

1 Thessalonians 3:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

Analysis

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know—kai gar hote pros hymas ēmen proelegomen hymin hoti mellomen thlibesthaiProelegomen, 'we were foretelling you that we were about to suffer tribulation'). The imperfect tense indicates repeated warning: Paul didn't mention suffering once but continually prepared them. Kathōs kai egeneto kai oideate (καθὼς καὶ ἐγένετο καὶ οἴδατε, 'even as it came to pass and you know') appeals to fulfilled prediction—Paul's warnings proved accurate, validating his prophetic insight.

Honest evangelism includes suffering's cost. Jesus required would-be disciples to 'count the cost' (Luke 14:28-33); Paul warned converts about tribulation. This produces genuine conversions: those attracted solely by promised blessings flee when persecution comes (Mark 4:17); those prepared for suffering persevere. The phrase 'even as it came to pass' confirms Paul's credibility—he didn't exaggerate or fear-monger but accurately predicted persecution, demonstrating prophetic authority. When suffering arrived, the Thessalonians recognized it as prophesied reality, not divine rejection.

Historical Context

Paul's ministry in Thessalonica lasted only three weeks (Acts 17:2) yet included comprehensive teaching on suffering, Christ's return, sanctification, and other doctrines. This compressed timeline required focused discipleship. The persecution he predicted arrived immediately—Jews incited a mob, attacked Jason's house, dragged believers before authorities (Acts 17:5-9). Paul fled by night, but afflictions continued for the Thessalonian church (2:14). His warnings prepared them to interpret suffering correctly: as expected Christian experience, not divine abandonment.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does your evangelism and discipleship honestly prepare people for suffering's reality rather than promising only blessing?
2. What role does fulfilled prediction (Paul's warnings proving accurate) play in validating spiritual authority?
3. How do you interpret your sufferings—as confirmation of following Christ or as evidence of God's displeasure?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	γὰρ	ὅτε	πρὸς	ὑμᾶς	ἡμεν	προελέγομεν	ὑμῖν	ὅτι
and	For	when	with	you	<i>G1510</i>	before	you	that
G2532	G1063	G3753	G4314	G5209		G4302	G5213	G3754
μέλλομεν	θλίβεσθαι	καθὼς	καὶ	ἐγένετο	καὶ	οἶδατε		
we should	suffer tribulation	as	and	it came to pass	and	ye know		
G3195	G2346	G2531	G2532	G1096	G2532	G1492		

Additional Cross-References

1 Thessalonians 2:14 (Parallel theme): For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:

1 Thessalonians 2:2 (Parallel theme): But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.