

## THE BOOK OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

### "Evidences of Faith: Suffering"

1 Thessalonians 3:1-4

#### Introduction

1. The heart of Paul as a missionary pastor has been demonstrated (2:1-20). There is no more thrilling testimony to a servant of God than that described in these verses.
2. It is in the light of this terrific pastoral ministry that this present chapter is given. This is the force of the opening word "wherefore."
3. Personal faith is the key to this section (the word "faith" is found five times in this chapter). Paul affirms that affliction is an essential ingredient of personal faith. This is demonstrated by:

#### 1. Paul's BURDEN v. 1.

a. It is uncovered. The verb "forbear" means to conceal or cover (Mark 2:4). Here a negative is used with it so that it means Paul could no longer conceal his feelings for the believers at Thessalonica (cf. 1 Cor. 9:12; 13:7).

b. It is considered. For Paul this was a pleasurable thought. This verb "thought good" also conveys a deliberate and free choice. His thought was that he was happy to be abandoned at Athens alone (yet not really, for Silas was with him) without Timothy. His concern for the Thessalonians was so great he could not bottle it up any longer.

#### 2. Paul's PARTNER v. 2.

Timothy is the man who is sent by Paul to find out about the personal faith of the Thessalonians. His name means "honored of God." He was an emissary of Paul. His character and quality are described:

a. As a brother. This shows a filial relationship. They were both in the family of God (John 1:12). Such a relationship is often deeper than blood. How tremendous that Paul should refer to him like this when in fact he was also his son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2).

b. As a minister. The word here may be transliterated as "deacon." While the word may be rooted in a verb meaning to pursue, it probably is better to take it from two words: through and dust. Hence, a deacon is one who raises the dust by his busy efforts as a minister. It is the general word for servant. While it is widely used in a technical way for a deacon, it is also used of a minister of the Gospel (1 Cor. 3:5).

c. As a worker. Timothy was not just an adjunct to the

work of Paul. He was involved as a worker! The preposition prefixed to the noun for worker accents the faith of Timothy's partnership with Paul in labor.

NOTE: Paul told the Philippians how trusted Timothy was to him (Phil. 2:19-23). It is a rare experience to find Timothys who will labor with an older brother in the Lord so sacrificially. God, send us MORE!

### 3. Paul's INTENTION vv. 2, 3.

a. Confirmation. Nowhere in the New Testament is this associated with the laying on of hands. The prepositional phrase here expresses purpose. It is a work entirely accomplished by God through the Word (2 Pet. 1:12; 1 Thess. 3:13; Rom. 16:25; 1 Pet. 5:10). The verb is a strong term for establishing one for something (cf. Luke 16:26; Acts 14:22; 15:32, 41; 18:23; Rom. 1:11, 12).

b. Consolation. The compound verb here means to "call to one's side." It has three meanings: urge, entreat, and comfort. The latter is probably the force in this context. It is their personal faith which needed comfort!

c. Conviction. Tragically, then as now, the need for conviction was apparently neglected. Paul was concerned. The verb "moved" means to wag the tail or beguile. It results in disappointment and disheartened attitude. This is something which threatens believers of all ages and of all areas. When suffering comes, people doubt God. This Paul wanted to counter. He wanted immovable believers at Thessalonica. Winds of feeling come and go, but God stands!

### 4. Paul's TEACHING vv. 3, 4.

a. Indicated appointment. Paul was clear about this: afflictions are a part of the faith one exercises toward God. This is supported throughout Scripture (cf. John 16:33; Phil 1:29). New believers must be made aware of this appointment for if not told, they will come to disappointment!

b. Indicated instruction. When Paul was among them, he informed them of this coming affliction. The imperfect of the verb "told before" (v. 4) indicates Paul "used to tell." He did not disguise the inevitable consequences of accepting the Gospel, namely suffering! This includes bodily suffering until the rapture (Rom. 8:23).

c. Indicated effectation. The verbs "know" and "come to pass" show that the suffering actually took place. This is no dream. They did not endeavor to deny facts as many do today. The word affliction conveys the thought of "straightened" (Matt. 7:14), throng (Mark 3:9), press (2 Cor. 4:8). The pressure of circumstances or the antagonism of persons are both involved.