

THE BOOK OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

"Evidences of Faith: Growth"

1 Thessalonians 3:9, 10

Introduction

1. A non-believer is related to the Lord Jesus Christ through faith, personal faith. This faith is generated in his heart through the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).
2. It is personal faith which is the dominant note in this chapter (vv. 2, 5, 6, 8, 10). It is true that personal faith merges with the body of doctrine at certain points. This is particularly true of the present verses.
3. Growth is one aspect of life in biology. It is also a facet to true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this connection, Paul writes with deep concern. This is how he does it:

1. BY THANKING v. 9.

- a. Rendered---to God

The verb here means to "recompense" (2 Thess. 1:6). In this context, however, it is the only New Testament use of thanks to God. It obviously has the idea of giving back to Him. The pronoun "what" also emphasizes the sort of thanks due to God. Paul was bereft of words to give thanks to God for the Thessalonians. What concentrated burden he had for the converts in the faith!

- b. Related---to joy

Here is an amazing revelation of Paul's heart. He had super joy on account of the Thessalonians. It was not centered in himself, but in the Lord (before our God). Note also that the word for "all" is singular. Hence, he was gratified before God for every single aspect of joy provided for their sakes, i.e. on account of them. They were the source of the joy! Their steadfastness and endurance in suffering (vv. 1-4), temptation (v. 5), fellowship (vv. 6, 7), and conviction (v. 8) brought all kinds of joy to Paul before God. N.B. Paul gives a superior example here of what it really means to be grateful for the work of God in the lives of His children.

2. BY PRAYING v. 10.

a. Timed

The two words "night and day" describe the same sort of burden as earlier given (1:2, 3). This same sort of expression is found elsewhere (2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8). For Paul, his prayers for the saints were a 24 hour item. The order here might suggest that Paul spent some time in all night prayers.

b. Described

Interestingly, Paul is not niggardly in his prayer. He employs a word here which is a double compound. It is only found in 1 Thessalonians (here; 3:10; 5:13). It basically means more than out of bounds. Hence, Paul had a beyond measure sort of prayer burden for them. Few have the ordinary. How many have any concept of the "out of the ordinary" prayer life?!

c. Purposed

1) To see This is the first and initial concern of Paul. He wanted to see their faces (cf. v. 6; 2:17). Only one who has been separated from those whom he truly loves for any period of time knows what Paul is talking about here. Those who truly know the Lord in honesty will know the essence of John's prayer (Rev. 22:20).

2) To perfect Here it is. Paul is deep and expressive of his desire for the Thessalonians. He wants not only to see them but to labor among them. The verb employed here means to "mend" nets (Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19) and to "restore" or set back in place (Gal. 6:1). It is used of God in creation (Heb. 11:3), of a matter of praise (Matt. 21:16), of destiny (Rom. 9:22), of the incarnation (Heb. 10:5), and of desire for believers (Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 5:10). All of this notes that the term relates to progress and growth. Admittedly, Paul declares there are items lacking (cf. Col. 1:24) or left over for him to provide in connection with their faith. They needed more.

Conclusion The Thessalonians, by virtue of the remainder of the book, needed more on Christian conduct (4:1-8), hope (4:13-5:10), interpersonal relationships (4:9-12; 5:11-15), and sundries (5:16-28). While the Bible records their lacks, we all have areas of needed growth. What is it in your life? Identify it (them) and allow the Spirit of God to bring about the desired goal--perfection (growth)!