

I THESSALONIANS, CHAPTER THREE  
(2:17—3:13)

Chapter Topic:

**Paul's Current Dealings  
with The Thessalonians**



“When I could no longer forbear, I sent Timothy unto you.” I  
Thess. 3:1-2

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

### CHAPTER THREE BEGINS AT 2:17

Perhaps it looks as if we have a lot of nerve to say that chapter three should begin at 2:17. But if we regard the chapters as being rather complete and unified discussions of one particular topic, then we should by all means include 2:17-20 along with the material in chapter three. 2:17-20 is plainly a part of the same subject matter that Paul writes more about in chapter three.

Notice in the outline of chapter three how that the material in 2:17-3:10 all flows together into one discussion of "Paul's Current Dealings With The Thessalonians":

- III. Paul's current dealings with the Thessalonians; 2:17-3:10
  - 1. Paul's desire for personal visit hindered; 2:17-3:10
  - 2. Timothy sent; 3:1-5
  - 3. Joy upon Timothy's return; 3:6-10.

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

### I Thessalonians, chapter three (2:17—3:13)

Chapter Topic—"Paul's Current Dealings With the Thessalonians"

1. Paul had been taken from the Thessalonians for a short time in \_\_\_\_\_ but not in \_\_\_\_\_, 2:17
2. What had Paul endeavored to do? 2:17  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Who prevented Paul from coming unto them? 2:18.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. The Thessalonians were Paul's \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ of rejoicing. 2:19
5. The Thessalonians were Paul's hope, etc., "in the \_\_\_\_\_ of our Lord Jesus at his \_\_\_\_\_" 2:19
6. The Thessalonians were Paul's \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, 2:20.
7. Where was Paul when he decided it would be good to be left alone? 3:1. \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Whom did Paul send back to Thessalonica to establish them? 3:2. \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Paul desired that they would not be moved from their faith by these \_\_\_\_\_, 3:3
10. Unto what are we appointed? 3:3  
\_\_\_\_\_.
11. When Paul was with them, what had he told them would happen? 3:4.  
\_\_\_\_\_.

### CHAPTER THREE

12. When Paul could no longer forbear his fears for the Thessalonians, he \_\_\_\_\_ to know (about) their \_\_\_\_\_, 3:5
13. By whom did Paul fear that they might have been tempted? 3:5. \_\_\_\_\_.
14. If they had yielded to temptations, Paul's labors could have been \_\_\_\_\_, 3:5
15. Were the tidings from the Thessalonians good or bad? (Circle which.) 3:6
16. Timothy brought back tidings of their \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, 3:6
17. True or false (circle which)—The Thessalonians wanted to see Paul again, just as he wanted to see them. 3:6
18. True or false (circle which)—Timothy's report from Thessalonica distressed Paul. 3:7
19. True or false (circle which)—When Paul wrote this letter, he was in pleasant circumstances. 3:7
20. In 3:8, Paul said, "Now we \_\_\_\_\_ if ye \_\_\_\_\_ in the Lord."
21. Was Paul able to express his thankfulness for the Thessalonians? 3:9. Yes or no. (Circle which)
22. What was Paul praying that he might get to do? 3:10. (2 answers)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
23. True or false (circle which)—Paul considered the faith of the Thessalonians to be complete. 3:10
24. To whom did Paul address his prayer? 3:11. (Two answers)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
25. Paul prayed that the Lord would "direct \_\_\_\_\_ unto you." 3:11
26. Paul prayed that God would make to increase and abound in what? 3:12. \_\_\_\_\_.
27. The end (or object) of Paul's prayer was that the Lord "may \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_ unblameable in \_\_\_\_\_ before God." 3:13
28. At what time are we to be before God, even our Father? 3:13.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

29. Who will be with Jesus when He comes? 3:13

30. Memorize I Thess. 3:12-13.

### I THESSALONIANS, CHAPTER THREE (2:17—3:13)

#### Chapter Topic, "*Paul's Current Dealings With the Thessalonians*"

#### Outline

- I. Paul's current dealings with the Thessalonians; 2:17-3:10
  - A. Paul's desire for personal visit hindered; 2:17-20
    1. Paul's desire to see them; 2:17
    2. His efforts hindered; 2:18
    3. How much the Thessalonians meant to Paul; 2:19-20
  - B. Timothy sent; 3:1-5
    1. Paul remained at Athens alone; 3-1
    2. Timothy sent to establish and comfort them; 3:2-5
      - a. So that no man would be moved by afflictions; 3:2-4
        - (1) We are appointed unto afflictions; 3:3
        - (2) Paul had warned them of afflictions; 3:4
        - (3) They knew afflictions had occurred.
      - b. So that Paul could know of their faith; 3:5
        - (1) Lest the tempter had tempted them.
        - (2) Lest his labor had been in vain.
  - C. Joy upon Timothy's return; 3:6-10
    1. What Timothy reported; 3:6
      - a. Their faith and charity.
      - b. They had good remembrance of Paul always.
      - c. They desired greatly to see Paul again.
    2. Paul's reaction to Timothy's report; 3:7-10
      - a. Comforted; 3:7
      - b. Caused to live; 3:8
      - c. Too thankful to express his joy; 3:9
      - d. Praying to see them again; 3:10
- Conclusion; The apostle's prayer for the Thessalonians; 3:11-13
  1. That God would direct his way unto them; 3:11
  2. That their love would increase and abound; 3:12-13
    - a. Toward one another and all men; 3:12
    - b. Abound as Paul's love abounded toward them; 3:12
    - c. Purpose of this petition—that their hearts would be established unblameable; 3:13

You should NOW memorize the topic of this chapter, and the three main points (A, B, and C) under it, and their Scripture limitations.

## THOUGHTS FROM THE OUTLINE

### Of I Thessalonians, chapter three

Paul's dealings with the Thessalonians AFTER he left Thessalonica show the feelings of a true man of God toward his converts after he has departed from them. They never cease to be upon his heart. He will do anything possible to help them remain true to the Lord, and he has no greater joy than to hear news of their continued faithfulness and spiritual growth.

Christians should realize that it is a great grief to a minister whom they may love, if they do not remain true to Christ when he has gone away from them.

#### *Text (2:17)*

**17 But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season, in presence not in heart, endeavored the more exceedingly to see your face with great desire:**

#### *Translation and Paraphrase*

17. But we, brethren, being bereaved (by our separation) from you, (like a father is grieved when he has lost his children, even though it has been but) for a (short) time (such as the passing) of an hour, (and we have been separated from you only) in presence, not in heart, we, (because of our grief) have hurried (about, seeking) more abundantly (than you can imagine) to see your face with great desire.

#### *Notes (2:17)*

1. Can you imagine how a father in a Communistic country would feel to see his children taken out of his house by the police, and sent away to state schools, while he himself was sent off to a slave labor camp? Paul's feelings when he was driven away from the Thessalonians were equally intense.

Paul uses the word *aporphanidzo* (the root of which gives us our word "orphan") to describe his feelings. The word means "to bereave, as one separated from parent or child."

We love the churches where we have served. But probably most preachers do not have the intensity of love and yearning for them that Paul had.

## 2:17,18 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

2. Paul had not been separated from the Thessalonians very long when he wrote this letter. He says it was "a short time, such as the time of an hour." McGarvey says that "this short time" was about six months. But though the time had not been long, the pain of being separated was not any less keen.
3. Christian people have many farewells to say in this life. Thank God, we shall not have these in the world to come. But even in this life, Christians are not separated in heart nor affection, merely in presence. Thus Paul was separated from the Thessalonians only in presence, not in heart. Paul wrote a similar thought to the Colossians. Col. 2:5.
4. We do not know just what all Paul had done to try to get back to Thessalonica. But he had earnestly endeavoured (literally, "hastened" or "hurried" about) to get back to see them.
5. Not only did Paul desire to get back to see the Thessalonians, but he also desired to see his brethren in other places. He wrote to the Romans, "I long to see you." Rom. 1:11, 13. Paul's heart was big enough to love all of his brethren with all of him. Like a parent with a dozen children, he did not love any of them the less, just because there were so many to love.

### *Text (2:18)*

**18 because we would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

18. Wherefore, we were resolved to come to you, even I Paul (myself), once and twice (once and again), and (then) Satan cut us off (so we could not come).

### *Notes (2:18)*

1. Paul could not get back to Thessalonica because Satan hindered him. Satan has always tried to interfere with the work of Christian teachers. It was Satan who tried to break up the church in Jerusalem by forbidding the apostles to preach, and persecuting its members so that they were scattered.
2. The word "hindered" (Gr., *egkopto*) is a military term, and indicates the obstruction of an enemy's progress by breaking up the road, destroying bridges, etc. Did you ever think of Satan as a "road-breaker"? This surely explains why missionaries sometimes have so much trouble getting to various places. Paul used the same term, "hindered," in writing to the Romans. Rom. 15:22.

3. We do not know exactly what means Satan used to block Paul so he could not get back to Thessalonica. But Satan has many means—sickness, poverty, persecution, etc. Perhaps Satan hindered Paul by the “distress and affliction,” mentioned in I Thess. 3:5.
4. Paul had an unhesitating belief in the reality and personal activity of Satan. See Ephesians 2:2; 4:27; II Cor. 4:4; 12:17; Acts 26:18; I Timothy 5:15. We must believe that the devil is real, if we claim to have an apostolic faith.

*Text (2:19-20)*

**19** For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at his coming? **20** For ye are our glory and our joy.

*Translation and Paraphrase*

19. (We have desired so greatly to see you,) for what is our hope, or joy, or crown in which we rejoice (like an athlete rejoices in his laurel of victory)? Are not even you (Thessalonians our hope, joy, and crown)? (Indeed you are those very things to us, and you will be our crown when we stand) before our Lord Jesus at his coming.
20. For ye are our glory and joy.

*Notes (2:19-20)*

1. To a gospel preacher like Paul, his converts are his . . .
  - (1) Hope
  - (2) Joy
  - (3) Crown of rejoicing
  - (4) Glory; 2:20
2. When we stand before Christ at His coming, the souls that we have won, and the work that we have done for Christ, will be our hope, and joy, and glory, and crown. Let us therefore win souls while we have opportunity.
3. Numerous references in the New Testament teach us that Christians shall be rewarded according to their works. We did not say *saved* by their works, but rewarded according to their works. I Cor. 3:14: “If any man’s work shall abide . . . he shall receive a reward.”

This fact partly explains why Paul was so uneasy when he thought that the Thessalonians might have forsaken the faith. If they stood fast for Christ, he would have a reward. If they

shrunk back from the Lord, he would suffer loss. I Cor. 3:15. (Of course Paul's concern for them was prompted more by love for them than by self-interest.)

4. Victorious athletes in Paul's time often received garland crowns as symbols of their victories. They could point to the crowns as objects of pride and proof of victory. Likewise Paul could point to the churches he had established as emblems of victory and tokens of his joy. Philippians 4:1: "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord."

In the absence of his king, Paul had won a crown, the Thessalonians. When he met the king, he would lay his crown before the king's feet.

5. The fact that the Thessalonians would be Paul's joy and crown in heaven should make it plain once for all that we shall know one another in the future life. Otherwise how could Paul glory in them before Christ at His coming?
6. To explain how the souls we win will be our *glory*, we can do no better than to quote Daniel 12:3: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."
7. This verse mentions the "coming" of our Lord Jesus. The Greek word translated *coming* is *parousia*. It is used here for the first time in the Thessalonian epistles. You should get to know this word as you will often find it in books, even those all written in English.

*Parousia* literally means "a being alongside," and is usually translated "coming" or "presence." It is frequently used in Greek literature to refer to the visit (or coming) of some official or prominent personage. It refers in the New Testament to the "coming" or arrival of men, such as Stephanas (I Cor. 16:17) and Titus (2 Cor. 7:6-7). It is applied seventeen times to the second coming of Jesus.

*Parousia* is used twenty-four times in the New Testament. In the King James version it is translated "coming" twenty-two times and "presence" twice. It is found in Matt. 24:3; 24:27, 37, 39; I Cor. 15:23; 16:17; II Cor. 7:6, 7; 10:10; Phil. 1:26; 2:12; I Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; II Thess. 2:1, 8, 9; James 5:7, 8; II Peter 1:16; 3:4, 12; I John 2:28.

We have given all these detailed facts, so that when we come to this word, *parousia*, in future verses, you will already know its meaning and uses.



## STUDY SUGGESTION

Turn to the "Did You Learn?" questions following chapter 3, and see if you can answer questions 1 through 9. These deal with the section, 2:17-20.

(We started the study of chapter three at 2:17. For our reasons for doing this, the outline of chapter three, and the "Thinking Through Thessalonians" questions over chapter three, turn back to the pages following notes on 2:16.)

*Text (3:1)*

**1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone;**

*Translation and Paraphrase*

1. Wherefore (on account of your being so dear to us, and the fact that I could not personally return to you), when we could no longer conceal (and endure the pain of being separated from you), we thought it (would be) good to be left behind at Athens alone (rather than to continue suffering anxiety over you).

*Notes (3:1)*

1. Christians frequently discover that things do not work out as they sincerely believe they should. God often leads us in paths not of our own choosing, and not according to the way we understand things. Of course, God knows best and can foresee the future, and always works things out for the best. Romans 8:28.  
Paul probably thought very sincerely that it was the will of God that he return to Thessalonica. But God did not open up the way (and when Satan blocks us, only God can open the way). Meanwhile his fears about the young Thessalonian Christians were heaping up day after day.
2. Finally Paul could stand the anxiety no more, and decided that it would be better for him to remain at Athens alone, than to enjoy the assistance of Timothy and continue worrying about the Thessalonians. So Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica from Athens. For further details about the moves of Paul, Timothy, and Silas at this time, see Introductory Section VI, paragraphs 16 to 20.
3. When Paul says that *we* could no longer forbear, it is certain that he was speaking only of himself. He could not have been left *alone* if Silas or other helpers had been with him. Writers

### 3:1,2 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

often refer to themselves as “we” (an editorial “we”). It does not sound as boastful to say, “We did something,” as to say, “I did it.”

4. The word translated “forbear” (Gr., *stego*) means “cover, cover up with silence, bear up against, endure, bear, forbear.” (Thayer) Paul finally reached the point where he could not cover up his fears about the Thessalonians. He had to do something.
5. Although Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica from Athens, he wrote this epistle from Corinth later.

#### *Text (3:2)*

**2 and sent Timothy, our brother, and God’s minister in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and comfort you concerning your faith;**

#### *Translation and Paraphrase*

2. And (so) we sent Timothy, our brother (in the Lord, and minister of God), and fellow-worker with God in the (work of spreading the) good news of Christ, so that he might establish you (in the right beliefs and practices) and exhort you concerning your faith.

#### *Notes (3:2)*

1. While the anger of the Jews was directed at the whole church and the gospel itself, their anger was focused on Paul. So Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica. Timothy apparently encountered no trouble in making the trip. Paul would certainly have had trouble.
2. Paul calls Timothy:
  - (1) Our brother.
  - (2) Minister of God.
  - (3) Fellowlabourer in the gospel. Compare I Cor. 3:9.  
(The title “minister” is omitted in the American Standard Version, Nestle’s Greek text, etc. It has only limited support in the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament.)
3. Preachers of the gospel should revel in the way Paul speaks of his fellow-workers. Compare Phil. 4:2. Paul calls them “brothers,” “fellow-workers,” etc. Paul had no jealousy. Whenever anyone did anything for Christ, Paul was glad.
4. Timothy had two things to do for the Thessalonians:
  - (1) *Establish* them. This means to make them stable, and set them fast in the faith.

- (2) *Comfort* them. This is the term also translated "exhort." For the meaning of "exhort" and "exhortation," see notes on I Thess. 2:3, par. 2.

Establishing and comforting are two things necessary for every young Christian, and many older ones also.

### *Text (3:3-4)*

**3** that no man be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that hereunto we are appointed. **4** For verily, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we are to suffer affliction; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

3. (I sent Timothy unto you) so that none (of you) would be shaken about (and distressed) by these troubles (which you are having). For you yourselves know that (in God's arrangement of things) we are appointed unto this (very) thing (affliction).
4. For (you surely remember that) even while we were (still) with you, (that) we kept telling you before (anything had yet happened), that we (as Christians) were certain to be pressed (with afflictions), just as it (soon) came to pass, and (as) you know (very well how) it has happened. (Therefore, do not be disturbed by this turn of events.)

### *Notes (3:3-4)*

1. Often when people become Christians and discover that they experience trouble and sorrow afterwards, they wonder if they have made a mistake. They wonder if they are actually saved, thinking that their sufferings are an indication of God's judgment upon them.
2. But notice that Paul says in these verses that we are actually appointed in God's arrangement of things to suffer tribulation. The "we" refers to all Christians. Let them all hear it.

The words "tribulation" and "affliction" come from the Greek *thlipsis* and mean "a pressing, pressing together, pressure, oppression, affliction, distress, etc." (Thayer) Tribulation is our lot as Christians.

John 16:33—"In the world we shall have tribulation."

Acts 14:22—We enter into the kingdom of God through much tribulation. See also John 15:18-19; Mark 10:30.

3. But let us remember that God is not the instigator of all our troubles. God did not bring the sufferings of Job upon him. The

### 3:4,5 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

devil did it. (See Job, chapters 1 and 2.) If Job had accused God of hurting him, Job would have accused God foolishly. Job 1:22. Christians are appointed to suffer, probably because the evil world cannot stand the contrast of sanctified lives to its wickedness. God permits this evil to exist, but the time is coming when God will punish those who afflict us, and give rest to those who are afflicted. II Thess. 1:6-7.

4. We are happy to report that Paul's hope that the Thessalonians had not been moved by affliction was found to be a fact. II Thess. 1:4. They did continue to bear their tribulations without giving up the faith. It *is* possible for suffering people to be victorious over persecutions, so that "no man should be moved (or shaken) by these afflictions."
5. Paul seems to have had to jog the memory of the Thessalonians several times. In this verse he asks, "Don't you remember how that while I was with you I told you that we would have suffering?" Compare II Thess. 2:5; 3:10. Such verses as Acts 14:22 indicate that Paul did indeed warn his converts of tribulation to come.

#### *Text (3:5)*

**5 For this cause I also, when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor should be in vain.**

#### *Translation and Paraphrase*

5. Because of this (tribulation which I knew would befall you), I also, when I could no longer conceal (and endure) (my fears about what might have happened to you) sent (Timothy unto you), so that I could know (how) your faith (had held out), lest by any means the tempter (Satan) had (successfully) tempted you, and our toil (among you) had become in vain (because you had fallen away from the faith).

#### *Notes (3:5)*

1. The fears of a true minister that Satan may have destroyed the faith of his converts can be an overpowering burden to him. Paul's fears about the Thessalonians were so intense that he could not even preach in Corinth, until Timothy and Silas arrived with the reassuring news from Thessalonica. Acts 18:5; I Thess. 3:6-7.

2. This verse is so closely joined to the preceding verses that it cannot be understood without reading them, but when those verses are read along with this one, this one becomes very plain.

The "cause" which made Paul send Timothy to learn about their faith, is the "tribulation" (mentioned in 3:3-4) which he knew would befall them and indeed had.

3. Paul was mainly concerned about the *faith* of the Thessalonians. He sent Timothy to learn about their *faith*, I Thess. 3:7. Their faith was his main concern rather than their physical welfare or even their survival. There is a rather obvious point in this for us.
4. Of course, "the tempter" is Satan. I Thess. 2:18. Satan's temptations could have turned the Thessalonians away from the faith.
5. Satan tempts us "by any means." Some of his methods are smooth and slick. Some of them are iron-fisted and cruel. Satan can tempt people by incontinency. I Cor. 7:5. Satan beguiles and corrupts us from the simplicity that is in Christ. II Cor. 11:3.
6. When Satan's temptations are successful, the preacher's *labor* is in vain. (The word *labor* used here is *kopos*. For its meaning, see notes on I Th. 1:3, par. 2.) Paul often expressed the fear that his work might be *in vain*.

Gal. 2:2—"Let by any means I should run, or had run *in vain*."

I Cor. 3:15—"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

Phil. 2:16—"That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run *in vain*, neither laboured *in vain*."

7. The fact that Paul's work among the Thessalonians would have been *in vain* if Satan had successfully tempted them, shows that people CAN be lost, even after they are once saved.

No one can deny that the Thessalonians were saved. They were elect. I Th. 1:4. They had the joy of the Holy Spirit. I Th. 1:6.

As long as they remained saved, Paul's work among them could not have been in vain. The fact that Paul feared that his work among them might be in vain proves that they could become lost again. They were elect, but not unconditionally elect.

### STUDY SUGGESTION

Turn now to the "Did You Learn?" questions at the end of chapter 3, and see if you can answer questions 10 to 18.

*Text (3:6)*

**6 But when Timothy came even now unto us from you, and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also to see you;**

*Translation and Paraphrase*

6. But now since Timothy has come (back) to us from you, and told us the good news about (your steadfast) faith and your love, and (how) that you have (such affectionate and) good recollection of us at all times, desiring to see us, just as we also (desire to see) you (again),

*Notes (3:6)*

1. "As cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." Proverbs 25:25. The news which Timothy brought back to Paul from Thessalonica was fully that refreshing to him.
2. This verse (3:6) starts a new section in the outline, entitled "Joy upon Timothy's return." (3:6-10).
3. Timothy and Silas came to Paul in Corinth. Acts 18:1,5. It was there that he wrote I & II Thessalonians.
4. The fact that Paul writes, "Now when Timothy came," seems to indicate that he sat down and wrote this letter almost immediately upon Timothy's return.
5. Here is what Timothy's report about the Thessalonians contained:
  - (1) Good news about their faith (inward religion).
  - (2) Good news about their love (outward religion).  
(The word translated "charity" actually means "love.")
  - (3) The report that they had good remembrance of Paul always.
  - (4) Also the news that they desired to see Paul again.  
This was an encouraging report in every way.
6. You have no doubt often heard it said that the phrase "preach the gospel" means "bring good news." That is true, and this meaning is clearly pointed out in this verse. Paul uses the same word (*euaggelidzo*) to describe Timothy's bringing a good report to him, that is used in many other places to describe preaching the gospel of Christ. Timothy's report was good news of one kind. The gospel is also good news, but of a greater kind.

*Text (3:7-8)*

**7** for this cause, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your faith: **8** for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

*Translation and Paraphrase*

7. Because of this (good news about you), we are (greatly) comforted, brethren, about you (even) in all our distress and tribulation on account of your faith.
8. (This comfort means more to us than you can imagine), because now we live if you stand fast in the Lord.

*Notes (3:7-8)*

1. The depth of Paul's longing for the Thessalonians can be seen in his statement, "We live if ye stand fast in the Lord." This statement implies an opposite one: "We die if you don't stand fast."
2. Paul had certainly been in affliction and distress before Timothy returned from Thessalonica with good news. Before Timothy's arrival he had not even been stirred to preach. Acts 18:5. In Corinth the Jews blasphemed against him. Acts 18:6. The Lord even saw fit to appear to Paul in Corinth to encourage him. Acts 18:8-9.
3. Paul urged the Thessalonians to "stand fast" in the Lord. It may not be enough in itself to "stand still," but we certainly ought to "stand" against the onslaughts of Satan and not to yield. Ephesians 6:11, 13, 14. "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to *stand*." I Cor. 15:1: "The gospel . . . wherein ye *stand*."
4. The people of a church are so close to a minister that they have power to make his life happy or supremely miserable. The ministerial life and energy of even an apostle seemed dependent on the sympathy, faith, and steadfastness of the brethren. Elijah wanted to die when he thought that all the people had forsaken Jehovah. I Kings 19:4. John the apostle had no greater joy than to hear that his children walked in truth. III John 4.

*Text (3:9)*

**9** For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

*Translation and Paraphrase*

9. For what kind of thanks can we (possibly) repay to God (that would truly show our feelings) about you? For (such thanks would have to be great enough to include all the joy in which we rejoice on account of you (as we pray) before our God;

*Notes (3:9)*

1. This verse all boils down to a simple question: "How can we ever be thankful enough for you?"
2. The question begun here in 3:9 extends on through the tenth verse, where it is extended into a description of how Paul prayed long and hard for them. To make the question more apparent in our paraphrase, we have inserted the question mark into the ninth verse, and made a separate sentence out of the last half of verse nine and all of verse ten.
3. Paul felt like he should "repay" or "recompense" back to God sufficient thanks to show how grateful he was for the Thessalonians. Paul found this to be impossible, for he was too thankful for the Thessalonians to express it.
4. The expression, "joy wherewith we joy," is rather a Hebrew way of expressing tremendous, superlative joy.

*Text (3:10)*

**10 night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith?**

*Translation and Paraphrase*

10. (For we do pray) night and day, more than can be measured, asking (God to make it possible for us) to see your face (once again), and to perfect the things which are lacking in your faith.

*Notes (3:10)*

1. Paul candidly states in this verse that the faith of the Thessalonians was imperfect. He indicates in chapters four and five what some of the things were which were lacking in their faith.
2. Perhaps it seems rather blunt to tell someone, as Paul told the Thessalonians, "I want to come and see you, so I can perfect your understanding and development." This is especially so in matters of religion, where usually every man's way is clean in his own eyes. Prov. 16:2. But undoubtedly the Thessalonians had the right attitude, and knew very well that they were im-



- perfect in faith and knowledge. They doubtless would have been extremely glad to have had Paul instruct them further.
3. Paul prayed "exceedingly." The word means "superabundantly," "beyond measure."
  4. The way Paul prayed day and night concerning the Thessalonians reminds us of the way King David often prayed in the night, Psalm 119:55. Have you ever awakened in the night, and found yourself thinking about God's law and desiring to pray to God?
  5. New converts are only spiritual babes. I Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:13; I Corinthians 3:1. New converts need to be taught to observe all the things which Jesus commanded us. Matt. 28:20. They need to recognize their limited knowledge and development in spiritual things. They should not be appointed to positions of leadership in churches. I Tim. 3:6, 10. However, they can grow rapidly. And when they have been taught, they should not hold back from serving Christ just because they feel inadequate for the work of witnessing for Christ.
  6. Paul prayed for two things concerning the Thessalonians:
    - (1) That he might see their face.
    - (2) That he might perfect that which was lacking in their faith.
  7. The prayer of Paul that he might get to visit the Thessalonians was answered in due time, for Paul visited Thessalonica on his third missionary trip, and again afterwards. See Introductory Section VI, paragraphs 27 and 28.

*Text (3:11)*

**11 Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way unto you:**

*Translation and Paraphrase*

11. But (now) may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our path (once again) unto you.

*Notes (3:11)*

1. There are numerous brief prayers, such as this one, in the Thessalonian epistles. I Thess. 3:11-13; 5:23; II Thess. 1:11; 2:16; 3:5, 16. These written prayers show the character of Paul's mind. He could break into prayer in speaking or writing at any time. He prayed without ceasing. We should develop a similar habit of praying to God at every moment of joy or need. It should be just as easy as talking to any dear loved one.

### 3:11,12 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

2. The prayer which is started in this verse (and goes to the end of the chapter) forms the conclusion of Part One of I Thessalonians. There is also a prayer near the end of Part Two (at 5:23).
3. This prayer that God would direct Paul's path back to the Thessalonians was answered in due time. See the notes on I Thess. 3:10, par. 7.
4. There is a very notable, even if incidental, testimony to the glory of the Lord Jesus in this verse. Note that Paul addresses his prayer BOTH to God and to Jesus. Evidently Jesus answers prayers as well as God.

But while the subject in this verse is PLURAL (God and the Lord Jesus), the verb is SINGULAR. (This is not apparent in English, but the Greek text shows it plainly.) This should go far to prove that God and Christ Jesus are ONE in the godhead, even though they are separate personalities. (This very Scripture was used by Athanasius against Arius back in the fourth century, to prove the deity of Jesus.)

5. The American Standard Version and the Greek text omit the word "Christ" after Jesus. The word "Christ" is not found in most of the ancient texts. Its omission does not affect the thought one bit.

#### *Text (3:12)*

**12 and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we also *do* toward you;**

#### *Translation and Paraphrase*

12. And may the Lord (Jesus) make you to increase and (even) abound in love for one another, and (also) toward all (men), just as we (do) unto you.

#### *Notes (3:12)*

1. It humbles us to read this prayer of Paul. For we notice that Paul asks the LORD to make them increase in love. We dare not forget at any time, that though we may teach and labor and set an example with all our power, it is the *Lord* who transforms men. We may plant and water, but it is the LORD that gives the increase. I Cor. 3:6. We cannot do God's work for Him.
2. There are two requests in this prayer: (3:11-13)
  - (1) That God may direct our way unto you. 3:11

- (2) That God will make you to increase and abound in love.  
3:12
- (a) In love toward one another.
  - (b) In love toward all men.
3. Paul addressed the second petition of his prayer to the *Lord*. The Lord is Jesus. Acts 2:36; 10:36.
  4. The petition in 3:12 is for the *increase of their love*. Love is the greatest thing in the world. Faith, abilities, knowledge, and even good works, without love are of no avail. I Corinthians 13:1-3. "This is the message which ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." I John 3:11.
  5. For the Thessalonians to have loved all men, in the face of the abuse they were receiving, was indeed a development of character that only God could produce. Christians must love all men, even their enemies and persecutors. True followers of Jesus do not persecute even the worst of men. They may rebuke them and withdraw from them, but they do it out of a desire to lead them to a change of mind, and not as a punishment.
  6. Paul's prayer that the Lord might make their love to increase, seems to have been answered rather definitely. For in II Thess. 1:3, we find Paul expressing thanks that "the charity (love) of each one of you all toward each other aboundeth." God does answer prayer.
  7. After reading Paul's expressions of unlimited love for the Thessalonians in 2:17, 3:8-9, etc., it almost staggers us to read here in 3:21 that Paul says his love for them was increasing. How could it do so? But surely Paul was telling the truth.

### *Text (3:13)*

**13 to the end he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.**

### *Translation and Paraphrase*

13. (We long to see such love abound among you) so that (by means of love) he may establish your hearts (to be) unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all of his holy ones. (Amen)

### *Notes (3:13)*

1. The goal of Paul's fervent prayer for the Thessalonians is something that the world does not want in any degree. Paul agonized

that they would be “unblameable in holiness before God.” People in the world are proud of, and distinguished by, how wicked they can be. Whoever can curse the most violently, drink the most liquor, have the most wives and women, and make the most cutting remarks against “blue-nose,” “Victorian,” “Puritan” Christians is the most esteemed among the world’s elite.

2. Paul prayed that we might be *stablished* unblameable in holiness. “Stablish” (or “establish”) means to “set fast, place firmly, fix, make firm, render constant.” Holiness is not to be a Sunday style, but is to be the well-established pattern of our whole lives.
3. The Thessalonians would become “unblameable in holiness” as the result of the increase of their love. (I Thess. 3:12) You cannot build a holy life without a sincere foundation of love.
4. This holiness within us is to be fully exhibited at the “coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.” We shall never reach the “unblameable” perfectly attained stage in this life, but we shall reach it at the coming of the Lord Jesus. “When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” I John 3:2. Do you have the hope of being like Jesus (and God) when He appears? “Every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he (Jesus or God) is pure.” I John 3:3.

(The word “coming” in this verse is *parousia*. See notes on 2:19, par. 7, concerning this word.)

5. The Lord Jesus will come *with all his saints*. The word here translated *saints* simply means “holy ones.” It is applied to angels as well as people. It probably refers to angels in this verse. Jesus will come back with His holy ones, the angels. (See Special Study on page 247, “The Coming of the Lord With All His Saints.”) Will you be unblameable in holiness when you see Jesus, the holy one, with all His holy angels? God grant us determination and His help that we shall so be.
6. Many ancient manuscripts of the Bible have “Amen” at the close of this verse. We include it in our paraphrase. The “Amen” here fittingly closes not only this prayer, but the whole Part One of the epistle.

### STUDY SUGGESTIONS

1. We urge you now to go back and review the outline of chapter 3 (which is found at 2:17).
2. Also we urge you now to answer (preferably by writing out) questions 19 to 38 from the section that follows immediately.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DID YOU LEARN?

(Questions over I Thessalonians, chapter three)

1. What is the chapter topic of chapter three (2:17—3:10)?
2. Why have we included 2:17-20 with the chapter topic of chapter three?
3. What is the title of the section, 2:17-20?
4. What had Paul endeavoured to do after being driven from Thessalonica? (2:17)
5. Paul was separated from the Thessalonians in presence, but not in what? (2:17)
6. Who had hindered Paul from doing what he desired to do? (2:18)
7. What four things were the Thessalonians unto Paul? (2:19-20)
8. When would the Thessalonians be Paul's crown of rejoicing? (2:19)
9. What is the Greek word which is translated "coming"? (2:19)
10. What is the section (or paragraph) 3:1-5 called in the outline?
11. Whom did Paul send to Thessalonica for him? (3:2)
12. Where was Paul when he sent him? (3:1)
13. What two things was this man to do for the Thessalonians? (3:2)
14. Unto what are we appointed as Christians? (3:3)
15. What had Paul told the Thessalonians while he was still with them would happen? (3:4)
16. Paul was mainly concerned about the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Thessalonians. (3:5)
17. Who did Paul fear had tempted them? (3:5)
18. What effect would there have been on Paul's labor if the Thessalonians had yielded to temptation? (3:5)
19. What is the section 3:6-10 called in the outline?
20. With what does Part One of I Thessalonians close? (See outline)
21. Give the Scripture limitations of this conclusion.
22. Where did Timothy and Silas come to Paul? (3:6)
23. What four things did Timothy report about the Thessalonians to Paul? (3:6)
24. How long after Timothy brought his report from Thessalonica was it before Paul wrote I Thessalonians? (3:6)
25. What effect did Timothy's report have on Paul? (3:7)
26. Paul declared, "Now \_\_\_\_\_ if you stand fast in the Lord." (3:7)
27. Was Paul fully able to express his thanks for the Thessalonians? (3:9)

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

28. For what two things relating to the Thessalonians did Paul pray that he might be permitted to do? (3:10)
29. Was the faith of the Thessalonians perfect? (3:10)
30. When was Paul's prayer request to visit the Thessalonians granted? (3:10)
31. To whom does Paul address his prayer in 3:11?
32. Paul prayed that the Thessalonians might increase in what? (3:12)
33. Toward whom was this increase to be shown? (3:12)
34. What did Paul pray would be established unblameable in holiness? (3:13)
35. When would these be established unblameable? (3:13)
36. What other expression means the same as "saints"? (3:13)
37. Who are the "saints" who will come with Jesus? (3:13)
38. Write out, or recite, from memory I Thess. 3:12-13. It begins, "And the Lord make you to . . ."