



1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

Paul continues his defence of his ministry in Thessalonica. The key word in this section is “fellowship”. Paul had not wanted to leave his friends and had worried about them (3:1, 5). Kept from seeing them, he had sent Timothy to find if all was well.

Their perseverance was a comfort and joy to Paul. His concern for them is a challenge to the nature of our fellowship with other Christians.

Heartfelt fellowship

Paul may have been accused of abandoning this vulnerable church. But he wants to make clear that it was not by choice that they had gone quickly and had not returned (2:17). Like a parent losing a child, Paul had been torn away from them.

Our fellowship with other Christians must not be superficial, but heartfelt and sincere. They are now family in Christ.

Sacrificial fellowship

Paul was so concerned for them that he sent Timothy to fetch news, though it was costly to himself. Paul stayed in Athens while Timothy returned. Athens was a place of distress and hard work for Paul (Acts 17). See Phil 2:19-21 and 25-30 on Timothy and Epaphroditus that were sent.

Christian fellowship means gladly making sacrifices for others (Phil 2:3-4). Christ is the supreme example of this (Phil 2:5 and following). What he has done for us, we are to show to others (Acts 20:35).

Fellowship in trials

The trials they were going through (persecution) might have unsettled them. Paul’s fellowship with them in their trials was to encourage them with Timothy, to write to them, to pray for them and to warn them that this is expected. 2 Tim 3:12-13 tells us that Christians should expect persecution. Their lives highlight the ungodly world around.

We share with God’s suffering church across the world. As part of the body, when they hurt, so do we (1 Cor 12:26-27). Suffering prepares us to help others.

Mutual fellowship

Fellowship is not a “one-way street” but mutual. Paul encourages this church, but they are also an encouragement to him in difficult times. Why strive for heartfelt, sacrificial fellowship? Because we all need it and because it is a blessing to us.

Fellowship that brings rejoicing

V9 is a good statement of real fellowship and the joy it brings.

Fellowship in prayer

How do you express fellowship with others? No better way than to pray for their faith (v10), for their love (v12) and for their hope (v13) to increase.

Paul’s prayer (v12-13) should be our prayer for each other.



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