



STANDING FAST IN THE LORD

Who's Your Glory and Joy?

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5

Disciples you make are the only boast you have before the King when he returns (2:17-20).

- *Satan's battle against you is a reality in this world (17-18).*
- *Those you've discipled are your glory and joy before the Lord (19-20).*

The mission of the church is to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). The heart of the church is for the disciples they serve to make. Paul's heart for the disciples that he labored and toiled to make through the work of the gospel was clear through his words to the disciples in Thessalonica. Although persecution had torn them apart in person, Paul still longed to see them and to be with them again. In fact, he had desired and apparently tried to find a way back to Thessalonica, but he indicated that Satan had hindered him. The details weren't provided, but the warning was clear: Satan's battle against us is a reality in this world! Paul wasn't immune from the attack of the enemy, and neither are believers today. The more important point that Paul made was related to the place these believers played in his work in the Lord's Kingdom. Paul knew that when Jesus returned, those he had discipled were his glory and joy before the Lord! If the Lord's mission was to make disciples, Paul understood that his work in that mission was the most important thing to the Lord of the mission. Paul would be rewarded one day by his King for his faithfulness in the work of the Kingdom. This truth will remain the same until the Lord returns: Disciples you make are the only boast you have before the King when he returns!

1. While the specifics weren't given, Satan hindered Paul in his desire to return to Thessalonica. To begin, how was Satan possibly at work in tearing Paul apart from the Thessalonians? What are some ways Satan could have been at work in hindering Paul from returning? Why is it important not to discount and disregard Satan's battle against us in this world? What are some other passages that give us wisdom for fighting that battle?
2. Why is Paul so emphatic that the disciples he's made were his only "boasting" before the King when the Lord returns? What makes disciple-making so significant to the Lord that it's worthy of reward when Christ returns?
3. How is the Lord using you to make disciples? Who are they? How can you live with the Lord's mission in mind in every relationship at home, work, school, etc.?
4. Paul mentions "joy" in connection to these disciples twice? Have you ever experienced the joy of the Lord over seeing someone come to faith in Christ and grow in Christ? If so, who? Share, and praise the Lord for how he uses us and allows us to see his grace at work in others!

God's sovereignty over your circumstances is a strength for your faith (3:1-5).

- *Faith is established and exhorted when you trust God through afflictions (1-4).*
- *Faith needs protection against Satan's battle to destroy your witness (5).*

One of the reasons Paul wanted to return to Thessalonica was to make sure that the believers were not being moved away from their faith because of the afflictions that they – and Paul – experienced. Although he wasn't able to go, he did send Timothy to Thessalonica so that Timothy could check on the church there and "establish and exhort" them in their faith. Through his own experience, Paul knew that sound doctrine informs and protects faith. God is all-knowing and sovereign, so the afflictions that Paul faced weren't a surprise. Paul knew that they would come, and



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they did. In the midst of those afflictions, Paul trusted in God's sovereignty. In God's infinite wisdom, Paul was destined for these things. Faith is established and exhorted when you trust God through afflictions, so Paul sent Timothy to encourage the Thessalonians to do just that. Paul also knew that Satan uses afflictions in his battle to destroy a disciple's witness, damaging faith and the work of the gospel in making disciples of Jesus Christ. Paul was concerned that Satan was tempting the Thessalonians in this way, and his desire was to protect them against that temptation. Faith needs protection against Satan's battle to destroy your witness. In all of these things, be reminded today that God's sovereignty over your circumstances is a strength for your faith!

1. Even though Paul and the church in Thessalonica faced many afflictions, he said that they were "destined for this." That's a powerful statement! Use the BlueLetterBible app to do word studies on this verse. What does "destined" mean in this context? How does this point to Paul's faith in God's sovereignty?
2. Some argue that if God allows afflictions to happen to his people, he must not be good, or he must not be sovereign. How would you respond to this kind of thinking? What are some other passages that help us understand how God uses all things – even affliction – in his work of redemption in and through his people? Discuss.
3. Have you ever trusted in God's sovereignty in the midst of some affliction? How did God use that to establish and exhort you in your faith?
4. Has God used others in your life to help protect you from the temptation of the tempter (Satan)? How did they help to protect you? Do you know someone who needs this protection? How can you share the truth with them this week to help protect them from temptation?