

“How to Handle Trouble”

1 Thessalonians 3: 1 – 13

Paul's journey to Thessalonica took him through several cities where strong opposition was expressed. The gospel's success in Thessalonica brought persecution against the young church. This letter from Paul calls his friends to renewed courage in face of persecution and unsettled times. Paul's encouragement is disclosed in (verses 3 and 8), and this chapter as a whole contains important words on how to handle trouble.

1. Expect Trouble. (vs. 3). We live in a world of freedom where the possibility for both good and evil exists. Jesus sent the disciples out “as sheep among wolves”, (Matthew 10:16). Trouble is inherent in life and we ought to live with that realistic attitude. Even though we would rather not have troubles, troubles do test our faith.
2. Refuse Satan an Entrance Through the Door of Trouble. (vs. 5). Paul expressed concern as to how the Thessalonians were dealing with their troubles and he sent Timothy to find out. Our adversary will use trouble to make us bitter, angry toward God and often cause us to withdraw from others. In (Luke 22: 31-32) Jesus told Peter that “Satan wanted to sift him like wheat”. Paul was indeed concerned about the Thessalonians remaining faithful. We are involved in that same concern today.
3. Face Trouble with Prayer. (vs. 10). Paul and the Thessalonians were linked in intercessory prayer. Paul was in the habit of “praying earnestly” for his friends and he in turn was strengthened by their fervent prayers. The only way trouble should get us down, is down on our knees in prayer. Lloyd Ogilvie said, “Courage is fear which has said its prayers”. If we maintain our fellowship with God through prayer, we will experience the promise of the psalmist in (Psalm 50: 15), “and call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.”
4. Reach Through Trouble to Others. (vs. 12). Part of Paul's prayer was that the Thessalonians would increase in love. It was impossible for Paul to wallow in self-pity while he reached out to these people in love and prayer. Our own troubles become smaller as we minister to others in love and concern. This would include not only family and friends, but all those that we become aware of who are dealing with troubles.
5. Be Patient. (vs. 13). Paul refused to look at troubles in the present tense. He looked to the future and he realized that God was not finished. He encouraged the Thessalonians to endure the present suffering with patience as they looked forward to the glory that would come. Paul wanted for these folks an inner strength that would lead them on to mature, holy living before God. A preacher was asked what he regarded as the most comforting verse in the Bible and he answered, “And it came to pass”. He was told that was just part of a verse and he replied, “it is still most comforting to me. It didn't say it came to stay; it came to pass”. Be patient in trouble.

Out of his own experience, Paul has given us these five ways to handle trouble. As we follow his example, may we be unmoved by trouble, but rather stand firm in the Lord knowing he will not forsake us.