

What is our joy?

Have you ever spent time separated from loved ones, unable to communicate with them? How did you feel? How did it magnify both your love and concern for them?

How he left

Read 1 Thessalonians 2 v 17-20

- ❓ *How does Paul describe the way he left Thessalonica (v 17)?*
- ❓ *Why did he not return (v 18)?*

It's not clear exactly what Paul means in verse 18 with his reference to Satan's work. Of course, in general Satan always seeks to oppose the work of God, and God always works to thwart the devil's plans, and even (no doubt to Satan's huge frustration) to use his ploys to further the gospel (Exhibit A: his Son's death on the cross). Perhaps here, Paul is referring to the Thessalonian Christian Jason being put on bail (Acts 17 v 9)—very possibly, a condition of his bail was that Paul would leave the town and not return, meaning Paul could not visit without effectively imprisoning a brother.

- ❓ *Why is Paul so concerned about how this young church is doing (v 19-20)?*

Apply

What a wonderful thought—one day we will stand in Jesus' presence and enjoy and revel in being able to see those we helped bring to faith, or those we helped continue in faith. That will matter far more than what career we had, or possessions we owned, or popularity we enjoyed. Here is a wonderful motivation to minister to those around us in evangelism and encouragement, and to pray for those who we are parted from!

- ❓ *How will this change the way you speak to God about others, and speak about God to others, today?*

Who he sent

Read 1 Thessalonians 3 v 1-5

- ❓ *What did Paul end up doing, in order to get news of the Thessalonians (v 1-2)?*
- ❓ *Why would Timothy have been useful in Athens (v 2)? How does this show the depth of Paul's concern for the Thessalonians?*
- ❓ *Why was he so concerned (v 3, 5)?*

Apply

Notice that Paul had been very honest with these Thessalonians about what the Christian life involved: "We are destined for them ... we kept telling you that we would be persecuted" (v 3, 4). He had clearly been totally upfront about both the benefits of following Christ, and also the costs.

- ❓ *Have you accepted that suffering as a Christian is an inevitable part of being a Christian, or do you think deep down that you're exempt?*
- ❓ *When you share the gospel with someone, are you as honest with them about the cost as Paul was?*
- ❓ *Is there a Christian, or a church, who you have not seen for a long time, but who you could be loving, praying for, and seeking news of?*