

Slide 1

Comfort given and received

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

Last week in chapter 2 we saw, that Paul was deeply involved in the development of the church in Thessalonica.

As the third chapter starts with the word therefore, we realize that what follows in this chapter is strongly linked to the contents of the previous chapter.

Let's go and check out how Paul continues this letter.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-3

- Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.

As the three of them were not able to come together to Thessalonica again, they (Paul, Silvanus and Timothy) decided to send just Timothy in order to build up the church in Thessalonica, strengthening them through the preaching of the Word and his presence among them.

Even today our persecuted brothers and sisters do not need only our prayers, but they also need to have personal interaction with disciples from other places and countries, just to remind them in an even stronger way that they are not forgotten. They need to know in straight forward ways that they are not forgotten by the other members of the Body of Christ. Living in a free society we should keep that in mind. Let's go to the next verses!

1 Thessalonians 3:4-5

- For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.
- For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.

Even though for the time being Satan hindered Paul from coming himself, he definitely wanted to know how they were doing.

In the past he had already told them that he and his coworkers would suffer persecution, so the church should not be surprised to hear that this actually happened to them.

But despite his own troubles Paul wanted to know how they were doing, as he was sure that Satan would attack them also in one way or another.

That is true for us also. We may not experience physical persecution as so many of our brothers and sisters in Christ do, but that doesn't mean Satan will not attack us. As a matter of fact, we need to be more worried if he doesn't attack us, for that means that we're not a problem for him.

1 Thessalonians 3:6-7

- But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also *to see* you — therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith.

While Timothy was sent to the church in Thessalonica to strengthen and comfort them, so now on returning to Paul and the other coworkers, all of them are comforted and strengthened by the news he brings back from his visit to the church in Thessalonica.

Even though it can be dangerous to visit our persecuted brothers and sisters in various countries, most of the time people who do so come back strengthened in their own faith as they see what God is doing in the lives of their brothers and sisters.

But let's continue.

1 Thessalonians 3:8-10

- For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.
- For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?

Not only are Paul and his coworkers now encouraged themselves and giving God thanks and praise for what He is doing among the disciples in Thessalonica, but now even more they long to be able to visit the church in Thessalonica again.

They truly desire to go back to them again to continue to build them up in their faith.

We're faithfully helping several missionaries to continue their work in the countries where God has called them to go.

But how good could it be if we actually would be able to visit them personally also in the countries where they are working for the Kingdom of God!

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

- Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you.
- And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we *do* to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

Paul realizes that in the present circumstances he's not able to decide by himself when he will be able to visit them again. Therefore, he hands that problem over to God, trusting that He will provide a way for them to go there again.

In the mean time they continue to pray to God for these disciples, trusting that He indeed will continue to build them up.

And so should we stand by our brothers and sisters that are suffering for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's make that one of the most important items during our prayer times.

Let's go to the last sheet for today.

Colossians 3:16

- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
- Laat het woord van Christus in rijke mate in u wonen, in alle wijsheid; onderwijs elkaar en wijs elkaar terecht, met psalmen, lofzangen en geestelijke liederen. Zing voor de Heere met dank in uw hart.

This chapter of the 1st letter of Paul to the Thessalonians teaches us also what this verse from his letter to the Colossians tells us.

This is what is needed in any local church, but we can also do this for our brothers and sisters in other churches.

It may start with praying for them, but we always should be open to hear from God what are some other things in which He wants to use us for the furtherance of His Kingdom.

Let's pray!