

(Num. 20:22-29). The children of Israel arrived and camped at its base, where they were told the sad news. They solemnly watched as Moses and Eleazar (Aaron's son) ascended the mount to bury their first high priest.

As Aaron ascended the mountain he would have seen one of the most remarkable scenes ever to be viewed by a living person—a view which he had been waiting to see for nearly forty years. From the summit of the mountain he would have seen the mountainous area of the Sinaitic Peninsula, with the entire region where the Israelites had wandered for so many years. He would have seen the boundless desert, marked by so many incidents in which he played such a notable part.

We can imagine what thoughts must have dominated the minds of the three men as they viewed this scene. They had witnessed the

complaints of the Israelites for forty years, whilst Mount Sinai in the distance had witnessed the wonderful revelation given to them forty years earlier. As these three men looked upon the land, they would doubtless have spoken about their great hope.

It would have been a sad farewell for those two brothers, who had worked with such dedication together in the service of their Creator; and there would have been some cherished final words of consolation between them both. It was now up to Eleazar to carry the responsibilities of the high priest, so Moses clothed him with his father's garments (v. 28). Aaron was left to contemplate the majestic view as he fell upon sleep. As with Aaron, the same principle governs our lives. The wilderness we too must walk; then, by God's grace, we shall rest.

Exposition

Timothy (2)

John Benson

Although still a young man, Timothy is sufficiently mature in the faith for Paul to entrust him with the responsibility of supporting the ecclesia at Thessalonica. This experience no doubt helped him at Corinth, to which Paul later sent him, while himself working at Ephesus. Before that, however, Paul has arrived in Athens, and has sent an urgent request that Silas and Timothy should join him without delay.

THE EXACT movements of Silas and Timothy at this time are not too clear, and therefore alternative suggestions have been made. There is no specific mention of them fulfilling Paul's request in Acts 17:15 and joining him at Athens. The next time we read of them is in 18:5, after Paul had left Athens and moved to Corinth. Here Luke informs us that Silas and Timothy come to Paul from Macedonia. We know also that at some stage Paul had sent Timothy back to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:1,2). His hasty departure from the city caused Paul great anxiety, because circumstances had prevented him from remaining there long enough to nurture the fledgling ecclesia. He was therefore desperate to receive reassurance that all was well with the Thessalonian brethren.

From Athens to Corinth

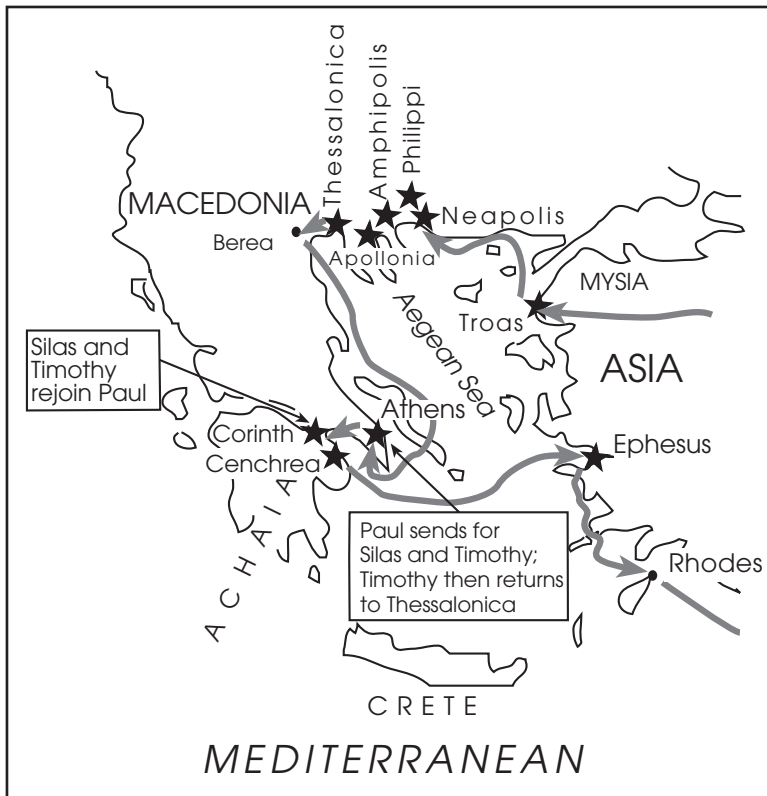
Despite the lack of clear information, let us assume that Silas and Timothy were able to join Paul at Athens as he had requested. By this time Paul's anxiety about the welfare of the Thessalonians was so great that he "could stand it no longer" (v. 1, NIV), and therefore, it would seem, he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica on a mission to see how the ecclesia was faring.

Thus Paul later wrote: "we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith" (vv. 1,2).

The pronoun "we" makes it clear that Paul could not have been alone during the whole of his stay in Athens. However, the reference in Acts 18:5 to Silas and Timothy coming from Macedonia to join Paul in Corinth suggests that, although Silas may have joined Paul in Athens for a while, he did not remain there.

The following scenario is an endeavour to harmonise all the recorded facts:

- Paul arrived at Athens in the company of certain brethren from Berea (Acts 17:15).



Paul's second missionary journey

- Paul sent the brethren back with an urgent message to Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible (v. 15).
- Silas and Timothy duly arrived in Athens. They discussed Paul's anxiety about the welfare of the Thessalonian ecclesia, and it was decided that Timothy should return to them.
- Silas also returned to Macedonia, thus leaving Paul once more alone in Athens (1 Thess. 3:1). As no mention is made of Silas in 1 Thessalonians 3, we assume that he did not return to Thessalonica.
- That being the case, we can conjecture that Silas accompanied Timothy as far as Berea and remained there to support the new converts while Timothy continued alone on the remaining fifty miles to Thessalonica.
- Having accomplished his mission in Thessalonica, Timothy returned to Berea to join Silas.
- Together, Silas and Timothy returned from Macedonia to join Paul, who had now moved to Corinth, as recorded in Acts 18:5.

Paul remained in Corinth for eighteen months (Acts 18:11), and it would seem that, having joined him in the city, Silas and Timothy remained

there as well. The names of both Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy (Timotheus) are included with Paul's in the superscription of both letters to the Thessalonians: "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians . . ." (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1). The first letter would have been written shortly after Timothy's arrival in Corinth, in response to the good news he had brought back from Thessalonica.

Before moving on, it is worth reflecting on what Paul wrote about Timothy in his letter to the Thessalonians. From Athens he "sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith" (1 Thess. 3:2). Although still very young,¹ Timothy was evidently capable and reliable. Paul called him not only "our brother" but also a "minister of God" and a "fellowlabourer".

Clearly Timothy was not a mere 'hanger-on', but fully participated in the work. His mission in this case was far from easy. The brethren at Thessalonica had only recently "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1:9), and needed guidance and support. Not only so, but Paul had left them in great haste after his preaching had provoked much hostility.

This was a potentially volatile and dangerous situation for the Thessalonian ecclesia as they endeavoured to grow towards maturity within the hostile environment of the "Satan" (2:18) that had prevented Paul's return. Paul fully entrusted Timothy with this difficult and delicate mission, and was clearly greatly relieved at the success achieved and the good news that Timothy brought on his return.

A reliable fellow-worker

It is a wonderful help for those engaged in various activities in the Truth to have reliable

1. It was suggested in Part 1 (Mar. 2010, p.10) that Timothy might still have been in his teens when Paul met him at Lystra.

fellow-workers. Conversely, how stressful it can be when those who are fully capable fail to fulfil their duties! How often do, for example, campaign leaders or recording brethren have to pick up the pieces because of the negligence or dilatoriness of those who are supposed to be helping? If only there were more like Timothy!

What happened to Timothy during the rest of Paul's Second Missionary Journey is not revealed. Paul remained a good while in Corinth (Acts 18:11,18) before leaving to make the return journey to Syria via Ephesus. Priscilla and Aquila, whom Paul met in Corinth (v. 2), travelled with him, but remained in Ephesus (vv. 18,19) when Paul embarked on the final leg of his journey to Syria. No mention is made of either Silas or Timothy; indeed, we read no more about Silas at all throughout the rest of Acts. They may have remained in Corinth for a while longer, but more likely travelled with Paul as far as Ephesus. Maybe at this point Timothy returned home to Lystra for a while. The rest of Luke's record of Paul's Second Missionary Journey is very brief and mentions only Paul, using the pronoun "he" (vv. 21,22).

After Paul had been some time in Syrian Antioch, he commenced his Third Missionary Journey (v. 23). As on the previous occasion, he travelled through Galatia and Phrygia in order to strengthen the disciples. If Timothy had returned home to Lystra, it may well be on this first leg of Paul's journey that they met up again. Timothy was certainly in Paul's company again during Paul's prolonged stay in Ephesus, for once more he is mentioned in Luke's narrative (19:22).

Paul was in Ephesus for a total of three years (20:31), leaving the city after the devotees of the goddess Diana had instigated a riot. He planned to continue through Macedonia and Achaia after leaving Ephesus, and thereafter to visit Jerusalem (19:21). Before the incident of the riot in Ephesus, Paul sent Timothy over to Macedonia, this time with Erastus as his companion: "So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season" (v. 22).

Given that Paul planned to visit both Macedonia and Achaia after leaving Ephesus, we must assume that he intended that Timothy and Erastus should continue into Achaia after visiting Macedonia. Their journey would therefore include visits to Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Corinth, supporting the ecclesias established during the previous journey.

Assignment at Corinth

It was during Paul's stay in Ephesus that he would have received news about the problems in the Corinthian ecclesia, for there were good communications across the Aegean Sea between the two cities. It was clearly Paul's intention that Timothy should visit the ecclesia in Corinth, but it seemed likely that Paul's letter would reach them before Timothy's arrival.

Paul mentioned his plans towards the end of his first recorded² letter to the Corinthians. He was intending to visit them (16:2). On the way he would pass through Macedonia (v. 5), but for the time being would remain at Ephesus until Pentecost (v. 8). He then mentioned Timothy's visit: "Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren" (vv. 10,11).

It seems that Paul was intending that Timothy's time with them should be a short preparatory visit. Paul was sending Timothy as his representative prior to his own visit to them: ". . . for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do" (v. 10). As the earlier chapters in Paul's letter make clear, the apostle was fully aware of the problems at Corinth, so he did not want Timothy to be deterred from his missionary zeal by the wrangling and disharmony in the ecclesia. Nor would Paul want Timothy to be criticised by some members of the ecclesia in the same way as he had been criticised. Paul therefore wrote, "see that he may be with you without fear". As Timothy was relatively young and inexperienced, Paul was anxious that he should be treated well: "Let no man therefore despise him" (v. 11). He was hoping that they would "set him forward on his journey in peace" (v. 11, RV), and that, when other brethren arrived at Ephesus from Corinth, Timothy would be with them.

The reason for Paul sending Timothy to Corinth in advance of his own intended visit is mentioned earlier in the epistle (4:17). Paul was writing to them in the hope that they would heed his warning and advice, so that he would be able to come to them "in love, and in the spirit of meekness [NKJV, gentleness]", rather than with a rod (v. 21).

2. 1 Corinthians 5:9 makes it clear that the First Epistle to the Corinthians in the Scriptures was not the first that Paul wrote.

He therefore appealed to them as an affectionate spiritual father speaking to his sons: "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you" (v. 14).

Paul was not sending Timothy to them to 'wave the big stick', but rather in love and the spirit of gentleness. Paul was the spiritual father of Timothy, and he was Paul's "beloved son, and faithful in the Lord" (v. 17). Timothy had spent much time in Paul's company as his fellow-worker in the Lord's service, and was therefore in a good position to demonstrate in his demeanour the Christlike character of Paul and his loving care for all the churches. So Paul wrote that Timothy "shall bring you into remembrance of my ways

which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church" (v. 17).

Paul evidently had great confidence in Timothy's ability to handle this delicate situation. Timothy was to be like an elder brother, setting a good example to his younger siblings, and by his personal association with them he would be able to reassure them of Paul's sincere motives. And, just in case some of Paul's critics should think that he was sending Timothy in order to avoid meeting them face to face, Paul reiterated his intention to visit them personally: "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will" (v. 19).

[\(To be concluded\)](#)