



# 1 Thessalonians

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**For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? 1 Thessalonians 2:19**

Paul just noted that he and his associates had been hindered from coming to Thessalonica despite their great desire to see the church once again. Understanding that, he now says, "For what is our hope...?" In this, hope is the object of their efforts, which in this case is the church there and the people in it. He continues, "or joy...?" What is it that they will rejoice in when they stand before the Lord? It is those whom they brought along to likewise stand before him. And then he says, "or crown of rejoicing?" A crown is something which denotes honor. In the Greek games, a crown was bestowed upon the champion. It is what all strived for, but it is what only the winner would receive.

The word translated as "rejoicing" gives the sense of "glorying" and "exultation." It is what one revels in. In the Old Testament, the book of Proverbs shows that a person with gray hair had such a crown –

*"The silver-haired head is a crown of glory,  
If it is found in the way of righteousness." Proverbs 16:31*

The reason for this crown of glory was the satisfaction of having lived a long life. Paul and his companion's crown of glorying is that they had lived a fruitful life in Christ. What could a true evangelist revel in more? And to explain that clearly to the Thessalonians, he then rhetorically asks, "*Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"

His word "you" should be taken in an inclusive sense to mean those converts at Thessalonica, and all others that had been converted by their ministry. What he is saying is that there will be a great rejoicing when the Lord comes for His people, and those who were faithful in leading others to Christ would stand before Him with a multitude who had been brought to Him

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through their efforts. It would be as if they were decorated with a crown of glory. The Thessalonian converts would be a part of that crown when that day comes.

The reason for Paul's saying this is to show how much being able to visit the church in Thessalonica really and personally meant to them. Despite their being hindered by Satan, he wanted the believers there to know that it was not an intentional snubbing of them, but a source of true sadness.

Life application: When we stand before the Lord, there will be a sense of exultation for each person who has been productive in their Christian life. Those who bring others to Christ will be rewarded. Those who minister to others in Christ will be rewarded. Teachers, preachers, and those who give... all efforts for Christ that are done in Christ will receive their due. Be pleased to work now for this marvelous cause; the rewards and the joy will be heavenly.

**For you are our glory and joy. 1 Thessalonians 2:20**

A question was just submitted, and it was followed up with an answer: "For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"

Now, Paul restates the thought again in an emphatic form. The Greek more closely reads, "You indeed are the glory of us and our joy." He and his associates literally reveled in the converts they brought to Christ. They were a source of rejoicing because they knew they would share eternal life together. For the ages of ages, there would be no struggles such as we face in this current walk. Instead, there will be an eternity of fellowship, glory, and joy. Because of what is ahead, Paul could say that now, at this time, they were a source of glory and joy.

Life application: This world is one marked with sin. That leads to all kinds of other troubles. People we once got along with are now our enemies. This includes many Christians. The fellowship is divided over some really, really petty issues. Divisions are even noted in Paul's letters, among the earliest of converts. But it won't always be this way. A time lies ahead where all such things will be behind us, and there will only be understanding, agreement, and perfect fellowship. Therefore, let us strive for these things even now.

**Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone,**  
1 Thessalonians 3:1

This verse is hard to reconcile with the account in Acts, but only because not everything that occurred is recorded there or here. Paul is using the plural "we" here, but as has been seen already, it is certainly referring to himself alone. This becomes evident in verse 3:5. The use of

“we” is because the letter as a whole was from himself, Silvanus, and Timothy. It is how we speak and write in English as well, and there is nothing which proves a contradiction in the biblical account in his words.

He says, “Therefore.” This is based on the ending words of the previous chapter. Paul had spoken of how eagerly he had wanted to come to Thessalonica, but he was hindered in doing so. But they were to him as his glory and joy. It caused him no little anguish. As he says, “when we could no longer endure it.” The word he uses gives the sense of a vessel which is over-filled and which is bursting, or as something which is covered in order to keep water out, but which is ready to give in.

In the words, “...when we could no longer endure it,” the “we” as noted is speaking of himself in the sense that he would be left alone in Athens while the other two would conduct other affairs. Almost as soon as they all arrived, Silvanus and Timothy were sent back to Macedonia. Silvanus went to one area, probably Berea or Philippi, and Timothy went back to Thessalonica. What is left out of Paul’s words in this epistle was simply not of importance to the church. They would have already heard from Timothy concerning where Silvanus had gone. As they were gone, he says, “...we thought it good to be left in Athens alone.”

This is not speaking of the three of them being alone in Athens, but the agreement by the three of them that Paul alone would stay. Timothy, as we will see, and as noted above, was sent back to Thessalonica while Silvanus went elsewhere. During this time, Paul was alone in Athens. It is something which is rather unusual. He was normally conducted from one place to another due to some unknown affliction. Therefore, while alone in Athens, he would have been greatly inconvenienced, and certainly very lonely.

Life application: At times, there are needs which must be considered as more important than our own personal comforts. When these times arise, we can look at what occurred with Paul here and know that it is right and good to allow ourselves to suffer inconvenience for the sake of the gospel, and for the sake of those who need attention in that precious message.

**...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, 1 Thessalonians 3:2**

It is evident from these words that Paul had sent Timothy from Athens. As noted in 3:1, there is no contradiction with this and with the account in Acts as long as Paul’s terminology in the use of singular and plural pronouns is properly understood. He then calls Timothy “our brother.” This makes a fraternal connection between Timothy and the church in Thessalonica. Paul didn’t send someone disinterested in the church, but rather someone who was intimately united to it.

Further, he then calls him a “minister of God.” It is again a set of words intended to show Paul’s care for the church. He didn’t just send someone with a note in his hand which was filled with a bunch of directions. Instead, he sent a minister who was both learned and experienced in ministerial duties of preaching, teaching, and exhorting. And to add to the special personage of Timothy, he then says, “...and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ.”

Timothy was personally useful to Paul, and he was a person who worked directly along with him in spreading the gospel. It wasn’t at all the case that Timothy was of no use to Paul at the time. Rather, he was someone which Paul heavily relied upon and found useful at all times. But the weight of his care for the church at Thessalonica was of greater importance to him than having Timothy stay with him to evangelize.

Everything about Timothy’s credentials which has been stated here is to show the superlative nature of Paul’s love for the Thessalonians, and how much it meant to him that they be properly ministered to by someone that bore even his own abilities. All of this was done “to establish you.” The word “establish” is one which means “a support that fixes plants down.” Thus, it is to solidly plant. Paul’s intent was the church that He had established would now be more deeply rooted by the coming of Timothy.

And more, Paul’s desire for them in sending Timothy was to “encourage you concerning your faith.” Paul knew that they were suffering trials for their faith. They were persecuted by unbelieving Jews, and they were ridiculed by unbelieving Gentiles. Like all of us, those at Thessalonica were not super spiritual. Rather, they were common people who needed encouragement and uplifting in their faith. Paul knew this, and he sent his trusted companion and fellow worker, Timothy, to accomplish this in them.

Life application: Those who say they don’t have moments of doubt or times of weakness in their faith probably think too much of themselves. It is human nature to face such times, and it is exactly why we need to remain united to a body of believers that we can go to when they arise. Let us not forsake the gathering together of the body.

**...that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. 1 Thessalonians 3:3**

In the previous verse, Paul noted that he had sent Timothy “to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith.” He now notes that this was so “that no one should be shaken by these afflictions.” In the coming verse, he will note that he had previously told them that they would suffer tribulations. Thus, the afflictions are being used in a comparable manner to “tribulations.”

In saying that “no one should be shaken,” he uses a word unique to Scripture, *sainó*. It literally means, “to wag the tail.” Hence it by implication can mean to greet, flatter, or disturb. However, it appears from the context that the original meaning is appropriate. Just as easily as a dog shakes its tail, so could a believer be shaken if they were not prepared for what lies ahead in the afflictions that are sure to come.

Paul then reminds them of something he has obviously already told them about (and as will be explicit in the next verse), which, as he says, “you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.” No Christian is exempt from tribulations, and anyone who was brought to Christ with a message of security and prosperity was brought to Him under a false presentation of the gospel. These things may come, but the opposite is what should normally be expected.

The world hates the gospel message because the world belongs to the devil. And the devil will do everything possible to destroy the faith of God’s people, and to undermine the spreading of this message. Any church that teaches the prosperity gospel will be held accountable for the mishandling of God’s word. The one who receives Christ is to be instructed in the epistles of Paul, and the instruction is to be by maintaining proper context.

In such instruction, they will learn that tribulations are to be expected, but they will also be prepared for those tribulations by being grounded in the words which have been given to prepare them for those things.

Life application: Are you having trials and troubles in your Christian walk? If so, then it is something that the word said would come.