left the three of them feeling like orphaned children, who had been torn away from their parents (v. 17) — they, *like the Thessalonians*, felt orphaned by their involuntary departure. And even though the Thessalonians were out of sight for a while, they were never out of mind. In fact, the three, especially Paul ("I, Paul," v. 18), wanted so strongly to return to Thessalonica that they tried repeatedly to do so, but their every effort was frustrated by Satan, who makes putting roadblocks in the way of the gospel his mission. The idea behind the term translated "blocked" (v. 18) is "that of cutting up a road to make it impassable, and thence of *hindering in general*" (Leon Morris, *The First Epistle to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, 95, italics added).

Why the strong desire to see the Thessalonians again? Paul explains *why* using two rhetorical questions: "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?" In other words, Paul, Silas, and Timothy wanted to see the Thessalonians again because these believers were their "hope," "joy," and lit., "crown of boasting." "They were his **hope**: their development was what he lived for as a parent lives to see his children grow up to maturity, to produce and reproduce. They were his **joy**; they filled his life with sunshine as he thought of what they used to be, what they had become, and what they would be by the grace of God. There were his **crown**; they themselves were the symbol of God's blessing on his life and ministry" (Thomas L. Constable, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 697). The use of rhetorical questions is for emphasis. "The 'crown of exulta-

tion' ['crown in which we will glory,' NIV] alludes to the wreath which was awarded to the victor in an athletic contest: victory in such a contest afforded the victor and all associated with him ample ground for [*kauxēsis*] ('boasting')" (Bruce, 56). Paul is referring here to the judgment seat of Christ before which every believer will appear to be rewarded for running a good race in this life. This judgment and awards ceremony occurs following the return of Jesus described in 4:13-17 (cf. 2Co 5:10).

In the second paragraph (3:1-6), Paul writes that in response to Satan's hindering, he and Silas sent Timothy from Athens to Thessalonica to (*purpose*) "strengthen" the church *spiritually* and "encourage" it *emotionally*. Clearly, the three of them knew what a persecuted church needed. Timothy was to "strengthen and encourage" the church, so that (*result*) no one would be "unsettled" by the "trials" (v. 3) and "persecution" (v. 4) coming their way. The word translated "unsettled" (cf. "shaken," NET) suggests that Timothy was to minister to the church, so that its members might not have *second thoughts* regarding their faith in the face of skeptical outsiders. Paul knew the harassment they faced might give them pause, if they did not understand that such was the lot of all those who believe. So he reminds them of what he taught them when he was with them. He writes: "We kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know" (v. 4). Persecution was not a sign of something gone wrong with their faith; on the contrary, it was a sign of something gone right with it. Timothy was also to report back to Paul as to whether there was anything left to show for the ministry in Thessalonica.

In a nutshell, Paul was aware of the Thessalonians' *spiritual* immaturity and *emotional* vulnerability, likely aggravated by his abrupt departure, and he was uncertain as to whether their faith and warm relationship to him had held up under testing, so to neutralize Satan's efforts, he and Silas sent Timothy to establish them in the faith and assure them of Paul's continuing affection for them.

An application is difficult to draw from this passage because it is so personal and historically rooted. Nevertheless, the Thessalonians' response to persecution and the warm relationship between them and Paul are at the heart of it. Both are rooted in a shared relationship with Jesus Christ and shared suffering. So Paul leveraged his relationship to them to strengthen them to resist Satan's attempts to use their trials and suffering to unsettle their faith.

Word Studies/Notes

2:17 **But** Paul contrasts himself, Silas, and Timothy, i.e., “we,” to “the Jews” of 2:14-16, who “displease God and are hostile to everyone in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved.”

v. 17 **orphaned** Cf. “torn away” (ESV); “separated” (NET); “bereft” (RSV). “The verb [aporphanisthentes] occurs only here in the New Testament . . . Literally, the meaning is, first, *to be orphaned*; then, *to be bereaved*. However, the meaning of the prefix ([apo], *from, away from*) of the composite verb is brought out better in the rendering which we favor, namely, *to be torn away from*” (William Hendriksen, *Exposition of 1 and II Thessalonians: Commentary on 1 Thessalonians*, NTC, 74). “Paul and his companions had to leave Thessalonica prematurely, and for Paul the separation was an especially sorrowful one. He compared it to being *orphaned*. He felt *torn* from them. However even though absent in body his readers were very present in his affections” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 1 Thessalonians,” 2023 ed., 32, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/1thessalonians.pdf). “Paul is like a mother (v. 7), a father (v.11) and now an orphan” (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on 1Th 2:17).

v. 19 **hope, joy, crown** “The connective [gar, ‘for’] explains the writers’ longing to see their Thessalonian friends. Those friends fill their hearts with hope and joy and exultation—hope that the divine work so well begun in them will increase to maturity, joy in the evident genuineness of their faith, exultation as they look forward to points to such converts as the fruit of their service before the tribunal of Christ” (F. F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 45, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 56).

v. 19 **crown . . . glory** “Paul’s rhetorical questions tie the Thessalonians into Paul’s anticipation of the Lord Jesus’ coming and presence. They will bring him joy and be *a victor’s wreath for him to glory in* at that future moment of truth. As always with Paul, this is a boasting or glorying in what God has done (cf. 1 Cor. 1:31), not in personal accomplishment (Rom 3:27; 4:2; cf. 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 2:16) . . . The future even Paul is looking toward is identical with the appearance of every Christian before the *bema* (‘judgment seat’) of Christ (2 Cor 5:10), where the works of every Christ will be evaluated” (Robert L. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, 262, italics added).

v. 20 **when he comes** Cf. “at his coming” (ESV, NET, NKJV). Here the noun is *parousia*, which in extrabiblical Greek sometimes meant a ruler’s visit to a certain place. *Parousia* comes from two words; “to be” and “present.” It may point to the moment of arrival to initiate a visit, or it may focus on the stay initiated by the arrival. In the NT

the word applies to the return of Jesus Christ. The various facets of this future visit are defined by the contexts in which *Parousia* appears. In this instance it is Jesus’ examination of his servants subsequent to his coming for them (4:15-17) that is in view” (Thomas, 262).

3:1 **So** As a *result* of their “intense longing” (2:17) to see the Thessalonians, when they “could stand it no longer” (3:1), they, namely, Paul and Silas, sent Timothy to Thessalonica (v. 2).

v. 1 **Athens** “Evidently Paul traveled from Berea to Athens without the companionship of Timothy and Silas. When he reached Athens he sent word back to Berea (by the Berean Christians who had accompanied him) for Timothy and Silas to join him in Athens as soon as possible (Acts 17:15). Apparently Timothy and Silas did so. Their mutual concern for the Thessalonian church led Paul and Silas to dispatch Timothy to Thessalonica (1 Thes. 3:1-2). Silas also returned to Macedonia shortly after Timothy’s departure, probably to check on the Philippian church. Silas and Timothy both returned to Macedonia to rejoin Paul in Corinth, Paul’s next port of call after Athens (Acts 18:1, 5)” (Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 697-98). “We . . . left by ourselves” in this verse “probably means: Silvanus and I without the valued presence of Timothy” (Hendriksen, 83).

v. 2 **our brother, co-worker** Cf. “our brother and God’s co-worker” (ESV). Translations differ in their renderings of this verse because of variant readings in different Greek manuscripts (see discussion in *The NET Bible*, 3tc on 1Th 3:2). Given its possible renderings, the verse can mean Timothy, “‘fellow worker with us in the work of God’ but more probably means ‘God’s fellow worker’—‘fellow worker with God (in God’s work)’” (Bruce, 61).

vv. 3, 4 **trials, persecuted** Not a reference to physical suffering exclusively. “It is reasonable to understand *thlipsis* in 1:6 [‘severe suffering’ NIV] as the distress and anguish of heart experience by persons who broke with their past as they received the gospel . . . The Thessalonians too were redefining their relationship with the larger society” (Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, 48, 49).

v. 5 **in vain** “Paul was not concerned that they had lost their salvation; this they could never do (1:4). They could, however, have ceased to walk by faith, not trusting God in all circumstances of life. Paul’s concern was that his labor might have been in vain, not that their faith had been in vain” (Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 698).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Strengthen one another to resist Satan's attempts to use trials
and persecution to unsettle you in your faith.

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

I remember the moment I met each of my children face-to-face. I knew I loved them but when I first laid eyes on them my heart felt like it was going to burst out of my chest. At that moment I had such hope for my little nuggets. I had big dreams and giant plans for their future. Somewhere down the line I realized that my expectations for my kids are just that, my expectations. Have you seen that meme that compares what we thought parenting would look like to what it actually is? Raising children is a whole lot different than what I expected. Don't get me wrong. Parenting is fun, exciting and challenging but I thought I would be a Girl Scout mom and my husband would be a T-ball coach. My children, on the other hand, had completely different paths carved out for themselves. Though their interests and activities were vastly different from what I expected, one thing I'm ridiculously thankful for is their continuously growing faith in the Lord. Once again, I expected them to be at church every moment the doors were open and participate in Christian-based activities on their school campus. But their faith is their own and doesn't look like what I thought it would. Instead, it's blossomed into a unique and beautiful relationship with the Lord that is standing the tests of time and trials as they get older. Isn't that our biggest hope? It's nice to have accomplished children, but considerably better to witness our children as followers of Jesus Christ. We're praying you have moments of true discipleship this week and witness their growing fruit.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5

1. How did Paul describe his Thessalonian friends?
2. Who did Paul send to Thessalonica and why?
3. Why was Paul concerned about their faith?

What Do You Think?

How did Paul know Satan was blocking his return and not Jesus?

What Do You Do?

Everybody loves being told they are doing well. When you see Christlike behavior in your family members this week, let them know you see Jesus at work in their life.

CORE COMPETENCY: Compassion

I believe God wants me to help others in need.

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."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids 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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The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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