
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 3:6-8

By: Brian A. Yeager

In our previous article, we discussed Paul's concern for the brethren in Thessalonica. We looked forward in the text to him sending Timothy to find out how the brethren were doing. Now, we find out about Timothy's report. Notice: *"But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you: Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord"* (I Thessalonians 3:6-8).

Timothy brought "good tidings" back to Paul and Silvanus. That phrase is also translated as preaching the Gospel, preaching, and similar wording related to preaching (Matthew 11:5, Luke 3:18, Luke 4:18, Luke 4:43, Luke 7:22, Luke 9:6, Luke 16:16, Luke 20:1, Acts 5:42, Acts 8:4, Acts 8:12, Acts 8:25, Acts 8:35, Acts 8:40, Acts 10:36, Acts 11:20, Acts 14:7, Acts 14:15, Acts 14:21, Acts 15:35, Acts 16:10, Acts 17:18, Romans 1:15, Romans 10:15, Romans 15:20, I Corinthians 1:17, I Corinthians 9:16, I Corinthians 9:18, I Corinthians 15:1-2, II Corinthians 10:16, II Corinthians 11:7, Galatians 1:8-9, Galatians 1:11, etc.). So, when Timothy brings back "good tidings" it was similar to the preaching of the soul saving message of God's word. Think about that. Think about why that wording was used. Think about how spiritually beneficial it was to Paul and Silvanus to hear good news from Timothy about the saints in Thessalonica. Solomon wrote: *"The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat... As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country"* (Proverbs 15:30 and Proverbs 25:25).

The good report from Timothy was concerning the faith and charity [love] of the saints in Thessalonica. In the second epistle to the saints in Thessalonica this was written: *"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure"* (II Thessalonians 1:3-4). Faith and love are tied together (I Corinthians 13:1-13 and II Timothy 2:22). Think about what Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia and the saints in Colosse: *"For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love... Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints"* (Galatians 5:6 and Colossians 1:4). So, Timothy's report indicated good things in Thessalonica.

Timothy's report also included the fact that the saints in Thessalonica had a good recollection of Paul and Silvanus. They desired to see these two brothers as much as Paul and Silvanus desired to see them. We know that Paul and Silvanus had a great desire to see these brethren (I Thessalonians 2:17). So, it is good for them to see that feeling reciprocated. This was not always the case for Paul. Do you recall from your studies how the Corinthians treated Paul? When you read the letters to the saints in Corinth you find that there were brethren that cared for Paul (II Corinthians 7:6-7). However, not all of them. Notice: *"And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved"* (II Corinthians 12:15).

The report from Timothy comforted Paul and Silvanus. Paul was emotionally invested in those he taught. To the Corinthians he wrote this: *"But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you"* (II Corinthians 2:1-4).

All too often the only measuring stick of brethren is whether or not a teacher teaches the truth. Of course, that is of great importance (Ephesians 5:6-11). However, there is more to measuring faithful teachers of God's word. What about his conduct, his love, his faith, his purity, etc. (I Timothy 4:12-16)? How about his emotional investment in those he is teaching? Will he care if that person or group of people fail? Jesus was emotionally invested. Think about what Jesus did as He looked upon the city of Jerusalem: *"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation"* (Luke 19:41-44).

Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus were invested in the saints in Thessalonica. Such is made clear in how their being alive was tied to whether or not their brethren stood fast in the Lord (cf. Philippians 1:27). Being a preacher of God's word has to be an unselfish service. All the energy and emotion involved has to be towards the salvation of others far beyond one's own well-being. Think about this: *"Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all"* (Philippians 2:17). The teacher's life is all about others. Evangelists must be willing to die in service to those he is teaching. It even goes beyond the physical. Remember, the soul of the teacher is at stake too (I Thessalonians 2:7-8; cf. James 3:1). Therefore, a teacher is very much alive when his students are standing fast!