

Thessalonica was the largest city located in the Macedonian region having around 200,000 citizens.

- It was founded sometime around 316 BC and
- became the capital city of the Roman province of Macedonia.
- There were Romans, Greeks, Macedonians and
- a large number of Jews living in Thessalonica.

Paul most likely had a tentmaking shop

- in one of the agoras (market place) there in Thessalonica
- as he did in Corinth and would have shared the gospel
- with locals and travelers.

Many would have been former worshippers of pagan gods

- since Paul tells us in verse 9
- that some turned to God from idols.

Later in chapter 4:5 Paul admonishes each of the believers

- to “control his own body” in holiness
- and “not in passionate lust like the heathen,
- who do not know God.”

In Acts 17

- Paul reasoned with some Jews on the Sabbath
- but the Jews who were not persuaded and
- gathered a mob and attacked the house of Jason
- where Paul was staying.

However, Paul was not there at the moment,

- so they dragged Jason and others from the home
- to the magistrate.

After providing security, Jason was released.

- Paul and Silas were sent away immediately
- by night to Berea.

Ultimately, Paul ended up in Corinth

- where he probably wrote 1st and 2nd Thessalonians
- sometime between AD 51-52.

Why did Paul write to this church of Thessalonica?

First, he wanted to assure the church of his love for them.

- 1) To Commend them, chapter 1
- 2) To vindicate himself chapters 2 & 3

2

- 3) To admonish them to live holy lives, first part of chapter 4
- 4) To instruct them about those who had fallen asleep or had gone on before them.

The church of Thessalonica was elected by God,

- they were evangelistic,
- and they were expectant.

1 Thess 1

1 Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The church is the called-out assembly.

The church is comprised of those in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as we know, Paul is known for opening his letters with the words,

- “Grace to you and Peace.”
- He never opens by saying peace and grace.
- We can’t experience God’s peace
- until we’ve experienced His grace.

God in His grace gives us what we do not deserve,

- and in His mercy does not give us
- what we do deserve.

Their Good Example

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, 4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. 5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

6 And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. 8 For from you 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 out, so that we do not need to say anything. 9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from

heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

1 Thes 1:2

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers,

We know from Acts 17 that Paul preached in the Synagogue for three Sabbaths explaining and demonstrating that Jesus had to suffer and rise again from the dead.

No doubt they would have shared Isaiah 53 which is the fulfillment

- of the incredible promises of the Messiah.

There were also many devout Greeks

- who were persuaded at the time regarding the Messiah.

Ps 100:2-3

2 Serve the Lord with gladness;

Come before His presence with singing.

3 Know that the Lord, He is God;

It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;

We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Part of serving Him is living faithfully for Him:

1 Sam 12:24

Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.

Man was created in God's image so his purpose cannot be fulfillment outside of Him. King Solomon tried living for his own pleasure but concluded the only worthwhile life was one in obedience and honor to God.

Eccl 12:13-14

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:

Fear God and keep His commandments,

For this is man's all.

14 For God will bring every work into judgment,

Including every secret thing,

Whether good or evil.

God Himself gave us glory: David said in:

Ps 8:4-6

4 What is man that You are mindful of him,

And the son of man that You visit him?

5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels,

And You have crowned him with glory and honor.

6 You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet,

God has a plan and a purpose for each one of us.

Ps 139:13-16

13 For You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother's womb.

14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And that my soul knows very well.

15 My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,
The days fashioned for me,
When as yet there were none of them.

Those are but a few reasons to worship God and to serve Him:

Prayer to Paul came as natural as breathing.

And much like we say, grace and peace are the Siamese twins of scripture,

- Paul's letters typically begin with a word of thanksgiving,
- And are usually accompanied with praise.

1 Thes 1:3

3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith (your work produced by faith),

labor of love, (I believe Paul commended the church of Thessalonica because their work in the Lord was an honor to them.)

The gospel of Christ offers hope to the lost:

Paul remembered the Thessalonians with:

patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

Hope:

Ps 42:5

5 Why are you cast wn, O my soul?
And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him
For the help of His countenance.

H - Heritage

Titus 3:7

7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Heritage according to Websters is a legacy or an inheritance.

Rom 8:16-17

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

O - Optimism

Websters - “an inclination to put the most favorable construction upon actions and events or to anticipate the best possible outcome.”

Ps 146:5

5 Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help,
Whose hope is in the Lord his God,

Rom 8:28

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

P - Patience

Websters - steadfast despite opposition, difficulty, or adversity.

1 Peter 5:10

10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

E - Eternal life

Websters - having infinite duration:

Websters also defines eternal as characterized by abiding fellowship with God and references Mk 10:17.

Mark 10:17

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

1 Thes 1:4

knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.

A seminary professor once said, “try to explain election, and you may lose your mind. But explain it away-and you may lose your soul!”

In other words, it's difficult to explain but don't dismiss it.

salvation begins with God!

2 Thess 2:13

13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,

John 15:16

16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

Eph 1:4 we were chosen before the foundation of the world.

Salvation also involves God's love for us!

Paul addresses the congregation as beloved brethren in verse 4.

1 Thess 2:17

17 But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.

Similar to election and free will, **salvation also involves faith.**

Eph 2:8-9 we have been saved by grace thru faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Our faith will lead to works, because we want to be busy for the Lord.

Someone once said,

- "We are not saved by faith plus works, but by a faith that works."

How do I receive that faith, how does faith come to me, especially if I've never believed.

Rom 10:17 faith comes by hearing; and hearing by the word of God.

James 2:17-20

17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

Faith by definition is “complete trust.”

A changed life is also proof of our salvation.

God doesn't save us and leave us as we were.

- He begins to make changes in us.

Yes, God saves us, but He expects us to move as well.

When we begin to seek the Lord, our lives change.

1 Thes 1:3

your work of faith
your labor of love
and patience of hope

1 Thes 1:9-10

you turned to God from idols
to serve the living and true God
to wait for His Son from heaven.

1 Thess 1:3

3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

1 Thess 1:9-10

9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

If a person is truly saved, we will see that evidenced thru their faith, hope and love. God begins to make changes in you.

1 Cor 13:13

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

There are 3 things that occur in the life of a believer. First, he receives the gospel. Secondly, it redirects the recipient. In other words, it changes his thinking, his way of life, the way he treats others etc. Thirdly, we send it to others.

1 Thes 1:5

5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

Many people say, and they're correct in a sense, I share the gospel by my actions. While that is true, the gospel begins with words. The gospel is the good news.

The gospel is the word of God. In John 6 many turned away from Jesus and the disciples said to Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

Rom 10:14

14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?

In Matt 10 when Jesus sent His disciples out, He told them, “as you go, preach, saying, ‘The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

To preach is to make a public announcement. This is to be made public.

It was in power and in the Holy Spirit working as the Thessalonians watched the messengers and how they lived their lives.

It was the testimony of their mouth and the way they lived their life that the Thessalonians witnessed.

We don’t need to sell the Holy Spirit to anyone thru convincing.

We need the power of the Holy Spirit

- because He’s the one that ultimately reaches
- that heart of an individual.

The message Paul preached was with much assurance. That speaks of conviction.

- You heard it, you saw it and it touched you.

A man who attended Charles Spurgeon’s church was once asked why he attended since he was an unbeliever. His answer was that while he didn’t believe the message, the preacher did. He listened because there was conviction in the message.¹

If you share the gospel with someone and they don’t respond, that’s alright.

- The Holy Spirit needs to draw that person in.

When the scribes and Pharisees approached Jesus complaining about the disciples transgressing the traditions of the elders, Jesus called them hypocrites! He said, Well did Isaiah prophesy about you saying,

Matt 15:8-9

8 "These people draw near to Me with their mouth,
And honor Me with their lips,
But their heart is far from Me.
9 And in vain they worship Me,
Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

¹ Butler, J.G. (2014) *Sermon Starters*. Clinton, IA: LBC Publications, p. 173.

In other words, they were correct in what they said, but their life showed something different.

We are to walk the talk.

Mark 9:42

42 "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.

Then Paul says in verse 5, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

So, a person first receives the gospel then it redirects his ways.

Paul takes no credit for their conduct amongst the church.

- Instead, he appealed to what they'd seen in his character.

He reminds the church in the next chapter of their character.

He uses phrases like, "You yourselves know, As you know, You remember, and You are witnesses."

Thirdly, we send the gospel message to others:

1 Thess 1:6-7

6 And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,

7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

These two verses are discipleship 101. I hear, I watch and I do.

Paul set an example to the Thessalonian church and to those thereafter.

He lived what he preached,

- therefore, he told the church to follow him.

In 1 Cor 4:16 he said, Therefore I urge you, imitate me

And in 1 Cor 11 he said: Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

1 Peter 2:21

21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

Paul recognized the church received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said the world would hate us, His followers. He said, “if they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.”

But it’s often in times of persecution or affliction that the joy of the gospel goes out most effectively.

The Thessalonian church became the example:

7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

If everyone in this church were just like you, what kind of church would this be? Would this be a church that people wanted to be at? What would the character of the church be?

Fortunately, we’re all a work in progress regardless of how the church would be.

1 Thess 1:8-10

8 For from you 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 out, so that we do not need to say anything.

We know from verse 5 that the church received the word, now they’re putting the word out.

In fact, Paul says that the word of the Lord has sounded forth. To sound forth is the Greek word “execheo” which means to sound forth as a trumpet or as thunder.

He says:

9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you

Paul was saying, “hey, the churches in Macedonia and Achaia reported how you welcomed us.

And you know what’s really cool about this verse,

- the church had a reputation, a good reputation.

Notice the change in their lives:

and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

There was action in their life. They didn’t remain where they were. They heard the word, they received the word, then they made changes based on what they received.

When Jesus spoke the parable of the sower, He said:

Matt 13:23

23 But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.