

THE BOOK OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

"Prayer for the Church"

1 Thessalonians 1:2-4

Introduction

1. The formation of the church is recorded in Acts 17. God used Paul in a mighty way to establish the ministry of Christ in this city.
2. After spending time at Thessalonica, Paul continued on his second missionary journey. When it came necessary, he wrote to the church about his concerns for them (this book). His opening words are powerful (v. 1). They confirm the church's position spiritually and Paul's personal avowed interest in their experience.
3. Three times he records his prayers for them (1:2-4; 3:9-13; 5:23, 24). Each prayer has a significant point to make concerning the believers. This one is basic and looks to the past. Four major items are recorded as elements of the prayer:

1. THANKSGIVING v. 2.

Note: Paul expresses thanks for this church in every book which he wrote, except Galatians! He avers by this that doctrinal error is worthy of censure and not praise!

a. All gratefulness

The verb for "thanksgiving" really means to be grateful. It is the root from which the English term "eucharist" is derived. It is a combination of "well" and "grace." The plural form of the verb marks the inclusion of Paul, Silas, and Timothy in the prayer.

b. All occasions

The adverb "always" signifies at all times (2:16; Luke 18:1). It suggests that Paul was always in the attitude of prayer.

c. All believers

The prepositional phrase includes all the saints at Thessalonica. The preposition really means to encircle

the saints in prayer. There were various levels of believers, but he prayed for them all (cf. Eph. 6:18).

2. MENTIONING v. 2.

a. Paul did it.

The present middle participle notes this. It also shows that Paul had personal concerns for them. He did not fail to bring up their names in thanksgiving.

b. Paul timed it.

Here the prepositional phrase notes that at the times of prayer he had, Paul prayed for the Thessalonians. It is suggestive that he had specific times to give thanks. Here is valid reason to believe that Paul may have had prayer lists.

3. REMEMBERING v. 3.

At the beginning of this verse, there is an adverb which is amphibolous. It may well, therefore, go with the previous verse or be attached to the present one. In any case, it means that the action was similar to the verb. It does not mean incessant, but recurring, as a troublesome cough. Being a double compound, the adverb means "not to leave off." Three items are included in this:

a. Work characterized by faith

The reference here is probably to the initial work of faith. It is a strange combination, but a true one. The common word for "work" is used with "faith." While most would desire "faith" characterized by "work," Paul inverts that phrase. Faith inspires this sort of thing. It is a definite response to the Word.

b. Labor characterized by love

The thought of toil resulting in weariness is involved. It concerns the pains taken, strength spent. Where there is love, there is light work! Work is related to love (John 14:15, 21, 23). Hence, following faith, this love speaks of true service to God.

c. Patience characterized by hope

This is more than waiting. It is endurance under trial. It is the effect of waiting for the coming of Christ (cf. 1:6; 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:4). Romans 5:4 says that patience through probation (trial or proving) works (results in or accomplishes) in hope. Hence, both are true: hope encourages patience and patience strengthens hope.

4. KNOWING v. 4.

The verb here is the third participle which is dependent upon the initial verb "thanks" (v. 2). Being a perfect active participle, the idea is that "since we know...." Two items are listed:

a. Relation

Two words are used for this: "brethren" and "beloved." The former is a technical word for believers. It does not specify sex, although it is masculine. The latter is a perfect passive participle. It is true that God loves all (John 3:16). However, he has special love for the child of God (John 14:21, 23; 16:27). It is the same as the Father has for the Son (John 17:23).

b. Selection

Seven times this noun is used in the New Testament. It is always used of God, although the phrase "by God" is omitted in the text. This is not a harsh doctrine of a capricious God, but a testimony to the infinite grace of a loving compassionate heavenly Father. Those who know the doctrine well exercise their hearts before Him (2 Pet. 1:10). It relates to the family of God and is a doctrine accenting grace in salvation.

Conclusion Paul has a warm place in his heart for the believers at Thessalonica. It is sensed in this prayer for them. Let us be mindful that this is that for which God would give thanks for in our lives. So let it be.