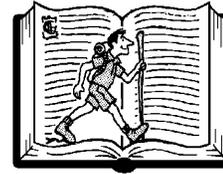


V. SUFFERING

1. Paul was even thankful for the difficulties he faced in life for he recognized the blessings they added to life. (3:4; 2:14)
 - a. To the Colossians Paul wrote, "Now I rejoice in my suffering, for your sake" (Col. 1:24, NASB).
2. Why did Paul rejoice in suffering?
 - 1) First, because in his suffering he reached the end of his own ability, and he was forced to really trust in God. (2 Cor. 4:7, NASV)
 - 2) Second, because his suffering enabled him to more ably minister to others who suffered. Paul explained that God "comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Cor. 1:4, NASB).
 - 3) Third, because he knew that his suffering could not be compared with the glory that God was preparing for him (Romans 8:18). Some young person suggested that the pay for following Christ is not that good, but his retirement plan is out of this world!
3. Suffering is not the final word in the life of the Christian.

Conclusion:

"In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
1 Thessalonians 5:18



Walking Thru The Bible

1 THESSALONIANS

AUTHOR: The book of First Thessalonians is probably the first inspired book of the Apostle Paul. It was written about AD 50 or AD 51 from Corinth on the second missionary journey.

BACKGROUND: Thessalonica was a large city of about 200,000 in Macedonia, which is today northern Greece. Its modern name is Salonika. As a strategic commercial center it had attracted a large community of Jews and they had a synagogue (Acts 17:1). Paul was given an opportunity to speak in the synagogue for three Sabbath days and "reasoned with them from the scriptures," showing that Jesus of Nazareth came in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and promises (Acts 17:2-3).

While some of the Jews believed, there was a greater number of God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women (Acts 17:4). The Jews, becoming jealous, gathered up some wicked men from the market place and formed a mob. They attacked the house of Jason and took some of the brethren before the city authorities and accused them of harboring men "who have upset the world and have come here also" (Acts 17:5-8).

Paul's stay in Thessalonica was undoubtedly filled with more adventure and activity than Luke's account in Acts could briefly record. There are three factors that seem to indicate this:

- (1) there was a large number of Gentile converts there,
- (2) Paul engaged in some manual labor during this period (2 Thess. 3:8),
- (3) in Phil. 4:16 he indicated that from the Philippian church he had received aid more than once while in other parts of Macedonia.

THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA

The church at Thessalonica had been a very faithful active church up to the time of this first letter. Paul speaks of their "work of faith, and labor of love, and steadfastness of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 1:3). He also states that they had set an example for the believers in Macedonia and Achaia, particularly in the fact that from them "the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth" (1 Thess. 1:8).

Paul's success with the church there had brought them severe persecution from the Jews. When he was forced to leave them he was very eager to learn how things were going and sent Timothy to them (1 Thess. 3:1-5; 2:17). Timothy's report of their steadfastness in the faith and some of the questions (especially about Jesus' second coming) may have prompted this letter.

AN OUTLINE OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

I. THE MODEL CHURCH -- 1:1 - 3:13

1. The Model Church: A Strong Church- 1:1-4
2. The Model Church: A Strong Conversion- 1:5-10
3. The Model Church: A Strong and True Minister- 2:1-12
4. The Model Church: A Strong People - 2:13-20
5. The Model Church: A Strong Faith- 3:1-10
6. The Model Church: A Strong Love - 3:11-13

II. THE MODEL WALK OR LIFE -- 4:1-12

1. A Walk That Pleases God -(I) A Life of Purity- 4:1-8
2. A Walk That Pleases God -(II) Four Practical Duties- 4:9-12

III. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST -- 4:13 - 5:24

1. The Lord's Return and the Resurrection- 4:13 - 5:3
2. The Lord's Return and the Believer's Behavior- 5:4-11
3. The Lord's Return and the Behavior in the Church-5:12-28

CONTENTS OF I THESSALONIANS

Paul begins his letters by giving thanks to God for them. He mentioned they had readily received the Gospel even in the face of much tribulation; and their zeal and diligence in spreading the Gospel through that part of the world was known by all.

Chapter 1. Thessalonica was a city filled with idolaters, as were many others, but "they had turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God" (1:9).

Chapter 2. In the first part of chapter two Paul emphasizes the characteristics of his work among them by pointing out: 1) They had preached with boldness in the face of opposition (2:2); 2) Their preaching had been free from deceit, and they had spoken so as to please God (2:3-4); 3) They did not seek glory from men (2:6); 4) They had preached the Gospel in love and truth and for the Thessalonians (2:8); 5) They had worked with their hands that they might not be a burden to the brethren (2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8);

In this same chapter Paul makes a wonderful statement concerning the attitude with which they had received the Gospel: "You accepted it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God" (2:13). Paul stated his desire to see them and that Satan had hindered his plans (2:17-18).

Chapter 3. He explains that when his anxiety over their welfare could endure no longer he sent Timothy to strengthen and encourage them (3:1-2). He had warned them that persecution would come (3:3-4) and rejoiced over Timothy's good report concerning their faith (3:6-11).

Chapter 4. Paul emphasized the necessity of boldness in life (4:1-8) and exhorted them to brotherly love (4:9-10). Beginning with vs. 13 he

instructs them concerning the second coming of Christ and those dead in the Lord and exhorts them "to comfort one another with these words."

Chapter 5. The need for watchful and sobriety in view of the Lord's coming is emphasized (5:1-11). After a number of brief exhortations (5:12-22) Paul concludes the epistle with a prayer (5:23-24), some personal requests (5:25-27), and his blessings upon them (5:28).

Give Thanks In All Things

I Thessalonians 5:18

Introduction:

1. A magazine published a poll what a number of various people said they desired most in life.
2. Paul indicates that he had learned the secret of a thankful life. This basic characteristic of his life comes out in each of his epistles, and even including his prison epistles. "In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (5:18)
3. Paul did not just proclaim this principal, he practiced it as well. Paul was thankful for all things, including:

I. THE SAVIOR

1. Paul was thankful for the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thess. 1:1,3
2. Paul exclaimed in the letter to the Corinthians, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

II. SALVATION

1. Paul was not only thankful for who Jesus was but also for what Jesus had done. 1 Thess. 5:9.
2. Salvation to Paul meant to be saved *from* something.
3. Salvation to Paul meant to be saved *for* something.

III. STRENGTH

1. As Paul walked up and down the Roman roads he came to know the strengthening presence of the Lord. God not only saves; he also sustains.
2. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me" (I Tim. 1:12, NASB). Philippians 4:13

IV. THE SAINTS

1. Paul was always thankful for his fellow Christians.
 - a. To the Romans, Paul wrote, "I thank my God through Jesus for you all" (Rom. 1:8, NASB).
 - b. To the Corinthians he said, "I thank my God always concerning you" (I Cor. 1:4, NASB).
 - c. To the Ephesians... Eph. 1:16
 - d. To the Philippians... Phil. 1:3
2. Illustration of a man who said he recognized passing through three stages of growth in his life.