



Paul's Evangelical Mission

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:3a

1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while — in person, not in spirit — were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. For we wanted to come to you — I, Paul, more than once — and yet Satan hindered us. For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-3a

Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions.

Main Point

Paul had been given an evangelical mission aimed at an eschatological goal that prompted a pastoral concern.

Paul's Evangelical Mission

Paul was given an
evangelical mission.

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our brother and God's **fellow worker in the gospel** of Christ,

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“Gospel” is from the Greek word *euangelion*,
meaning good news, and this is the source
of our word “evangelical.”

Gospel Centrality

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

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Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of **the gospel**, for it **is the power**
of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

Gospel Centrality

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of **the *euangelion***, for it **is the power**
of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

A faded topographic map of a region, likely in the Balkans, showing a network of rivers and terrain contours. The map is light-colored with blue lines for water and brown lines for elevation. The text is overlaid on the map.

An Evangelical Mission

Paul was working for
the salvation of sinners.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-2

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best to be left behind at Athens alone, and **we sent Timothy,**

our brother and **God's fellow worker in the
gospel of Christ,**

to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith.

This co-laboring in the gospel is not less than
a co-laboring in the work of evangelism.

To be a fellow worker in the gospel of Christ is to be a co-laborer in the work of bringing people into proper relationship to God through the reconciling work of Christ.

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**to strengthen and encourage you
as to your faith.**

They could not be strengthened and encouraged as to something they did not yet have.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Test yourselves to see if you are **in the faith**.

It was Paul's great desire to see people brought into "the faith."

Paul's missionary work was essentially evangelistic -- it was aimed at the salvation of souls.



An Evangelical Mission

Paul was working for the salvation of sinners.

**Paul was working for the
sanctification of saints.**

Saints?

Romans 1:7

To all who are beloved of God in Rome, **called as saints:**
Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-12

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets,
and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,
for the equipping **of the saints** for the work of service,
to the building up of the body of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-2

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best to be left behind at Athens alone, and **we sent Timothy,**

our brother and **God's fellow worker in the
gospel of Christ,**

to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith.

To co-labor in the gospel of Christ is to co-labor
for the growth of those who are in Christ
and have been set apart for Christ.

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to strengthen and **encourage you**
as to your faith.

Gospel work is faith-strengthening
and faith-encouraging work.

It is work aimed at the
sanctification of the saints.

We are not “evangelical”
if we are not fellow workers
in the *euanglion* of Christ.

Paul's Evangelical Mission

Paul was given an evangelical mission.

Paul was aimed at an
eschatological goal.

Eschatological?

1 Thessalonians 2:18-20

For we wanted to come to you — I, Paul, more than once — and yet Satan hindered us. For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.

Eschatological?

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A faded topographic map of a region in the Balkans, showing the Danube River and the city of Salonski. The map is light-colored with various shades of brown, green, and blue representing terrain, water, and infrastructure. The text is overlaid on the map.

An Eschatological Goal
Paul was building *in hope*.

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In what sense were they Paul's hope?

1 Corinthians 3:8-10

Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it.

But each man must be careful how he builds on it.

1 Corinthians 3:12-13

Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

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or crown of exultation? Is it not even you,

**in the presence of our Lord Jesus
at His coming?**

For you are our glory and joy.

This day was going to “show”
the quality of Paul’s work.

Paul was not just building
in the hope of his reward but
in the hope of mission success.

At Christ's coming, the Thessalonian
church would be a validation
of their ministry and a testimony
to the power of the gospel.



An Eschatological Goal

He was building in hope.

He was anticipating joy.

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or crown of exultation? Is it not even you,
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Philippians 4:1

Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see,
my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord.

The context?

Philippians 4:1

Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see,

my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord.

Philippians 3:20-21

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

The context?

Philippians 4:1

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Philippians 3:20-21

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conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion
of the power that He has even to subject
all things to Himself.

No doubt Paul had great joy as he engaged in his evangelical mission, but he had his eyes resolutely fixed on the end and was anticipating the greater joy that would be his when he presented the Thessalonian church to Christ at His coming.

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in the presence of our Lord Jesus **at His coming?**

For **you are our** glory and **joy**.



An Eschatological Goal

He was building in hope.

He was anticipating joy.

He was running for glory.

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my joy and **my crown**, in this way stand firm in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 9:24

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run,
but only one receives the prize?
Run in such a way that you may win.

Paul was running to win—
he was running for the crown.
The churches he served would be
his crown of exultation—his glory.

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or crown of exultation? Is it not even you,

in the presence of our Lord Jesus **at His coming?**

For **you are our glory** and joy.

Paul's Evangelical Mission

Paul was given an evangelical mission.

Paul was aimed at an eschatological goal.

Paul was motivated
by pastoral concern.

Pastoral Concern?

1 Thessalonians 2:17-18

But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while — in person, not in spirit — were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. For we wanted to come to you — I, Paul, more than once — and yet Satan hindered us.

What's this?

1 Thessalonians 2:17-18

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Paul's Pastoral Concern

His concern was intensely personal.

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and yet Satan hindered us.

1 Thessalonians 2:17-18

But we, brethren, **having been *made orphans***
from you for a short while — in person, not in spirit —

were all the more eager with great desire to see your face.
For we wanted to come to you — I, Paul, more than once —
and yet Satan hindered us.

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1 Thessalonians 2:17-18

But we, brethren, having been made orphans

from you for a short while — ***in face, not in heart*** —

were all the more eager with great desire to see your face.
For we wanted to come to you — I, Paul, more than once —
and yet Satan hindered us.

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But we, brethren, having been made orphans
from you for a short while — in *face*, not in *heart* —

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were all the more eager with great desire to see your face.

**For we wanted to come to you —
I, Paul, more than once —**

and yet Satan hindered us.

Paul's concern for this church was intensely personal, but it was not *primarily* relational.

Paul was not missing backyard barbeques and opportunities to hang out; his concern was personal, but it was *pastorally* personal.



Paul's Pastoral Concern

His concern was intensely personal.

His concern was deeply theological.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-2

Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith.

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Ephesians 4:11-13

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to **the unity of the faith**, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Jude 1:3

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you **contend earnestly for the faith** which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Christian faith is not a feeling
or a vague wish about the future.

Christian faith is a firm belief in specific
propositions about God, mankind, Jesus
Christ, and our relationship to Him—
our faith is fundamentally theological.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-2

we sent Timothy,

our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ,

**to strengthen and encourage you
as to your faith.**

This means that Paul's concern was in reference to their faith above all.



Paul's Pastoral Concern

His concern was intensely personal.

His concern was deeply theological.

His concern was necessarily practical.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-3a

Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and **we sent Timothy**, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, **to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith**, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-3a

Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith,

**so that no one would be disturbed
by these afflictions.**

Paul's concern was not theoretical;
he understood the enemy's aim
and the temptations his
persecutions would provoke.

The enemy's aim is not simply
to derail you; it is to destroy you!

1 Thessalonians 3:1-2

we sent Timothy,

our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ,

**to strengthen and encourage you
as to your faith.**

Faith is not ivory tower, it is not mystical
or fanciful, it is profoundly practical.
It wears clothes and walks in shoes;
it goes to work and to play;
it marries and raises kids;
it lives life, and it goes to death.

Conclusion

Is the orientation of your
life's labor evangelical?

Are your life's goals eschatological—
are you working with the end in mind?

Is your faith theologically practical—
are you living by and with it?