

PAUL'S DESIRE TO RETURN (VV. 2:17–20)

1 THESSALONIANS 2:17 – BLACK

- Paul transitions from the theme of persecution to expressing longing for the Thessalonian believers.
- “Taken from you” conveys deep emotional loss—like being orphaned or torn away.
 - Separation was involuntary and forced (**Acts 17:10**).
 - Left a relational wound.
- Separation was physical only, “not in heart.”
 - Affection and care remained intact.
 - Distance intensified his desire to see them.
- “Endeavoured the more abundantly” implies:
 - Great, persistent effort to return.
 - Likely multiple attempts.
 - Believers would have known or sensed his sincerity.
- Paul’s ministry was relational, not mechanical—invested and heartfelt.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:18 – BLACK

- Multiple attempts (“once and again”) to return were made.
- Hindered not by natural causes but by Satan.
- Biblical examples of Satan hindering or opposing:
 - **Job 1–2** – Satan afflicts Job under God’s limits.
 - **Zechariah 3:1** – Satan opposes Joshua the high priest.
 - **Daniel 10:13** – “Prince of Persia” resists an angelic messenger.
 - **Matthew 16:23** – Jesus rebukes Peter’s Satanic influence.
 - **Revelation 2:10** – Satan casts some into prison.
 - **Luke 22:31** – Satan desires to sift Peter like wheat.
- Reason for Satan’s hindrance:
 - Paul’s unique gospel of grace and revealed mystery (**Ephesians 3:8–10**).
 - Satan aimed to suppress this message.
- Caution against misusing “Satan hindered me” today:
 - Paul’s statement was descriptive, not an excuse.
 - He had concrete plans, multiple attempts, and real opposition.
 - Avoid over-spiritualizing normal life obstacles.
- Common non-spiritual reasons for inability to act: Financial limitations. Job commitments. Family needs. Low prioritization.
- Obstacles may arise from: Limited resources. Competing priorities. Insufficient planning. Inherent task difficulty.
- Key principle:
 - Don’t default to “Satanic opposition” when natural explanations suffice.
 - Ask constructive questions about difficulty and adjust accordingly.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:19–20 – BLACK

- Paul’s affection for Thessalonians:
 - They are his hope, joy, and “crown of rejoicing.”
- Refutes literal “soul-winner’s crown” interpretation:
 - The Thessalonians themselves ARE the crown.
 - Joy is present now, confirmed at Christ’s coming.
- “Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming”:
 - Refers to the second coming, not the rapture.
 - Fits Jewish prophetic context of the epistle.
- Paul’s view:

- Their endurance at Christ’s return will be his ultimate joy.
- They are his glory and joy now, not just in the future.
- Ministry joy is about people, not accolades.

TIMOTHY’S VISIT (VV. 3:1–5)

1 THESSALONIANS 3:1–2 – BLACK

- Paul’s concern reached a breaking point (“could no longer forbear”).
- Historical background:
 - Persecution in Thessalonica forced Paul to Berea.
 - Opposition there drove him to Athens (**Acts 17**).
 - Silas and Timothy remained, but Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica.
- Timothy’s three designations:
 - “Our brother” – relational closeness.
 - “Minister of God” – recognized service.
 - “Fellowlabourer in the gospel” – shared ministry work.
- Timothy’s background: Joined Paul in Lystra (**Acts 16:1–3**). Proven in doctrine and character.
- Mission purpose:
 - “Establish” (STĒRIZŌ) – strengthen, make steady.
 - “Comfort” – encourage in faith.
 - Possibly deepen understanding of the gospel of grace.

1 THESSALONIANS 3:3 – BLACK

- Goal: believers not “moved” by afflictions.
- Persecution was expected in that cultural climate.
- “Appointed” (*keimai*):
 - Not Calvinistic predestination.
 - Refers to being placed in circumstances where persecution is inevitable.
 - Used similarly in **Matthew 5:14** (“city set on a hill”).
- Alignment with Paul’s message naturally brought opposition.

1 THESSALONIANS 3:4 – BLACK

- Persecution was foretold by Paul:
 - Not prophecy but observation of circumstances.
 - Based on experiences in other cities and the volatile local environment.
- Fulfillment: Persecution came as expected. Their experience matched that of other persecuted believers.

1 THESSALONIANS 3:5 – BLACK

- Paul repeats his inability to endure the uncertainty.
- Shift from “we” to “I” for personal emphasis.
- Concern:
 - “The tempter” might undermine their faith.
 - Trials could render his labor “in vain.”
- Similar expressions in:
 - **Philippians 2:16**
 - **Galatians 4:11**
 - **Galatians 2:2**
- Ministry principle:
 - Fruitless labor calls for reevaluation.
 - Paul desired lasting stability in their faith, not temporary results.