Scriptura 125 (2026:1), pp. 1–13 http://scriptura.journals.ac.za
ISSN 2305-445X (online), 0254-1807 (print)
http://dx.doi.org/10.7833/125-1-2353

A Text-Centred Rhetorical Analysis of 1 Thessalonians 3:1–5

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Abstract

This article analyses 1 Thessalonians 3:1–5 from a rhetorical perspective. In this article, it is suggested that, instead of the approach generally preferred by scholars to analyse the letter in terms of classical Greco-Roman rhetorical theory, a close reading of the text itself better captures Paul's rhetorical strategy. Prinsloo (2024b:1–11) has illustrated this approach in his analysis of 1 Thessalonians. Tolmie (2005:28) defines this approach as "a text-centered descriptive analysis." Gombis (2007:348) defines it as "a minimum theoretical approach." First, the overall rhetorical strategy is identified, followed by an outline of the dominant and supportive arguments used by Paul, including supporting strategies, and the analysis concludes with the identification of the rhetorical techniques. This article highlights Paul's overall strategy in this phase, which involves the utilisation of the apostolic parousia, a term explained in the article, specifically in the "the sending of a collaborator" unit. It remains critical to understand the urgency of the missionaries to convey their loving concern and to encourage them to remain committed to their faith in Jesus in the light of the return of Christ. [1]

Keywords: Text-centred rhetorical analysis; 1 Thessalonians; Pauline Literature; Apostolic parousia; Narratio

Introduction

In a previous study, a rhetorical analysis of 1 Thessalonians 2:17–20 was offered that did not draw on ancient rhetorical theory (as almost all scholars do). Instead, a text-centred rhetorical approach was followed (Prinsloo 2024b:1–11). This approach was introduced by Tolmie (2005:28), who defines it as "a text-centered descriptive analysis." Another scholar, Gombis (2007:348), defines it as "a minimum theoretical approach." First, the overall rhetorical strategy is identified, followed by an outline of the dominant and supportive arguments used by Paul, including the supporting strategies, and the analysis is concluded with the identification of the rhetorical techniques. This article aims to analyse 1 Thessalonians 3:1–5 whilst situating it within a larger framework. Prinsloo (2024b:2) identifies the following structure:

[1] For example, Witherington (2006:47–180) illustrates the classic Greco-Roman approach in his analysis: Letter Opening 1:1, *Exordium* 1:2–3, *Narratio* 1:4-3:10, *Transitus* 3:11–13, *Exhortatio* 4:1-5:13, *Peroratio* 5:16–22, *Wish Prayer* 5:23–24, *Letter Closing* 5:25–28. For an overview of the existing scholarship following the ancient rhetorical approach, see Prinsloo (2024a:208).

(a) 2:17–2:20: Paul's longing to see the Thessalonians again;
(b) 3:1–5: Timothy sent as Paul's substitute;
(c) 3:6–10: Timothy's report on the outcome of his visit;
(d) 3:11–13, Paul's wish prayer for the congregation.

In this pericope, 1 Thessalonians 3:1–5, Paul is utilising "an apostolic *parousia*" to assure the believers in Thessalonica of his love and encouragement to persevere. Prinsloo (2024b:2) summarises the meaning behind the term "apostolic *parousia*" as follows:[2]

> Paul and his co-writers are not merely narrating events that have already occurred in the past. Instead, he utilises this section to express their desire to visit them soon – a near future event. The missionaries' longing accounts for their motivation to communicate with these believers, driven by their expectation of the return of Jesus, also a near-future event.

Therefore, in this article, with reference to the quoted structure of 1 Thessalonians 2:17–3:13, I will focus on the second part, namely, Paul's sending of Timothy as a substitute.

Timothy was sent as Paul's replacement (3:1–5)

Paul's overall strategy in this section involves utilising the apostolic *parousia*, specifically the "the sending of a collaborator" unit. Prinsloo (2024b:3) explains the "sending of collaborator" unit as follows: "(b) 'the sending of a co-worker unit' – mentioning that a co-worker has been sent and a brief description of the assignment with which the co-worker has been sent, including a brief motivation why he is worthy of being sent."

He sent a co-worker (vv. 1–2a): διὸ μηκέτι στέγοντες εὐδοκήσαμν καταλειφθῆναι ἐν Ἀθήναις καὶ ἐπέμψαμεν Τιμόθεον, "therefore, when we could bear it no longer, we thought it good to be left alone, and we sent Timothy";[3] 5a: διὰ τοῦτο κἀγὼ μηκέτι στέγων ἔπεμψα, "when I could bear it no longer, I sent (for Timothy)." Timothy's dignity to serve as Paul's representative is confirmed as follows (v. 2b): τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν καὶ συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, "our brother and fellow worker of God in the gospel of Christ." The command with which he was sent is evident from the following (vv. 2c–3a): εἰς τὸ στηρίξαι ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλέσαι ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν τὸ μηδένα σαίνεσθαι ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν ταύταις, "to strengthen and encourage you for the sake of your faith so that none of you is troubled by these tribulations"; f. 5b: εἰς τὸ γνῶναι τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶ μή πως ἐπείρασεν ὑμᾶς ὁ πειράζων καὶ εἰς κενὸν γένηται ὁ κοπος ἡμῶν, "to find out about your faith, fearing that the tempter has tempted you and our work has come to nothing." The reason why he was sent with these instructions is attributed to the inevitability of tribulation (vv. 3b–4): αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἴδατε ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα· καὶ γὰρ ὅτε πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἦμεν, προελέγομεν ὑμῖν ὅτοὶ γὰρ οἴδατε ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα. οἴδατε, "After all, you yourselves know that we are destined for this because even when we were with

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[2] See Prinsloo (2024b:2–3) for a detailed description of the term "apostolic *parousia*", the current debate around the term, and how it is used to achieve Paul's overall rhetorical objective of underscoring his desire to return as an apostle himself.

[3] In this article, I have not relied on a single translation but have presented my own translation(s).

you, we told you in advance that we would be oppressed, as it also happened, and you know it."

Several arguments are used in the pericope to convey Paul's strategy. Some are dominant and others are supportive. The use of these arguments will be explained in more detail in the subsequent discussion. The arguments include:

1. Emotion – Type 1 and Type 3[4]
2. Ethos[5]
3. Experience[6]
4. Divine control/initiative[7]
5. Vilification[8]

In this section (1 Thessalonians 3:1–5), the dominant argument is emotional, specifically of type 1: Paul's desire to see the congregation (vv. 1–2a). Διὸ μηκέτι στέγοντες εὐδοκήσαμεν καταλειφθῆναι ἐν Ἀθήναις καὶ ἐπέμψαμεν Τιμόθεον, "therefore, when we could bear it no longer, we thought it good to be left alone, and we sent Timothy"; 5a: διὰ τοῦτο κἀγὼ μηκέτι στέγων ἔπεμψα, "when I could bear it no longer, I sent (Timothy)."

It is critical to outline the situation "in Athens" to understand this emotional argument, considering Acts 17:14–16, as it matters to note the differences between Paul's account in the Thessalonian correspondence. Acts recounts that Paul and his co-missionaries,

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[4] Paul does not use only a single emotional argument in his writing, but one can differentiate between three arguments, involving different emotions, according to Prinsloo (2023:4) footnote 5: "When reading Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians as a whole it becomes clear that three types of emotional arguments are used, namely: (a) Emotion Type 1 – Paul's desire to meet with the congregation again, (b) Emotion Type 2 – The congregation's desire to see Paul and his co-missionaries again, (c) Emotion Type 3 – Paul's concern about their spiritual endurance." Paul's understanding of emotion is generally understood by many scholars in terms of *Pathos* in Aristotelian language, e.g., Cornelius (1993:80).

[5] Paul uses an argument of ethos to reaffirm their credibility as a missionary team. Prinsloo (2023:4) explains the argument of ethos used by Paul in this letter as follows: "Given Paul's already favourable relationship with the congregants, his authority does not need to be confirmed. In light of the accusations of the outsiders, he nevertheless finds it necessary to reaffirm his integrity or ethos. In this way, he ensures that the congregation will accept the remainder of the letter with the requisite seriousness and will be able to reject any external accusations against him."

[6] Paul uses an argument of experience in which he presupposes their collective experience in order to present it as an affirmation of his argument. Prinsloo (2023:8) explains it as follows: "Recalling the events of the past through their own memories enables them to hear the past, which is absent in the present, not only as an interpretation but to experience it for themselves. Paul seems to be doing something similar. He presents specific events and highlights individual elements of the initial experience in a new context."

[7] Paul uses an argument of divine control or initiative. This argument underscores God's involvement in Paul and his co-missionaries' work in Thessalonica. E.g., in 1 Thessalonians 1:1, Prinsloo (2022:1–5) identifies an example: "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," highlighting its significance as follows: "He uses a supportive argument of divine control and initiative to tie the congregation's existence to the Deity's identity."

[8] Paul uses an argument of vilification in his letter to the Thessalonians, e.g. 1 Thessalonians 2:15–16, "For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last!" Prinsloo (2024a:217) explains it as follows: "With the vilification of the Jews (2:15–16), Paul can reaffirm the integrity of their authority and actions. The fact that God will punish the Jews who persecuted Paul confirms that his ministry carries God's approval. It also serves as an encouragement for the suffering congregation to know that God will punish their opponents."

Silvanus and Timothy, were initially together in Berea but that Paul left them behind when he was taken away to Athens (Acts 17:14).[9] Those who accompanied him to Athens gave a message from Paul to Silvanus and Timothy upon their return, namely that they should join him (in Athens) as soon as possible (Acts 17:15).[10] Having just arrived in Athens and waiting for Silvanus and Timothy to join, Paul continued his mission there (Acts 17:16).[11] Although Acts omits to mention Silvanus and Timothy's arrival, Paul himself reports this in 1 Thessalonians 3:1.[12] This can be derived from the subject "we", which is confirmed by the conjugation of the verb (-αμεν).[13] Therefore, the "we" cannot merely be reduced to an editorial amendment but was thoughtfully inserted to confirm Silvanus and Timothy's presence with Paul.[14] When they met again in Athens, they might have consulted together first. Their emotions decisively influenced their decision (Weima 2014:206–207). This can be inferred from the adverbial participle phrases describing the missionaries' emotions: v. 1: διὸ μηκέτι στέγοντες, "therefore when we could bear it no longer" and v. 5: διὰ τοῦτο κἀγὼ μηκέτι στέγων, "when I could bear it no longer" in other words, when they could not absorb their overwhelming emotions (1 Thessalonians 3:1, 5) of separation from the congregation any longer (1 Thessalonians 2:17).

Overwhelmed by their emotions, the missionaries conclude that their response should be to send a co-worker. The supporting arguments that follow this dominant emotional argument note that the urgency behind their decisions is marked by the fear that the believers may not endure in faith (vv. 2b–4, 5b). They fear that the Jews, responsible for ending their initial activity in Macedonia (Acts 17:1–15), could target the newly founded congregations such as Thessalonica next, which left the missionaries worried (Hiebert 1992:143). To make matters even worse, all their earlier attempts to revisit the congregation also failed (vv. 17–20). The decision taken is considered a collective decision (plural, -αμεν, v. 1), which Paul and Silvanus probably initiated and to which

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[9] As indicated in a previous publication, I am aware of the historical-critical differences between Acts and 1 Thessalonians. I hold that 1 Thessalonians was written about 50 A.D., whereas Acts was written about 85 A.D. Brown (1997:226, 457) considers differences in background, source, time of writing, and intent. However, as illustrated in a previous publication, the account of Acts is used constructively, but with priority to Paul's own writing. See Prinsloo (2024a:217) for an illustration.

[10] For more details about the interpretation of the missionaries' journey, see Barrett (2002:262–265).

[11] See Bruce (1982:60–61). Although Acts does not explicitly mention Silvanus's arrival in Athens, Acts 17:16 confirms that Paul waited specifically for them (αὐτούς, plural). In the previous verse, Acts 17:15, Paul's instruction was already stated: they should come to Athens, which explicitly mentions both Silvanus and Timothy, τὸν Σιλᾶν καὶ τὸν Τιμόθεον. Consequently, many scholars overlook this clue to confirm the possibility of their presence in Athens; for example, Barrett (2002:266) argues that Paul waited in vain for his co-missionaries, who only joined him in Corinth.

[12] Bruce (1990:374–375). Bruce provides a satisfactory explanation to reconcile Acts. 17:14–16 with 1 Thess. 3:1–6. According to him, 1 Thess. 3:1 is to be taken as the confirmation to indicate both Silvanus and Timothy's presence with Paul in Athens.

[13] *Contra* Donfried (2002:218). According to Donfried, -αμεν, indicating the plural in Greek, cannot be taken as proof that Silvanus and Timothy were with Paul in Athens, because, he argues, there is almost no reason to question the interpretation of Acts, which fails to report this explicitly.

[14] *Contra* Holtz (1986:124). Holtz argues as follows: "*Andererseits aber ergibt sich zweifellos aus unserem Vers (καταλειφθῆναι μόνοι), daß Paulus in Athen nicht von Silvanus begleitet wurde. Denn er stellt den Tatbestand, daß er sich entschloß, allein zurückzubleiben, stark heraus; das wäre unbegreiflich, wenn er damals mit Silvanus zusammengewesen wäre.". For confirmation, consider the statement of Verhoef (1998:138): Mijns inziens geeft deze wisseling in numerus juist aan dat hier in 3:1 aan meer mensen dan alleen aan Paulus gedacht is. Om wie het wel gaat wordt niet precies aangegeven. We kunnen het beste denken aan Silvanus*."

Timothy agreed (Schreiber 2014:184). As a leader, also aware of his own emotions, Paul (singular, -ψα, v. 5) ratifies this decision, and Timothy, willing to cooperate, is accordingly sent.

The first outcome of the decision implies that Paul and Silvanus should be left alone in Athens, καταλειφθῆναι ἐν Ἀθήναις μόνοι, "to be left alone in Athens," with the outcome that Paul and Silvanus could not rejoin with Timothy in being sent to revisit the congregation (Roose 2016:51). The passive expression, καταλειφθῆναι, emphasises that this is not their preference at all. It expresses the overwhelming emotion they experienced. However, they were left "alone," so they could not re-establish personal contact with the Thessalonian believers whom they longed to see again.[15] Secondly, the decision entailed sending only a single co-worker back to the congregation. Because Timothy was not implicated in the initial charge that expelled the missionaries (Acts 17:5–9), he may have been able to return to Thessalonica (Weima 2014:209). Timothy can, therefore, be sent to Thessalonica as a substitute for Paul (Reinmuth 1998:132). This enables them to make their presence more authentic and encourage the believers in Thessalonica to follow the function of the apostolic *parousia* (Weima 2016:118).

Another type of emotional argument is noted: Paul's concern for the community, emotion type 3, which forms part of the dominant strategy, v. 2b: εἰς τὸ στηρίξαι ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλέσαι ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν, "to strengthen and encourage you for the sake of your faith"; v. 3a: τὸ μηδένα σαίνεσθαι ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν ταύταις, "so that these tribulations provoke no one."

First of all, it is essential to note Paul's vocabulary in Greek: 'εἰς τό plus infinitive' to equal a goal sentence grammatically (Richard 1995:141 and Shogren 2012:136). Utilising such a grammatical construction, namely a goal sentence, enables Paul to identify their aim in sending Timothy. From this, it can be deduced that their decision to be left behind and send a co-worker (vv. 1–2a) was deliberate. This outcome can be attributed to the emotions that the missionary team shared, as they are profoundly concerned about these believers. This concern is confirmed by their sending of Timothy. His pastoral agenda, therefore, consisted of two aspects, namely: (a) εἰς τὸ στηρίξαι ὑμᾶς, "to strengthen you" and (b) (εἰς τὸ) παρακαλέσαι (ὑμᾶς), "to encourage you" (v. 2b) (Best 1972:134). Both aspects are specifically focused on the faith of this newly founded community: ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν, "concerning your faith" (Collins 1979:259–260). The concept πίστις, "faith", refers to the young congregation's faith and trust in Jesus Christ (Weima 2014:211). In response to the initial proclamation of the Gospel, the congregation has already fully transferred their trust from a polytheistic pagan religion to the monotheistic faith, which now orients their lives. Therefore, Timothy is sent to the congregation to reaffirm their new identity (Tarazi 1982:122).

The desired outcome of Paul's mission agenda is described as follows: τὸ μηδένα σαίνεσθαι ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν ταύταις, "so that these tribulations provoke no one" (v. 3a). Their participation in the new symbolic reality through their faith does not at all exempt

[15] *Contra* Wanamaker (1990:126–127). Wanamaker interprets the description πανόμεν "alone" as opposed to the plural of -αμεν. Based on this, the presence of an epistolary plural is motivated and not a genuine plural, which confirms again the presence of Silvanus and Timothy with Paul in Athens. Thus, the proposed meaning is completely overlooked. For confirmation, see Malherbe (2000:190).

them from hardship (Jew 2021:107). The concept θλῖψις implies "suffering". In response to their conversion, the young congregation was socially and religiously alienated from their early identity and practices (Malherbe 2000:193). However, as the following arguments will show, the reality of such tribulation does not catch the missionaries off guard. On the contrary, they accept it as a given that anyone who shares in Christ will also share in his suffering (Jervis 2007:22). The infinitive σαίνεσθαι can be read with several meanings, namely to be disturbed, shaken or deceived.[16] The passive expression also emphasises the inevitability of this tribulation. Nevertheless, their concern for the congregation's faith centres on ensuring that they are not derailed or misled by the reality of suffering (Hiebert 1992:148). Thus, the emotion behind Paul and his co-worker's concern is further articulated. Therefore, the urgency to strengthen and encourage them is unavoidable, as it will help the Thessalonians to stand firm in their faith and not be swept away by doubt (Roose 2016:54).

In 1 Thessalonians 3:1–5, supporting arguments are also used. The first is *Ethos*. Here, the focus is on Paul and one of his associates who is typified as reliable, v. 2a: Τιμόθεον τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν καὶ συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, "Timothy, our brother and fellow worker of God in the gospel of Christ." To explain this description of Timothy, it is helpful to consider the implied relationships: the missionaries' relationship with the congregation and the mutual relationship among Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy.

Earlier in this letter, the implied relationships have already been depicted through familial imagery.[17] Paul and his co-missionaries are portrayed as parents concerned about their children and the young community (2:7c and 2:11) (Clarke 2008:139–149). Apart from this familial relationship's favourable, protective, and caring nature, it is also essential to pay attention to the implied hierarchical structure (Burke 2003:166, 172–173). Silvanus and Timothy, as parents, share with Paul, the apostle and leader, authority over the congregation, while recognising that only Paul is considered, by title, an apostle (Weima 2014:209). This outcome is evident in the introduction (1:1), where Silvanus and Timothy are mentioned as co-senders with Paul, and in the implied inclusion of the plurality of metaphors in 2:7c, τροφός, "nursing mother," and 2:11, πατήρ, "father".[18] So, the congregation can rightly regard Timothy as their brother and co-worker (Malherbe 2000:191). Apart from being typified as τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν, "our brother" in the singular (Collins 2008:14), he is still distinguished from the congregation itself, ἀδελφοί, "brothers" in the plural.[19] The "brother" description is singular, denoting someone close to Paul and in service with him (Ehrensperger 2007:49). Although he is depicted as "our brother" to the congregation, he acts with the authority of a parent towards the congregation, his/their "brothers".

Precisely because he participates in this authority, he is also described as συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, "co-worker of God in the Gospel of Christ." This

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16 See Baumert (1992:45–60) for a more detailed examination of the meaning of the Greek notion σαίνεσθαι.

17 See Aasgaard (2004:302–303) for an overview of Paul's usage of familial metaphors in his letters to confirm the favourable yet hierarchical relationships.

18 See Prinsloo (2023:1–23) for a discussion of Paul's rhetorical strategy outlined as a text-centred rhetorical analysis which highlights the persuasiveness of this familial imagery.

19 See Clarke (2004:164). Clarke states that the familial language used by Paul holds the implied relationships together through brotherly love without denying the inequalities.

depiction confirms that Timothy shares in Paul's God-like authority with which he preaches the Gospel of Christ.[20] Timothy is a co-worker in the service of God in collaboration with the apostle Paul (Malherbe 2000:191). This designation implies that God has made Timothy a co-worker in the Gospel of Christ (Schreiber 2014:184). Therefore, given their shared concern(s) about the young congregation, Timothy and Paul's reciprocal relationship can be evaluated as collaborative rather than hierarchical.[21] However, since symmetry is not necessarily identical (Ehrensperger 2007:41), it seems that the relationship also has an asymmetric dimension, since Paul, as leader, has the authority to send or command Timothy. Conversely, Timothy is sent by Paul and Silvanus because he shares, almost symmetrically, in the divine authority that Paul (as an apostle) possesses, for he represents Paul (and Silvanus) in their absence during his return to Thessalonica (Aasgaard 2004:298–299). Understanding the function of an apostolic *parousia*: An apostolic *parousia* allows his congregations to experience something of his presence rather than trying to defend his absence (Prinsloo 2024b:3). So, Timothy will be able to realise a glimpse of Paul's own presence by the congregation, even though he is "our brother and co-worker of God in the Gospel of Christ." Any uncertainty about his reliability has become obsolete.

The ethos argument is also evident from the following statement: v. 4a: καὶ γὰρ ὅτε πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἦμεν προελέγομεν ὑμῖν ὅτι μέλλομεν θλίβεσθαι, "for when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we would be oppressed." This statement refers to the initial visit and teaching. The missionaries did not only teach them about Jesus Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection (Schreiber 2014:187). They also taught them repeatedly about the suffering of the followers of Christ, underscored by the imperfect tense of προελέγομεν, "to warn" (Boring 2015:118). They made it explicit that they, as believers, would share in the experience of suffering for the sake of Christ (Luckenmeyer and Neil 2016:35). However, the believers should not be caught off guard by suffering (Green 2002:161); instead, they should accept it as God-ordained and consider it as a given (Holtz 1986:12). Paul and his missionaries' trustworthiness is underscored; what they said was about to happen did indeed happen, namely their firsthand experience of suffering as believers (Hiebert 1992:149). Remembering their initial warning evaluated in light of the outcome would cause the congregation to confidently accept the awaited additional teaching to follow in the letter. This depiction of reality in the remainder of the letter is not merely concerned with suffering but is tied to their expectation, fixed to the *parousia* (4:13–5:11). So, should they accept the continuing teaching about what would happen, namely the second coming and the resurrection. They will know how to be ready, and to live ethically and responsibly while awaiting the resurrection (Selby 1999:385).

The second supporting argument is experiential. With this argument, the existing knowledge from their initial experience is presupposed, v. 3b: αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἴδατε ὅτι εἰς

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[20] See Prinsloo (2023:1-23) for an outline of Paul's reaffirmation of his apostolic calling and the integrity of his preaching presented as a text centred rhetorical analysis of 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12.

[21] *Contra* Holmberg (2004:65). Holmberg absolutises Acts 17:1–9, where Timothy is not mentioned, to argue that Timothy is subordinate in rank to Paul and Silvanus. As far as 1 Thessalonians is concerned, however, it seems that there is no distinction in ranks at issue. Only later in Paul's ministry can such a possibility of an asymmetrical relationship be indicated, namely in Phil. 2:22, where Timothy is characterised as a son and not as a brother. See Clarke (2004:140–141) and Ehrensperger (2007:40–41, 48) to deny the position of Holmberg.

τοῦτο κείμεθα· "after all, you yourselves know that we are destined for this"; f. 4b: καθὼς καὶ ἐγένετο καὶ οἴδατε, "just as it happened, and you already knew it". To enhance this argument, consider the inevitability of θλῖψις, "suffering" (v. 3a) as a point of departure. With this argument, an appeal is made to the congregation's memories (οἴδατε, vv. 3b, 4b) (Shogren 2012:137 and Roose 2016:54). The believers are reminded of what Paul and his co-missionaries have taught them during their initial encounter: γὰρ ὅτε πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἦμεν προελέγομεν ὑμῖν, "for when we were with you, we told you beforehand" (v. 4a) (Jones 2005:40).

Concerning the argument of experience, two aspects need consideration: the congregation's understanding of suffering and their experience of suffering. (a) As far as their understanding is concerned, the following needs to be considered: αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἴδατε ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα, "Indeed, you yourselves know that this is what we are destined for" (v. 3b). By presupposing congregations' understanding of suffering in the light of their initial teaching, Paul wants to signal that suffering should by no means create confusion among the believers (Verhoef 1998:146). On the contrary, believers should assume that suffering and following Christ are synonymous. Suffering can, therefore, be understood as indispensable and applicable to all believers, including this congregation, as evidenced by the missionaries' experience, as reflected in the first-person plural (-εθα) in the verb κείμεθα, "we are destined" (Boring 2015:117). Also consider: (b) Their experience: ὅτι μέλλομεν θλίβεσθαι, καθὼς καὶ ἐγένετο καὶ οἴδατε, "that we were to suffer persecution; so it turned out, as you know" (v. 4b). With this, Paul assumes not only an understanding but also an experience of suffering, as is evident from the phrase καὶ ἐγένετο, "and it happened," which posed challenges to the stability of the church (Green 2002:161).[22] He is probably alluding to the vocabulary of their initial teaching in Thessalonica, echoing: "We will be oppressed" (1 Thessalonians 3:4). The congregation knows about Paul's experience of suffering as well as their own suffering, καὶ οἴδατε (De Boor 1977:58). Precisely because the young congregation is *not* excluded from the experience of suffering, Timothy must be sent (v. 5) (Marxsen 1979:54). Thus, the experiential argument supports the dominant emotional argument.

The third supporting argument is the idea of divine control (v. 3b): αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἴδατε ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα, "Indeed, you yourselves know that this is what we are destined for". This phrase implies that even their suffering is not disconnected from, nor unknown to, the sphere of God's involvement (Schreiber 2014:187). The passive expression in Greek (-εθα) κείμεθα 'destined" is identified as an instance of the divine passive (Weima 2014:213). Therefore, one cannot simply accept the deduction that suffering is merely the result of fate. Contrarily, the inevitability of suffering is characteristic of the Gospel (Jervis 2007:30–31). According to Paul's preaching in Thessalonica (Acts 17:3), suffering

[22] *Contra* Holtz (1986:128). Holtz argues that Paul only refers to his own experience, his suffering and that of his associates with the words μέλλομεν θλίβεσθαι, "we will be oppressed" (1 Thessalonians 3:4). What is more likely, however, is that Paul includes the young congregation in the "us" inclusive; their concern for the congregation is a key aspect of the dominant argument. Precisely because the congregation, like Paul, experiences suffering, θλῖψις (v. 3a), Timothy is sent in response to the suffering of the congregation and the fear of the missionaries that the believers might succumb to the pressure. It would therefore be a limited understanding if the "we" refers only to Paul and his co-missionaries. In favour of this inclusive understanding, see Haufe (1999:57), Roose (2016:54) and Weima (2014:212–213).

is symbolised by Jesus's death on the cross (Knoch 1987:44). If someone participates in the redemption of Christ, they will, through their participation in suffering, imitate Jesus Himself paradigmatically (Kelhoffer 2010:32). Paul probably shares this idea of divine control from his Jewish apocalyptic roots. However, his new perspective as a follower of Jesus Christ has enabled him to view suffering as compatible with God's will and with salvation. Such a theology enables him to encourage young believers to endure (Green 2002:162). Presupposing the new symbolic eschatological reality characterised by an immediate *parousia* expectation (Best 1972:135), he can comfort the recipients of this letter (Malherbe 2000:194). In this way, he and his co-workers, who also share in the experience of suffering, are depicted in solidarity with the congregation, awaiting the imminent *parousia* together (Roose 2016:54). So, they do not need to be discouraged by their current experience because their suffering only reaffirms their faithfulness to Jesus Christ within God's historical action of salvation (Kelhoffer 2010:35).

The last supporting argument is a further case of vilification, v. 5b: μή πως ἐπείρασεν ὑμᾶς ὁ πειράζων, "fear that the tempter has tempted you." With this, Satan is again typified negatively, now as ὁ πειράζων, "the tempter", an opponent of God or an anti-divine force (Reinmuth 1998:133). His motives are evil or contrary to the will of God. Directly opposite to God's initiative to bring people to faith in Jesus the Lord stands Satan's attempts to plunge these people (again) into doubt or drag them away by apostasy (Fee 2009:120). Just as Paul had earlier held Satan responsible for his inability to return to Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 2:18), he is now again blamed for tempting the congregation. From the verb πειράζω, "to tempt," it can be inferred that Satan tried to seduce the congregation into turning away from the Gospel they had come to accept, back to their earlier religious and social commitments (Schreiber 2014:188). The aorist tense of the verb ἐπείρασεν, "tempted," presupposes an accomplished reality of their social tribulation by fellow citizens as a result of their conversion (Malherbe 2000:195). Considering the missionaries' sudden departure from the congregation, well aware of these temptations and not finished with their initial teaching, Paul again incorporated the argument of vilification. Hence, the urgency of the matter, in turn, necessitates a collective urgency among the missionary team to send a co-worker back to re-establish contact (Weima 2014:215).

As part of the argument of vilification, Paul adds the following words: καὶ εἰς κενὸν γένηται ὁ κοπος ἡμῶν, "and that our labour had been in vain" (1 Thessalonians 2:5). Here, he possibly alludes to Isaiah 49:4 (Septuagint), which he echoes, κενῶς ἐκοπίασα, "I have laboured in vain" (Malherbe 2000:195). With ὁ κοπος ἡμῶν, "our work," he refers specifically to his and his co-workers labour to preach the Gospel (Roose 2016:55). His definition εἰς κενὸν γένηται, "being in vain," implies that he is referring back to the reference about the *parousia* and their standing as missionaries before Christ in the previous section (2:19)[23] (Marshall 1983:93). Repeating himself underscores what the radical eschatological implication would be: if the congregation would allow the tempter to deceive them and they would apostatise, this would mean that Paul and his co-workers'

[23] See Prinsloo (2024b:1-11) for a detailed discussion on Paul's rhetorical strategy in 1 Thessalonians 2:17–20 presented as a text-centred rhetorical analysis.

efforts, revealed at the nearby *parousia*, would have been in vain.[24] Rhetorically, it is considered very effective. This young congregation, which has already been typified as the elect (1:4), is implicitly encouraged to persevere amid suffering and warned of the suffering to follow. Their persistence confirms their new identity in Jesus Christ and eschatologically highlights the faithfulness of the missionary team (Weima 2014:218).

Several rhetorical techniques are used in this section in Paul's overall rhetorical strategy. The first technique is the usage of inclusive language, v. 2: τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν, "our brother." By identifying Timothy as *our* brother, Paul describes his and Silvanus's favourable relationship with Timothy as their co-worker. He also underscores the favourable, yet hierarchical, relationship in which they stand with the congregation, not only as mere brothers but also as co-workers of God (v. 2) (Aasgaard 2004:296–276).

The second technique is repetition, vv. 1, 5: μηκέτι στέγοντες, "no longer endure" and μηκέτι στεγων, "no longer endure." By using repetition, the intense longing to see the congregation is underlined (Haufe 1999:56).

The third technique is the usage of *inclusio*, vv. 2, 5: ἐπέμψαμεν, "sent." . . τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν "your faith"; ἔπεμψα "sent". . . τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν "your faith." Through *inclusio,* he embraces the "sending a co-worker" subunit, highlighting the motivation for Timothy's sending, namely the perseverance of the congregation through faith (Fee 2009:113).

The fourth technique is the usage of a metaphor, v. 2a: Τιμόθεον τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν, "Timothy, our brother." By employing the same familial imagery that Paul uses to describe their favourable yet hierarchical relationship with the converts, this description of one of his co-missionaries allows him to underscore the favour and unity between the missionaries. However, the following description "of a co-worker of God" would remove any uncertainty about Timothy's hierarchical status; not only a mere brother similar to any believer but a co-worker of God (Weima 2014:209).

To summarise, as Prinsloo (2024b:2–3) has indicated, Paul's overall rhetorical strategy may be viewed as the utilisation of an apostolic *parousia* to emphasise his/their great need to meet with the Thessalonians again in person, to convey his/their loving concern for them, and to exhort them to continue with perseverance. This article highlighted the several arguments used by Paul to achieve this rhetorical objective: Emotion – Type 1 to confirm their intense desire to revisit the congregation, Emotion – Type 3 to underscore the missionaries' concern for the community, Ethos to confirm the reliability of the missionaries, Experience by which Paul presupposes their existing knowledge, Divine Control to emphasise that their suffering is not unknown to God or removed from the sphere of his control, and vilification to portray Satan negatively. He also includes various rhetorical techniques, namely inclusive language, repetition, *inclusio*, and metaphor.

Conclusion

This article aims to analyse 1 Thessalonians from a rhetorical perspective. Doing so merely presupposes the ancient categories or schemes from Greco-Roman rhetoric (as previous scholars have done). The article aims to demonstrate another approach instead of a repetitive identification of ancient rhetorical categories – a close reading of the text

[24] See Weima (2014:2117–218) for an overview of the different positions on the theological difficulties underlying Paul's eschatological statement in 3:5b.

itself, a model that was developed by Tolmie (2005), which presupposes a minimum theoretical framework, known as text-centered rhetorical analysis. This article explored 1 Thessalonians 3:1–5, and the results can be summarised as follows: the dominant rhetorical strategy, as I previously indicated (Prinsloo 2024b:1–11), entails the utilisation of an apostolic *parousia* to emphasise their great need to meet again in person, as they are concerned about the congregation's perseverance. Paul's dominant arguments are Emotion – Type 1 and Type 3. His supportive arguments are Ethos, Experience, Divine control, and Vilification. He also includes various rhetorical techniques, namely inclusive language, repetition, *inclusio*, and metaphor. The rhetorical techniques include inclusive language, repetition, *inclusio,* and metaphor. Paul's rhetorical strategy is effective, for it enables him not only to communicate the missionaries' continuous concern for the believers but also his desire to visit them. They heard not only about the challenges the missionaries experienced but also about their desire to visit them and their continuous efforts. This outcome will underscore their concern for the believers, whilst the sending of Timothy illustrates it. Via Timothy, despite the challenges, contact could be re-established, and the writing of this letter has reaffirmed their favourable and reciprocal relationship.

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