

1 Thessalonians 3:4-5 Commentary

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1Thessalonians 3:4 For [indeed](#) [when](#) we were with you, we kept [telling](#) you in [advance](#) that we were [going](#) to [suffer affliction](#) and [so it came to pass](#), as you know . ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [kai gar hote pros humas emen.](#) (1PIA) [proelegomen](#) (1PIA) [humin hoti mellomen](#) (1PPA) [thlibesthai.](#) (PPN) [kathos kai egeneto](#) (3SAMI) [kai oidate.](#) (2PRA)

Amplified: For even when we were with you, [you know] we warned you plainly beforehand that we were to be pressed with difficulties and made to suffer affliction, just as to your own knowledge it has [since] happened. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: Even while we were with you, we warned you that troubles would soon come--and they did, as you well know. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: Actually we did warn you what to expect, when we were with you, and our words have come true, as you know. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

WBC: Indeed, when we were with you, we warned you that we are bound to suffer affliction, even as it has turned out, as you know. ([Bruce](#))

Wuest: For also when we were with you, we kept on telling you beforehand that we are destined to be suffering affliction, even as also it came to pass and you know well.

Young's Literal: for even when we were with you, we said to you beforehand, that we are about to suffer tribulation, as also it did come to pass, and ye have known it;

1THESSALONIANS OVERVIEW

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5
LOOKING BACK			LOOKING FORWARD	
Personal Reflections Historical			Practical Instructions Exhortational	

Ministry In Person		Ministry in Absentia (Thru Timothy)	Ministry by Epistle		
Word and Power of the Spirit		Establishing & Comforting	Calling & Conduct	1Th 4:13ff Comfort	1Th 5:12ff Commands
1 Salvation	2 Service	3 Sanctification	4 Sorrow	5 Sobriety	
Exemplary Hope of Young Converts	Motivating Hope of Faithful Servants	Purifying Hope of Tried Believers	Comforting Hope of Bereaved Saints	Invigorating Hope of Diligent Christians	
Written from Corinth Approximately 51AD					

Modified from the excellent book [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#)

OUTLINE OF 1THESSALONIANS CHAPTERS 1-3

CHAPTER	THEME
1	An Exemplary Conversion
2	An Exemplary Witness
3	An Exemplary Follow-Up

FOR INDEED WHEN WE WERE WITH YOU, WE KEPT TELLING YOU IN ADVANCE THAT WE WERE GOING TO SUFFER AFFLICTION: kai gar hote pros humas emen, (1PIAI) proelegomen (1PIAI) humin hoti mellomen (1PPAI) thlibesthai, (PPN):

- John 16:1, 2, 3; Acts 20:24
- 1 Thessalonians 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

When we were with (pros) you - Here Paul looks back to the time when the missionaries were still in a mutual face-to-face relationship **with (pros)** their readers. Then "we kept telling you that we would be persecuted."

Jesus like Paul forewarned His disciples in order to keep them from being tripped up when afflictions came...

These things I have spoken to you, (**note the stabilizing effect of sound doctrine**) that (introduces a purpose clause) you may be kept from stumbling (literally from being stumbled, entrapped or tripped up - and giving up one's faith). They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. And these things they will do, because they have not known the Father, or Me. (See note [John 16:1-3](#))

Hiebert remarking on **telling you in advance** writes that...

Thus the suffering Thessalonians could take courage that their suffering as believers was no untoward accident that had unexpectedly befallen them; it was part of God's appointment for them. And as such they could be assured not only of its necessity but also of its beneficial purpose (Mt 5:10, 11, 12-see **notes** Mt 5:10; 11; 12; 2Ti 2:10, 11, 12, 13-**notes** 2Ti 2:10; 11; 12; 13; 1Pe 4:12, 13, 14-**notes** 1Pe 4:12; 13; 14). ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

Kept telling in advance (4302)(**prolego** from **pró** = before + **lego** = to say) means literally to say or tell beforehand (in advance and so to predict), to foretell or to forewarn (the idea is the to warn in advance).

Forewarned is forearmed and that is what Paul and Barnabas sought to do to the new disciples in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, Luke recording...

And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening (episterizo - present tense = continually placing them firmly upon the

Solid Rock of sound doctrine) the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:21, 22)

He had plainly told them beforehand, in advance of its actual arrival, that suffering would be the inevitable result of accepting the gospel. Paul wisely followed the example of Christ Who warned His disciples that trouble awaited them

From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, **so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He.** (John 13:19)..

And now I have told you before it comes to pass, **that when it comes to pass, you may believe.** (John 14:29)

Comment: Notice that these "appointments" with trouble serve a divine purpose of nurturing faith! And it is this kind of "eternal perspective" which allows us to practice the command to "in everything give thanks" - 1Th 5:18-note)

There is an important principle to note for all those who would evangelize and then follow up (disciple) -- To leave converts unwarned of the possible adverse personal consequences of their acceptance of the gospel is to do them a serious injustice. Yes, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life, but that plan will always include suffering for the gospel! We must forewarn disciples so they are forearmed (cp Acts 14:22)

In an ancient Greek secular use of **prolego** we read "Gaius, an attorney, **before** his death **expresses** his thoughts in an epitaph for his tomb."

Notice that here in 1Thes 3:4, **prolego** is in the **imperfect tense** conveying the sense of "we were telling you (over and over)" or repeatedly. Paul warned them many times for he understood Jesus' teachings and also had personal experience in God's "school of suffering".

Prolego is used in 1 verse in the Septuagint (LXX) and 13 verses in the NT...

Isaiah 41:26 Who has declared this from the beginning, that we might know? Or from former times, that we may say, "He is right!"? Surely there was no one who declared, Surely there was no one who **proclaimed** (LXX = prolego = "**proclaimed beforehand**"), Surely there was no one who heard your words.

Matthew 24:25 Behold, I have **told** you in **advance**.

Mark 13:23 But take heed; behold, I have **told** you everything in **advance**.

Acts 1:16 Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit **foretold** by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

Romans 9:29 (note) And just as Isaiah foretold, "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, We would have become as Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah."

2 Corinthians 7:3 I do not speak to condemn you; for I have **said before** that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.

2 Corinthians 13:2 I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent **Isay** in **advance** to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest as well, that if I come again, I will not spare anyone

Galatians 1:9 As we have **said before**, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

Galatians 5:21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I **forewarn** (prolego) you just as I have **forewarned** (proiepon - AAI from **prolego**) you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

1Thessalonians 3:4 For indeed when we were with you, we kept **telling** you in **advance** that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.

1Thessalonians 4:6 (note) and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also **told** you **before** and solemnly warned you.

Hebrews 4:7 (note) He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been **said before**, "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts."

2 Peter 3:2 (note) that you should remember the words **spoken beforehand** by the holy prophets and the

commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.

Jude 1:17 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that werespoken **beforehand** by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ,

We were going to (3195) (ginomai) means to come into existence, in this case continually being (present tense) in the state of suffering affliction.

Paul knew what was coming and yet he pressed onward toward the goal. He calls all believers to be imitators of him as he is of Christ Jesus, Who for the joy set before endured the cross and despised the shame (He 12:2, 3-see **notes** He 12:2; 12:3)

Jon Courson commenting on trials wrote that...

A. W. Tozer was right when he said, "Before God can use a person greatly, He must allow that person to be hurt deeply." This isn't because God is mean, but because He knows we can't comfort others unless we've been comforted ourselves.

Trials not only enable us to comfort others, but they purify our own faith. That's why Peter said, "Don't think it strange concerning the fiery trials that come your way. They are sent to test and purify your faith" (1Peter 4:12-note).

What happens when you are in a fiery trial? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego will tell you: Jesus shows up (Da 3:25). That's why James tells us to count it all joy when we fall into trials (Jas 1:2-note).

"Whoopee! A trial! How wonderful!" Crazy? Not really, because if you have this mind-set in your difficult times, you will see Jesus in a way that will blow your mind, warm your heart, and bless your socks off!

Trials don't make or break us, gang. They simply reveal what's inside. When I'm driving and hit a bump, the tea that splashes out of the mug on my dashboard was there before the bump. The bump doesn't put the tea in. It just shows what was already in the cup. That's what trials do. ([Courson, J: Jon Courson's Application Commentary: NT. Nelson. 2004](#) or [Logos](#))

Richison comments on **affliction** writing that...

This pressure from without hems the believer in a situation like a mountain gorge. God puts conditions in our narrow way and presses us into distressing problems.

We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair... (2Corinthians 4:8)

God puts us into a squeeze play. Compression produces gold and compression produces character in the Christian life.

Christian suffering is inseparable from the Christian life. Christians face different kinds of affliction: persecution (1Th 1:6-note), imprisonment (Acts 20:23), derision (He 10:33-note), poverty (2Corinthians 5:13), sickness (Re 2:22-note), and inner distress (Php 1:17-note; 2Corinthians 7:5).

Tribulation tests whether we will spread the gospel at the risk of life or limb and whether we will claim the promises of God (2Corinthians 1:8, 9). Faith accepts God's discipline and patiently endures trial (2Thessalonians 1:4). A Christian has the assurance that the coming glory far overshadows present suffering (2Corinthians 4:17, 18). God's promises give us hope in the face of suffering.

Suffer affliction (2346) (thlibo from **tribos** = wear away, rub, break in pieces; NIDNTT says **thlibo** is from the root **thlao** = squash, crush) (See study of related word **thlipsis**) literally means to press, squeeze, crush, squash, hem in and then to be narrow.

Thlibo used literally pictures putting pressure upon or pressing in upon or pressing hard upon a person as when when Jesus was forced to get in the boat to keep from **crowding** Him (Mark 3:9). While some uses of **thlibo** refers to physical affliction, other uses are figurative and refer to emotional or spiritual affliction (e.g., "conflicts without, fears within" in 2Cor 7:5) And so in Paul's letters **thlibo** usually refers to the hardships he and his fellow workers experienced during their missionary journeys (2Cor 1:6; 4:8; 7:5; 1Th 3:4; 2Th 1:1-7).

Grant Richison explains that "The words "**suffer tribulation**" refers to suffering due to the pressure of circumstances or the antagonism of others (2Thessalonians 1:6, 7). This pressure from without hems the believer in a situation like a mountain gorge. God puts conditions in our narrow way and presses us into distressing problems. ([Ref](#))

The **Williams'** translation footnote says thlibo presents the "picture of a loaded wagon crushed under its heavy load."

Marvin Vincent explains that the root **thlibo** means "to press or squeeze. **Tribulation** is perhaps as accurate a rendering as is possible, being derived from **tribulum**, the threshing-roller of the Romans. In both the idea of pressure is dominant, though **thlipsis** does not convey the idea of separation (as of corn from husk) which is implied in **tribulatio**." (Vincent, M. R. Word studies in the New Testament Vol. 1, Page 3-80)

To reiterate, the idea of **thlibo** is to press together, compress, squash, hem in. Figuratively **thlibo** refers to sufferings that arise from the pressure of circumstances or from the antagonism of persons and so means to afflict, to harass, to discomfit, to oppress, to vex. Philosophically, this word group (**thlibo**, **thlipsis**) is often used to describe life's afflictions. Thus **thlibo** means to trouble, to afflict, to distress, to oppress, to cause trouble. In the passive voice it means to be the recipient of such trouble, to experience hardship or be afflicted (2Cor 1:6).

Here in **1Thessalonians 3:4 thlibo** does not refer merely to a prediction ("we were going to..."), but ultimately it signifies God's appointed will for His choice servants. Recall Jesus' instructions to Ananias regarding His "newly minted" (Acts 9:3-9) bondservant Paul - "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him **how much he must suffer for My name's sake**." (Acts 9:15-16)

The basic idea of **thlibo** is 'severe constriction', 'narrowing' or 'pressing together' and **thlibo** is the verb used to describe the pressing of grapes to extract juice and make wine! **What do pressing circumstances "extract" out of me... what kind of wine... sweet or bitter?** God's trials are not meant to make us bitter but better! Similar notions underlie the Latin word **tribulum** (a threshing sledge), which is the source of the English word **tribulation**. Most biblical references to **tribulation** are to sufferings endured by the people of God. The central and dominating factor in the biblical understanding of such suffering however is the mystery of the suffering Servant, the Messiah (Col 1:24-note; Rev 1:9-note; cf. Isa 63:9). All the tribulations of the children of God are to be viewed in the light of the Savior's Suffering.

Here are some phrases in which **thlibo** is found in ancient secular Greek writings: "**tight** quarters", "the city is **jammed full** with a multitude", "a **tight** place and full of bad snakes", "**distressed** by someone's scheming", "**distressed** soul". The figurative used in classic Greek use is common, both in the sense of oppress (external) and of grieve, vex (internal). Epictetus speaks of the **pressures of life** (*ta thlibonta*) which the true Stoic must and can overcome (Dissertationes, 4, 1, 45; cf. 1, 25, 17 and 28; 2, 27, 2 f.; 3, 13, 8).

Thlibo is used 10 times in the **NT** and is translated - afflict(1), afflicted(5), crowd(2), distress(1), narrow(1), suffer affliction(1).

Matthew 7:14 (note) "For the gate is small, and the way is **narrow (thlibo** - perfect tense = a contracted way, straitened way or compressed way and is the continual state of the way - cf John 14:6) that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

Mark 3:9 And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the multitude, in order that they might not **crowd** (**thlibo**) Him;

2 Corinthians 1:6 But if we **are afflicted** (present tense, passive voice - continually being afflicted), it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;

2 Corinthians 4:8 we **are afflicted** (present tense, passive voice - continually being afflicted) in every way, but not crushed (**stenochoreo** - figuratively to be in a circumstance that seems to offer no way of escape); perplexed, but not despairing;

2 Corinthians 7:5 For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but **we were afflicted** on every side: conflicts without, fears within.

1Thessalonians 3:4 (note) For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to **suffer affliction**; and so it came to pass, as you know.

2 Thessalonians 1:6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who (present tense, active voice - continually) **afflict** you **7** and to give relief to you who are (present tense, passive voice - continually being) **afflicted** and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

1 Timothy 5:10 having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in **distress (thlibo** used here as a noun, literally means "those who are continually being afflicted"), and if she has devoted herself to every good work.

Hebrews 11:37 (note) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, **afflicted** (hard-pressed by their foes), ill-treated

Thlibo is found 76 times in the Septuagint (LXX) (Ex. 3:9; 22:21; 23:9; Lev. 19:33; 25:14, 17; 26:26; Deut. 23:16; 28:52-53, 55, 57; Jos. 19:47; Jdg. 4:3; 6:9; 8:34; 10:8-9, 12; 1 Sam. 10:18; 28:15; 30:6; 2 Sam. 13:2; 22:7; 1 Ki. 8:37; 2 Ki. 13:4; 2 Chr. 6:28; 28:22; 33:12; Ezra 4:1; Neh. 4:11; 9:27; Job 20:22; 36:15; Ps. 3:1; 13:4; 18:6; 23:5; 27:2, 12; 31:9; 42:10; 44:7; 56:1; 60:12; 69:17, 19; 78:42; 81:14; 102:2; 106:11, 42, 44; 107:6, 13, 19, 28; 120:1; 143:12; Isa. 11:13; 18:7; 19:20; 28:14; 29:7; 49:26; 51:13; Jer. 30:20; Lam. 1:3, 5, 7, 10, 17, 20; 2:17; Ezek. 18:18; Mic. 5:9). Here are a few representative uses...

Exodus 3:9 And now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are **oppressing** (Lxx = thlibo) them.

Judges 4:3 And the sons of Israel cried to the LORD; for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and he **oppressed** (Lxx = thlibo) the sons of Israel severely for twenty years.

Judges 10:9 And the sons of Ammon crossed the Jordan to fight also against Judah, Benjamin, and the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was greatly **distressed** (Lxx = thlibo).

Judges 10:12 Also when the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites **oppressed** (Lxx = thlibo) you, you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hands.

1Samuel 10:18 and he said to the sons of Israel, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I brought Israel up from Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians, and from the power of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.'

Psalms 18:6 In my distress (Lxx = thlibo = when I was afflicted) I called upon the LORD, And cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, And my cry for help before Him came into His ears.

Psalms 69:17 And do not hide Thy face from Thy servant, For I am in **distress** (Lxx = thlibo); answer me quickly.

Psalms 107:6 Then they cried out to the LORD in their **trouble** (Lxx = thlibo used as a noun); He delivered them out of their distresses.

Psalms 120:1 A Song of Ascents. In my **trouble** (Lxx = thlibo used as a noun) I cried to the LORD, And He answered me.

Micah 5:9 Your hand will be lifted up against your **adversaries** (Lxx = thlibo = "those who continually afflict you"), And all your enemies will be cut off.

TDNT has this comment regarding the uses of thlibo (and thlipsis) in the ...

1. The theologically significant figurative use is common in the LXX for various Hebrew terms meaning a. "to distress," b. "to treat with hostility," c. "to afflict," d. "to oppress," and e. "to harass," "be hostile to," and even "destroy," or, in the case of the noun, a. "trouble," b. "distress," c. "oppression," "tribulation," etc.

2. Both internal and external afflictions are in view, the former covering both distress and anxiety, the latter the afflictions of slaves or aliens, oppression by enemies, and such troubles as illness, desert wandering, and shipwreck.

3. Inner fear or anguish may be intended (cf. Gen. 42:21).

4. The terms acquire theological significance because the reference is usually to the distress of Israel (or the righteous), e.g., in Egypt (Ex. 4:31), or exile (Dt. 4:29). Often such distress is seen as a divine visitation on the people, so that we read of a present or future day of affliction (Isa 37:3; Hab. 3:16).

5. Yet the righteous also suffer various afflictions (enemies, sickness, etc.) from which God delivers them (cf. Ps 9:9; 32:7, etc.). In later Judaism afflictions are said to bring about repentance, increase merit, or achieve expiation for the self or others. ([Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Eerdmans](#))

Why are trials and afflictions necessary? Such experiences endured in God's power and for His glory prepare us to be able to comfort others also. In addition, trials serve to purify our faith, Peter exhorting his readers...

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on

rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. (See **notes** 1Peter 4:12; 4:13) (**Comment:** Remember beloved that your trials are not sent to break you irreparably [although brokenness is often a "benefit" of trials - see Psalm 51:17 - [Spurgeon's Note](#)] but to reveal what is really inside and ultimately to conform you to the image of God's Son.)

Richison reminds us that...

Paul leveled with them that they would meet such things if they became Christians. He never misrepresented the difficulty in becoming a Christian. He never painted a rosy picture of a bed of ease. The Christian life demands confrontation. True Christianity is not convenient. ([Ref](#))

AND SO IT CAME TO PASS, AS YOU KNOW: (PPN) *kathos kai egeneto* (3SAMI) *kai oidate*. (2PRAI)

- 1Thes 2:2,14; Acts 17:1,5, 6, 7, 8, 9,13; 2Corinthians 8:1,2; 2Thessalonians 1:4, 5, 6
- 1 Thessalonians 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

So ([2531](#)) (*kathos*) means as, just as, even as. Milligan has a similar use in a ancient secular Greek writing -- "that we will superintend the lamps of the above mentioned temples, **as** aforesaid"

Came to pass ([1096](#)) (*ginomai*) is used essentially to describe what comes into existence. Here the foretold afflictions did in fact come into existence.

Hiebert comments that with the phrase **and so it came to pass** Paul makes...

an appeal to the exact fulfillment of their predictions. This verification of his words **should encourage them and strengthen their faith**. It was assurance that the missionaries knew what they were talking about. **As you well know** is a confirmatory appeal to the personal experience of his readers. They could personally testify that his predictions had been no empty saying. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book, 1996](#))(Bolding Added).

Know ([1492](#)) (*eido*) literally means perception by sight (perceive, see) as in Mt 2:2 where the wise men "saw His star". It is the verb that describes absolute, positive, beyond a chance of a doubt type of knowing something. The **perfect tense** speaks of the permanence of their knowing. It refers to that quality of knowledge that is intuitive. It means to see with the mind's eye, signifies a clear and purely mental perception. It describes one as having come to a perception or realization of something.

Fausset rightly observes that...

The correspondence of the event to the prediction powerfully confirms faith: "Forewarned, forearmed" [Edmunds]. The repetition of "ye know," so frequently, is designed as an argument, that being forewarned of coming affliction, they should be less readily "moved" by it.

Hendricksen agrees writing that...

Afflictions that have been predicted, and that take place in accordance with this prediction, serve to strengthen faith. ([Hendricksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. NT Commentary Set. Baker Book](#))

Trials are the norm in the "victorious" Christian life, but we can rest assured that the Refiner's hand is always on the thermostat. Trials for believers prove the reality of our faith, and weed out those who are mere professors (1Pe 1:7-note), enable us to comfort and encourage others who are going through trials (2Co 1:4), develop endurance in our character (Rom. 5:3), make us more zealous in spreading the gospel (Acts 4:29; 5:27, 28, 29: 8:3, 4) and help to remove the dross from our lives (Job 23:10-note;).

1Thessalonians 3:5 For **this reason**, when I could **endure** it **no longer**, I **also sent** to **find** out about your **faith**, for **fear** that the **tempter** might have **tempted** you, and our **labor** would be in **vain**. (**NASB: Lockman**)

Greek: [dia touto kago meketi stegon](#) (PAPMSN) [epempsa](#) (1SAAI) [eis to gnonai](#) (AAN) [ten pistin humon, me pos epeirasen](#) (3SAAI) [humas o peirazon](#) (PAPMSN) [kai eis kenon genetai](#) (2SAMS) [o kopos hemon](#)

Amplified: That is the reason that, when I could bear [the suspense] no longer, I sent that I might learn [how you were standing the strain, and the endurance of] your faith, [for I was fearful] lest somehow the tempter had

tempted you and our toil [among you should prove to] be fruitless and to no purpose. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: That is why, when I could bear it no longer, I sent Timothy to find out whether your faith was still strong. I was afraid that the Tempter had gotten the best of you and that all our work had been useless. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: You will understand that, when the suspense became unbearable, I sent someone to find out how your faith was standing the strain, and to make sure that the tempter's activities had not destroyed our work. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

WBC: Therefore, because I for my part could hold out no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, lest the tempter should have (successfully) tempted you and our labor should be in vain. ([Bruce](#))

Wuest: Because of this, when I also could bear it no longer, I sent [him] that I might come to know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had solicited you to do evil and my labor would turn out to be in vain.

Young's Literal: because of this also, I, no longer forbearing, did send to know your faith, lest he who is tempting did tempt you, and in vain might be our labour.

FOR THIS REASON, WHEN I COULD ENDURE IT NO LONGER, I ALSO SENT TO FIND OUT ABOUT YOUR FAITH: dia touto kago meketi stegon (PAPMSN) epempsa (1SAAI) eis to gnonai (AAN) ten pistin humon:

- 1Thes 3:2,6; Acts 15:36; 2Corinthians 7:5, 6, 7
- 1 Thessalonians 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

For this reason (dia touto) means in essence "since I knew that you were so liable to be persecuted, and since I feared that some might be turned from the truth by this opposition."

Endure (4722) (stego from **steg** = to cover, conceal, **stego** = roof) had a fairly broad range of meanings including to cover, to protect, to hold back, to hide, to bear, to endure or to persist.

Stego means to protect by covering or to cover closely (so as to keep water out). Thus **stego** is found in secular Greek writings - "the camp **protects** men against the cold" (Plato); "a house **protects** men".

The related word **steganos** meant covering or sheltering (think about this as you study the use of stego in 1Corinthians 13:7 below).

Figuratively, **stego** derives its meaning from the fact that by covering it keeps off something which threatens which then is taken to mean to bear up under.

At the core of its meaning **stego** denotes an activity or state which blocks entry from without or exit from within. Hence to protect by covering, as with a tight ship or roof.

Vine writes that **stego**...

signifies either that of which it is predicated supports what is placed upon it or covers what is placed underneath it. The former idea is prominent here and in 1Th 3:5-note ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson or Logos](#))

Also sent (3992) (anapempo from **aná** =again + **pémpo** = send) means to send again or send back again

Find out (to get to know) (1097) (**ginosko**) refers to acquire information through some means, in this case learning through sense perception (hearing). It means to get to know or to ascertain. Paul desired to learn the condition of their faith, to gain experiential confirmation on the matter of how their faith was holding out under persecution.

Find out about your faith - In the present context their **faith** refers to their fidelity or steadfastness in the gospel. Timothy's mission served a dual objective, to strengthen the faith of the converts and to obtain for Paul information concerning their welfare.

Richison makes a pithy point writing that...

No doubt all phonies will throw in the towel quickly. Persecution always sorts out the fakers.

The church popular is the church polluted.

The church persecuted is the church purified.

If the church receives nothing but favor from the world system then there is something wrong with the church. The world hates the church when it finds out what the church believes. ([Ref](#))

If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you (John 15:18, 19).

Faith ([4102](#))(**pistis**) is synonymous with trust or belief and is the conviction of the truth of anything, but in Scripture usually speaks of belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it. Note that this discussion of **pistis** is only an overview and not a detailed treatise of this vitally important subject.

Wayne Grudem defines **faith** that saves one's soul...

Saving faith is trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God. This definition emphasizes that saving faith is not just a belief in facts but personal trust in Jesus to save me... The definition emphasizes personal trust in Christ, not just belief in facts about Christ. Because saving faith in Scripture involves this personal trust, the word "trust" is a better word to use in contemporary culture than the word "faith" or "belief." The reason is that we can "believe" something to be true with no personal commitment or dependence involved in it. ([Grudem, W. A. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine Zondervan](#)) (Bolding added)

FOR FEAR THAT THE TEMPTER MIGHT HAVE TEMPTED YOU, AND OUR LABOR SHOULD BE IN VAIN: me pos epeirasen (3SAAI) humas ho peirazon (PAPMSN) kai eis kenon genetai (2SAMS) ho kopos hemon:

- Matthew 4:3; 1Corinthians 7:5; 2Corinthians 2:11; 11:2,3,13, 14, 15; Galatians 1:6, 7, 8, 9; Ephesians 4:14; James 1:13,14
- 1Thes 2:1; Isaiah 49:4; Galatians 2:2; 4:11; Philippians 2:16
- 1 Thessalonians 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

For fear that ([3381](#)) (**mepos** from **me** = not, lest + **pos** = by any means) means lest by any means, that in no way, that by no means, lest perhaps. It serves as a marker of negative purpose, often with the implication of apprehension (fearful anticipation) as in the present context.

Wuest adds the phrase **lest by any means** - Barnes comments that Paul is referring to

Either by allurements to apostasy, set before you by your former heathen friends; or by the arts of false teachers; or by the severity of suffering. Satan has many methods of seducing men from the truth, and Paul was fearful that by some of his arts he might be successful there. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

Regarding the power of the Tempter to tempt, Paul explains that he forgave the Corinthians

in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan for we are not ignorant of his schemes. (2 Corinthians 2:11)

Comment: In this context Paul's point was that Satan can defeat a Christian or a congregation either through that Christian condoning sin or his refusal to forgive a repentant sinner.

The tempter ([3985](#)) (**peirazo** [word study] from the noun **peira** = test from **peiro** = perforate, pierce through to test durability of things) is a morally neutral word simply meaning "to test". For example it may mean to put to the test and so to search out or to discover what kind of person someone is. And so it may be used of God or Christ in a good sense as putting men to the test that they may stand approved, as when Abraham was tested by God's request to him to offer Isaac, his son of promise, his only begotten son (He 11:17-note).

Peirazo on the other hand when used of the devil always has a bad connotation, meaning to test or tempt in order to disapprove. It is always the devil's aim to entice men to sin and bring them to a fall as in the temptation of Christ

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be **tempted** by the devil (Mt 4:1)

And so the meaning of **peirazo** depends on the intent of the one giving the test and also on the response of the one tested. (See study of another word for testing **dokimazo**)

In this passage the definite article (Greek = **ho** corresponds to English article "the") precedes the verb **peirazo** (*ho peirazon*), and is

clearly a reference to specific tempting one, the Devil, Satan, the Serpent, the Evil one, Lucifer. Paul however does not now identify this nefarious foe by his name but by his characteristic activity. The **present tense** the indicating that temptation is his continual evil activity. It pictures him as persistently engaged in the effort to destroy the faith of the Thessalonians through temptation. He never gives up his sinister efforts. Do believers really understand and believe this today? Remember that Satan's tests are never with a good end in view but are always calculated to do us harm.

Satan is referred to as **the Tempter** only here and in Matthew 4...

And the tempter (peirazo) came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." (Matthew 4:3)

Comment: He who was the tempter of our Lord is also the tempter of His people.

Tempted (3985) (**peirazo**) is the same verb discussed above but without the definite article preceding and in a different verb tense, **aorist.**, referring here to a past fact. In other words Paul takes for granted that the saints have already been tempted by the tempter.

Vine comments that...

the point tense (**aorist tense**) indicates that the apostle feared not merely an assault on their faith, but a successful assault = "that the tempter had succeeded in tempting you." Satan was doubly active, he had hindered the missionaries from continuing the work at Thessalonica; had he succeeded in overthrowing what they had done? ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson or Logos](#))

Richison warns us that...

The Devil will take advantage of your vulnerability. He knows about your history. He knows where he can stick it to you.

Temptation is an awful thing particularly when both Satan and your sin capacity join forces against you. At times, Satan will move into your family and create problems in your household. He hates harmonious Christian homes. He may, for example, attempt to invade the bedroom.

Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control (1Corinthians 7:5).

Satan loves misunderstanding, unkindness and thoughtlessness. He wants couples to take each other for granted. He wants them to misuse sex. He delights to see physical and emotional bonds broken and partners drift apart. The Devil may bring a third person onto the scene which can result in cheating, infidelity, and eventual divorce. ([Ref](#))

Labor (2873) (**kopos [word study]**) is used in secular Greek of "a beating," "weariness" (as though one had been beaten) and "exertion," was the proper word for physical tiredness induced by work, exertion or heat. **Kopos** speaks of great effort and exertion, to the point of sweat and exhaustion. It pictures one who is physically become worn out, weary or faint. It describes intense toil even to the point of utter exhaustion if necessary. The work described by **kopos** left one so weary that it was as if the person had taken a beating. **Kopos** speaks not so much of the actual exertion as the weariness which follows the straining of all one's powers to the utmost.

Paul had used **kopos** earlier in the letter writing that...

you recall, brethren, our **labor** (kopos) and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. (1Th 2:9-note) (**Comment:** They worked and ministered, either one of which is enough to sap one's energy, thus we can understand Paul's allusion again to labor, although of course he is not concerned about his physical labor being in vain but his spiritual labor.)

Labor in vain - As would be the case if the Thessalonians were turned away from the faith by tempter. Paul remembered the response the Thessalonians had given to the preaching of the gospel for three Sabbaths in the synagogue (Acts 17:1, 2, 3, 4). As some commentators suggest Paul had been driven out before it could be established whether the Thessalonians had expressed merely an emotional reaction (which would have made the **labor in vain**) or had truly attained to genuine faith and conversion. This is always a good principle to keep in mind - we must assiduously follow up on those who have recently professed faith in the Gospel of Christ, lest they be shown to be only professors and not possessors of eternal life.

Hiebert comments that Paul...

knew that the tempter had been busy at Thessalonica. But at the time of sending he did not know the outcome

of that tempting activity. This uncertainty is indicated by his use of the aorist subjunctive in the expression "and our efforts might have been useless." It was his apprehension of this dread possibility that caused Paul such anxiety about the Thessalonians. There was the possible outcome that "our efforts," the wearisome toil the missionaries had expended at Thessalonica, might turn out to "have been useless" ("should come to nothing"—Darby). The possibility was that it should prove to be an empty thing, like a nut without a kernel. Paul was fully aware that the final outcome of his labors was dependent upon the steadfastness of his converts. The return of Timothy with his report brought the glad news that Paul's fears had not been realized. But that does not mean that his fears had been unwarranted. Knowing the fierceness of the enemy attack and the fickleness of human nature, Paul's fears were altogether reasonable. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

Writing to the saints at **Corinth** Paul said...

But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ (Paul feared that they would abandon their simple devotion to Christ in favor of the sophisticated error of the false apostles, just as Eve did with the chief falsifier!). 4 For if one comes (false apostles came into the Corinthian church from the outside just as Satan did into the Garden) and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, **you bear this beautifully** (Paul is not endorsing their acceptance of heresy but is speaking with intense irony, in essence chiding them for their spiritual gullibility and lack of discernment!)... 13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds. (2Corinthians 11:3,4,13, 14, 15)

In **Galatians** Paul voices similar concerns writing...

And it was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in **vain (kenos)**. (Galatians 2:2)

MacArthur explains **in vain** here writing that "Paul hoped the Jerusalem leaders would support his ministry to the Gentiles and not soften their opposition to legalism. He did not want to see his ministry efforts wasted because of conflict with the other apostles ([MacArthur Study Bible: Word](#))

I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored (kopiao = intense toil which include straining to point of exhaustion) over you **in vain** (eike - for nothing - it means without any result or for no purpose) ([Gal 4:11](#))

Comment: His intense efforts of evangelizing and discipling the Galatians churches might prove futile if they fell back into legalism. Paul would write this same concern to professing Christians today who seek to attain holiness by legal observances!

KJV Bible Commentary sounds a warning note "Paul's labor would have been in vain if all that was accomplished was for the Galatians to exchange their pagan religion for the old abrogated legalism of the Jews. Turning to legalism is equivalent to rejecting the gospel and renouncing Christ. Paul's admonition to the Galatians should be a solemn warning to Christians not to sacrifice their spiritual liberty in Christ for the slavery of forms and ceremonies." { [KJV Bible Commentary: Nelson](#) }

Finally writing to his beloved saints at **Philippi** Paul exhorts them to be lights in a midst of the crooked, perverted, pagan, dark and depraved world around them...

holding fast (present tense = continually holding on to in sense of holding it tight or holding forth in sense of holding out as if offering) the word of life (this phrase is first in the Greek sentence for emphasis and refers to the Gospel, which is life and which gives life - it is a supernatural word which has life in itself and which leads to real life in Christ - cp Col 1:6-note{referring to the gospel in Col 1:5-note}, 1Th 2:13-note), so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain (kenos) nor toil in vain (kenos). (Php 2:16-note)

Vain (2756) (kenos) means literally to be without something (material and thus means empty or without content. It was used with this literal meaning (as in Mk 12:3 "they took him and beat him and sent him away **empty handed**"). More often **kenos** is used figuratively referring to things that lack effectiveness and thus are futile, useless, of no purpose or without result. **Kenos** is used to refer to endeavors, labors, acts, which result in nothing and thus are vain, fruitless, without effect and will not succeed. **Kenos** can

refer to being devoid of intellectual, moral, or spiritual value.

Guzik comments that...

In the parable of the soils (Matthew 13:1-23) Jesus described the seed that withered under the heat of trials. If the Thessalonians withered, Paul's hard work as a farmer among them would have born no harvest. Paul did something to help prevent the Thessalonians from falling under their affliction. He sent Timothy to them, because those who are in affliction need the help of other godly people.

TDNT says **kenos**...

1. Literally the meaning is "empty" usually things, but also persons.
2. Figuratively the reference is to vain or frivolous persons or futile things, e.g., opinions, boastings, speech, and cf. the expression *eis kenon*, "in vain." ([Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Eerdmans](#))

Trench writes that when used

of persons, **kenos** predicates not merely an absence and emptiness of good, but, since the moral nature of man endures no vacuum, the presence of evil. It is thus employed only once in the NT, namely at Ja 2:20 where the (*anthropos kenos*) is one in whom the higher wisdom has found no entrance, but who is puffed up with a vain conceit of his own spiritual insight, 'aufgeblasen,' as Luther has it.

NIDNTT notes that in Classic Greek **kenos** is...

found frequently from Homer onwards (and) means empty, as opposed to *pleres* (full). It is thus used mostly lit. of things (e.g. an empty jug, pit [cf. Ge 37:24], or house). But it is also occasionally used of persons (e.g. with empty hands [cf. Ge 31:42]).

When used metaphorically in connection **with things**, *kenos* means either lacking content (e.g. *kenoi logoi*, empty words [cf. Plato, *Lach.*, 196b]), or a missing effect (especially in the expression *eis kenon*, in vain [The Flinders Petrie Papyri, II, 37, 1b, 12; Josephus, *Ant.*, 19, 96]). **With people**, *kenos* means hollow, shallow, lacking in judgment (*tou nou kenos*, empty in mind [Soph., *OC*, 931]), and also in the ethical sense of ineffectual, vain (Soph., *Ant.*, 709).

(In the **LXX of the OT**) **kenos** is used mostly in the lit. sense of empty (e.g. Jer. 14:3, vessels; Ex. 3:21 and Deut. 15:13, empty-handed). But it also has a distinctive metaphorical sense. Judges 9:4 and Judges 11:3 speak of *andres kenoi*, **worthless** men, who are not counted among the people of Yahweh and who are ready and willing to perform any kind of deed, even murder. The prophets spoke of turning away from Yahweh as giving oneself to **vanity**. The help that Israel sought from the Egyptians was **worthless and empty** (Isa. 30:7). Israel has forgotten Yahweh and offers sacrifice to **vanity or nothing**, i.e. the idols (Jer 18:15). The idea of emptiness was sharpened in the message of the prophets as a deceptive power upon which no reliance can be placed (Isa. 29:8). It is unmasked as senselessness. Only Yahweh can help. The Lord's chosen ones shall not toil **in vain** (Isa. 65:23).

The term is found most frequently in the cries of Job. He resents the **vain** words (Job 27:12) and the **empty** comfort (Job 21:34) of his friends. He sees not only the things around him but his own life sink into nothing. He laments the months of emptiness (7:3) and vain hope (7:6). He cries out: "Leave me alone! For my life is nothing" (7:16). He sees himself delivered to the curse of nothingness without reason. Unless Yahweh rescues him, he can only perish. ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan](#))

Kenos is used 60 times in the **Septuagint (LXX)**

Gen. 31:42; 37:24; Ex 3:21; 5:9; 23:15; 34:20; Lev. 26:16, 20; Deut. 15:13; 16:16; 32:47; Jdg. 7:16; 9:4; 11:3; Ruth 1:21; 3:17; 1 Sam. 6:3; 2 Sam. 1:22; 2 Ki. 4:3; Neh. 5:13; Job 2:3, 9; 6:5f; 7:3, 6, 16; 9:17; 15:31, 35; 20:18; 21:34; 22:6, 9; 27:12; 31:34; 33:21; 34:20; 39:16; Ps. 2:1; 7:4; 25:3; 31:6; 107:9; Prov. 23:29; Isa. 29:8; 30:7; 32:6; 45:18; 59:4; 65:23; Jer. 6:29; 14:3; 18:15; 27:9; 46:11; 51:58; Hos. 12:1; Mic. 1:14; Hab. 2:3).

Here are a few representative uses of *kenos* in the LXX...

Exodus 3:21 "And I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go **empty-handed** (Lxx = *kenos*)."

Deuteronomy 32:47 "For it (Word of God) is not an **idle** (Lxx = *vain*) word for you; indeed it is your life. And

by this word you shall prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."

Judges 9:4 And they gave him seventy pieces of silver from the house of Baal-berith with which Abimelech hired **worthless** (Lxx = kenos) and reckless fellows, and they followed him.

Ruth 1:21 "I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back **empty** (Lxx = kenos). Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

Ruth 3:17 And she said, "These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law **empty-handed** (Lxx = kenos).'"

Psalms 2:1 Why are the nations in an uproar, And the peoples devising a **vain** (Lxx = kenos) thing?

Kenos is used 18 times in 16 verses in the **NT**...

Mark 12:3 "And they took him, and beat him, and sent him away **empty-handed**. (The parable of the vineyard in which the tenants send back the master's servants empty-handed, cf Luke 20:10)

Luke 1:53 "He has filled the hungry with good things; And sent away the rich **empty-handed**.

Luke 20:10 "And at the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order that they might give him some of the produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away **empty-handed**. 11 "And he proceeded to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully, and sent him away **empty-handed**.

Acts 4:25 who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Thy servant, didst say, 'Why did the Gentiles rage, And the peoples devise **futile** things (things that will not succeed)?

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove **vain** (empty, lacking in anything which might or should be possessed); but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me... **14** and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is **vain**, (here **kenos** = devoid of any spiritual value) your faith also is **vain**... **58** Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in **vain** in the Lord (**vain** here = labor which yields no return).

2 Corinthians 6:1 And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in **vain**--

Galatians 2:2 And it was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in **vain**.

Ephesians 5:6 (note) Let no one deceive you with **empty** words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (**Comment:** The **words** were empty, hollow, without the substance of truth or reality. They sounded plausible, but were devoid of truth. and "employed to palliate heathen vices" {Vincent}. Expositors Greek Testament notes that **empty words** is a general expression "applying to all who sought by their sophistries to palliate the vices in question or make them appear to be no vices")

Philippians 2:16 (note) holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in **vain** nor toil in **vain**.

Colossians 2:8 (note) See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and **empty** deception (Deceit is always an empty thing. Only what is true is solid), according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

1 Thessalonians 2:1 (note) For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in **vain**,

1 Thessalonians 3:5 (note) For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor should be in **vain**. (a "failure")

James 2:20 But are you willing to recognize, you **foolish** (kenos) fellow, that faith without works is useless (nekros = dead)? (**Comment:** **Vine** has this note - In James 2:20 the vain man {kenos} is one empty of divinely imparted wisdom; in James 2:26 the vain religion {mataios} is that which produces nothing profitable; **kenos** stresses lack of quality, **mataios** lack of effect).

Find out ([1097](#))(**ginosko**) has the basic meaning of taking in knowledge in regard to something or someone, knowledge that goes beyond the merely factual. By extension, the term frequently was used of a special relationship between the person who knows and the object of the knowledge. It was often used of the intimate relationship between husband and wife and between God and His

people.

What was Paul concerned about? Whether they were temporary or had firmly taken root. In His parable of the soils Jesus explains that...

And in a similar way these are the ones on whom seed (the Word of Truth, the Gospel) was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word (the Gospel), immediately receive it with joy; and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, **when affliction or persecution arises because of the word**, immediately they fall away . (Mark 4:16-17)