



Acts 17:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 1-3
June 14, 2020

Acts 17:1-10 tells the story of Paul and his friends bringing the good news about Jesus to the city of Thessalonica. Jews, devout Greeks, and leading women all turned to God in response. But other, jealous Jews formed a mob and started a riot, accusing Paul and his friends of insurrection. So the local Christians sent Paul and his friends away by night to a nearby town. They didn't want to leave but were forced to. Nor did they just say God would protect them and remain there. They left.

In the following months, Paul longed to see those believers and made every effort to do so, but Satan blocked his way (1 Thessalonians 2:18). Did you know Satan can prevent Christians from getting together?

Yet Paul was concerned about them and their faith. So, when he couldn't stand it any longer, he decided to be left behind and sent Timothy to check on, strengthen, and encourage them. Timothy came back with a good report! They were having a couple of problems, but they were strong in faith and love and yearned to see Paul, just as he did them. Paul was thrilled! He sat down and wrote 1 Thessalonians, pouring out his heart to them and giving them a few instructions. His words give divine insights on what to do when you really want to be with other Christians but you can't!

1. Keep them in your heart and thoughts (2:17-20; 3:1-10)
2. Pray for them earnestly. Include thanksgiving (1:2; 2:13; 3:9-10), requests to be reunited with each other (3:10-11), and requests for their growth (3:12-13). Ask them to pray for you too (5:25).
3. Communicate however you *are* able. Write a letter (5:27). Send a Timothy (3:1-5). Talk about what you've been through together, affirm them, and tell them how you feel about them (chapters 1-3). Also, use this communication to help them grow (chapters 4-5).
4. Make every effort to get back together again (2:17-18; plus the prayer in 3:10-11).

In all this, Paul seems to be focused more on the Thessalonian's good than his own. He would benefit too, of course. But true to the way of Christ, but his main concern was the others (cf. Philippians 2:3-8, 19-21).