

I Thessalonians

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1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Vs. 1

- Paul begins the letter by introducing its authors: Paul who was the leader of the mission team that came to Thessalonica and was the founder of the church, as well as Silvanus/Silas and Timothy, whom Paul had left behind in Thessalonica when he was forced to flee the Jews there.
- We have this story in Acts 17 & 18. The two junior members had been left in Thessalonica and had caught up to Paul in Corinth and it is surely from here that Paul writes back to the Macedonian church, having received news and updates upon his friend's arrival.
- Paul describes the church as being "in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ." As we saw in John's epistles, the early church centered its thought on the image of being "in God" or "in Christ". Paul in his sermon in Athens tells the Greeks that "in Him we live and move and exist". We too should understand that though we are in a certain city, state, and country, it is God in whom we live. It is as if He is the air we move in and breath into our bodies. And just as we physically cannot live without air, neither can the church live if we do not breath God in, so He is life to every fiber and cell.

Vs. 2-5

- Clearly Paul had been very anxious to hear what had been going on in Thessalonica after he escaped the city, so he had been praying for the church in all the ways one would think: thankful for their faith and petitioning God to give them more faith that would preserve them from persecution and strengthen them as they grew.
- In vs. 3 Paul touches on three great qualities of the Christian life. He begins with their "work of faith". "Faith," Hebrews 11:1 tells us, "Is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." The story is told of a missionary who stayed in the home of a Bulgarian peasant. He watched as a 12-year-old girl worked day after day sewing a dress. "Aren't you tired of sewing?" he asked. "Oh no," replied the girl, "I am sewing my wedding dress!" Paul knew the Thessalonian church had that kind of faith powered perseverance to their work. Second is the "labor of love". Another missionary, a doctor serving in The Congo, was tending to a grossly infected wound of a villager. The doctor was being assisted by a seminary intern who looked into the wound and unconsciously said out loud, "I wouldn't do that for all the money in the world." To which the doctor replied, "Neither would I." Love empowers us to do that which we would never have dreamed we would do, both in

the darkest of valleys and in the glory of the mountain tops. Third is the “steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ”. As Paul said in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” At every turn, even and especially during the times Paul was imprisoned, he was able to accomplish amazing things. Keep working and pressing on...God is not done yet!

- In verses 4-5 Paul truly praises the church. He calls them “beloved of God” and phrase the Jews reserved for luminaries such as Moses and Solomon. Here, Paul extends glory to ordinary people who by God’s power have become extraordinary. Paul *KNOWS* God has chosen the people of the Thessalonian church because of the power of the Holy Spirit which was shown in their conversion and in their work since. It was not the word only, whereby they accepted Christ because it seemed reasonable to do so, but something dramatic must have happened where the true power of the Holy Spirit was on display for all to see. And moreover, this has been proved out by their works of faith, love, and hope in Christ.

Vss. 6-10

- The people of Thessalonica were able to see in Paul and his friends something that they lacked and wanted whatever *THAT* was in their lives. And even though there was a storm of controversy swirling around them, they received Christ with joy! Even in their spiritual infancy, they became example to new believers everywhere throughout the whole region of Greece.
- Verse 8 says the faith of the Thessalonians sounded forth like a trumpet or a roll of thunder. In the face of persecution, they stood firm and acted as Christians should act! And even in an age 2000 years before mass communication everyone soon heard of what was happening in Thessalonica.
- Verses 9-10 use two words which are key for true discipleship. First, their priorities changed completely. They went from serving pagan idols and living a pagan lifestyle to serving God and living the Christ-like life, following Him in The Way. Second, they *waited* on Jesus. We should never get ahead of Jesus. Too often our impatience pushes us *TO DO SOMETHING* and it is invariably either the wrong thing entirely or it is a weak thing that will not last. (Read Isaiah 40:31).