

An aerial photograph of a busy crosswalk with white stripes on a dark asphalt surface. Several pedestrians are walking across the crosswalk, and their long shadows are cast across the stripes. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

LAST DAYS LIVING

A STUDY IN I & II THESSALONIANS

“I’m Being Persecuted. Now What?”

I THESSALONIANS 3:1-5

“If God were good,
He would wish to make
His creatures perfectly
happy, and if God were
almighty, He would be
able to do what He
wished. But the
creatures are not happy.
Therefore God lacks
either goodness,
or power, or both.”



C.S. Lewis
The Problem of Pain

Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

John 9:3

“If you are going to walk with Jesus Christ, you are going to be opposed...In our days, to be a true Christian is really to become a scandal.”



George Whitefield

1. The Connection Between Paul and the Thessalonians (Chapters 1-3)

- Affirming Their Spiritual Growth (1)**
- Recalling Their Beginning (2:1-16)**
- Strengthening Their Resolve (2:17-3:13)**

2. The Instruction Paul Gives to the Thessalonians (Chapters 4-5)

I Thessalonians Outline

KEY POINT:

God wants us to be prepared to respond wisely to persecution.

1. Why Was Timothy Sent? (vs. 1-2)

a. He was needed (vs. 1).

Paul Sending Timothy

“A man with a true and faithful pastoral heart is not concerned about his own success or his own reputation; nor is he preoccupied with his own trials. Rather, he is deeply concerned with the spiritual condition of his people, for whom he will suffer and rejoice with an unflagging affection.”



John MacArthur
1 & 2 Thessalonians

¹⁰ The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹ Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. ¹² Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.

Acts 17:10-12

¹³ But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds. ¹⁴ Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. ¹⁵ Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

Acts 17:13-15

1. Why Was Timothy Sent? (vs. 1-2)

- a. He was needed (vs. 1).
- b. He was qualified (vs. 2).

Paul Sending Timothy

- To Corinth (I Cor. 4:17; 16:10-11)
- To Philippi (Phil. 2:19-24)
- To Ephesus (I Tim. 1:3)
- To Thessalonica

Paul Sent Timothy...

1. Why Was Timothy Sent? (vs. 1-2)

- a. He was needed (vs. 1).
- b. He was qualified (vs. 2).

2. What Was Paul's Aim? (vs. 3-5)

- a. Remember persecution is inevitable (vs. 3-4).

Paul Sending Timothy

*That is why I sent you Timothy,
my beloved and faithful child in the Lord,
to remind you of my ways in Christ,
as I teach them everywhere in every church.*

I Corinthians 4:17

¹⁰ When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. ¹¹ So let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers.

I Corinthians 16:10-11

19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. 20 For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. 21 For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:19-21

*²² But you know Timothy's proven worth,
how as a son with a father he has served with me
in the gospel. ²³ I hope therefore to send him just
as soon as I see how it will go with me,
²⁴ and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will
come also.*

Philippians 2:22-24

*As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia,
remain at Ephesus so that you may charge
certain persons not to teach any
different doctrine,*

I Timothy 1:3

- “Disturbed” in NAS, “shaken” in NKJV, “unsettled” in NIV
- Means “to shake” or “to wag”
- Synonyms - “duration,” “reliable,” “rhythmic,” or “predictable motion”
- Paul knew how they would respond before they were even persecuted!

The Word “*Moved*”

- John 16:33
- Acts 14:22
- II Timothy 3:12

Destined for Persecution

*I have said these things to you,
that in me you may have peace.
In the world you will have tribulation.
But take heart; I have overcome the world.”*

John 16:33

*Strengthening the souls of the disciples,
encouraging them to continue in the faith,
and saying that through many tribulations we
must enter the kingdom of God.*

Acts 14:22

*Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in
Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

II Timothy 3:12

- Maybe the persecution here is different, even if it is “lighter.”
- Maybe we don’t understand the word “persecution.”
- Maybe we aren’t living faithfully enough to bring about persecution.

Why Aren’t Western Christians Persecuted More?

“That we enjoy relative safety from violent attacks against may indicate a maturing of modern civilization with respect to religious toleration. Or it may indicate that we have so compromised the gospel that we no longer provoke the conflict that true faith engenders.”



R.C. Sproul
Willing to Believe

1. Why Was Timothy Sent? (vs. 1-2)

- a. He was needed (vs. 1)
- b. He was qualified (vs. 2)

2. What Was Paul's Aim? (vs. 3-5)

- a. Remember persecution is inevitable (vs. 3-4)
- b. Assess your spiritual growth (vs. 5a)

Paul Sending Timothy

- Do you really trust God?
- What kinds of spiritual support systems do you have in your life?
- How adequately have you been equipped for persecution?
- Are you willing to suffer or are you complaining to God about that suffering?
- Are you complaining to God about injustices or complaining at God that He would allow these hurts?

Persecution Is Good for Our Faith

*“Suffering is God’s gift
to make us aware of our
contingent existence.*

*It creates an
environment where we
see the true nature of
our existence –
dependent on the
living God.”*



Paul Miller
A Praying Life

1. Why Was Timothy Sent? (vs. 1-2)

- a. He was needed (vs. 1)
- b. He was qualified (vs. 2)

2. What Was Paul's Aim? (vs. 3-5)

- a. Remember persecution is inevitable (vs. 3-4)
- b. Assess your spiritual growth (vs. 5a)
- c. Expose the lies of the Evil One (vs. 5b)

Paul Sending Timothy

*Be sober-minded; be watchful.
Your adversary the devil prowls around like a
roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

I Peter 5:8

- “Try to change your circumstances.”
- “You are good enough to handle this on your own.”
- “God is not hearing you.”
- “God has no reason to allow this.”

Some Lies About Persecution

1. Why Was Timothy Sent? (vs. 1-2)

- a. He was needed (vs. 1)
- b. He was qualified (vs. 2)

2. What Was Paul's Aim? (vs. 3-5)

- a. Remember persecution is inevitable (vs. 3-4)
- b. Assess your spiritual growth (vs. 5a)
- c. Expose the lies of the Evil One (vs. 5b)
- d. Keep serving (vs. 5c)

Paul Sending Timothy

*I have said these things to you,
that in me you may have peace.
In the world you will have tribulation.
But take heart; I have overcome the world.”*

John 16:33

*⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.*

*⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.*

Isaiah 53:5-6

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:10-11

Close to Thee, close to Thee,

Gladly will I toil and suffer,

Only let me walk with Thee.”

Stanza from “Close to Thee”