

1 Thessalonians 1 “Their Faith Sounded Forth”

Well we are going to begin our study here through the book of 1 Thessalonians and I thought for our study here today that it might be nice to just go ahead and read the first chapter of this together so we can get an idea of the whole picture of what we will be studying.

So if you will look with me here at chapter 1 we'll read through that together it says the following

Paul, Silvanus, 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.

Their Good Example

²We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, ³remembering 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, ⁴knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. ⁵For 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.

⁶And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. ⁸For 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.

To just remind you of a few things here this morning before we dive into the text, I wanted to just remind you that Paul along with Silvanus and also Timothy had planted the church in Thessalonica during what is called Paul's second missionary journey.

We were told in Acts 17 that they were reasoning from the Scriptures for 3 sabbaths. Some accepted the message of Jesus while others thoroughly rejected it. Those that rejected Paul and his ministry then stirred up trouble which caused Paul and his companions to leave the city.

I have to say as we study this letter together over the next several weeks that this was a church that you and I should look to model ourselves after. Paul had very few notes of correction within these chapters and instead focuses on building up the church, reminding them that Jesus is coming back one day and teaching them that they are to live a life that is worthy of the calling they have received.

You might also keep in mind that this letter that we have before us is thought to be one of the first letters that Paul wrote that we have in our Bibles today.

Let's look at verse 1 here of our text where we have the following **Paul, Silvanus, 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.

We talked about the authors of this book last week but just to refresh our memories we should just keep in mind that while this letter is widely attributed to being written by Paul it was also written by both Silvanus and Timothy who were travelling companions and trusted brothers who helped Paul and were seen with him on multiple occasions in the book of Acts.

Silvanus if you remember had a shortened name we see in the scriptures which was Silas and he was a prominent leader in the early church in Jerusalem before he began to travel with Paul.

Timothy was a young man who we learn had been taught the scriptures by his mother and grandmother from a young age, he was considered to be a son in the faith to Paul and I like what Paul said of him in Philippians 2:19-22 when he said ¹⁹**But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.** ²⁰**For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.** ²¹**For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.** ²²**But you know his proven character, that as a son with *his* father he served with me in the gospel.** To find someone like this in your life that has the same attitude and the same heart in serving the Lord is a treasure indeed.

And so these three after they had spent just three short sabbaths in the city of Thessalonica had a heart for them and a deep desire to

know how this church was doing and how the Lord was working in them. For these men the missionary journey was not one that they took and then when they finished they just forgot about those they had ministered to. They cared deeply for them, remembered them and even prayed for them.

In verse 1 here we have the opening of this letter to this church and we learn here that the church of this city was both IN God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and they had received FROM God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I suppose it is worth mentioning that when we come to Jesus that we are found not only in Him but in the Father. When we come to the Lord by faith we are brought in to the family so to say, we are covered by the blood of Jesus and we are brought near to the Father.

I might also mention that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit for that matter all work together in the life of the church...They work corporately to bring the body of Christ together and they work individually in each of our lives. None of these three pieces of the Godhead which is three in one operate without the other.

So the church was found IN God the Father and the Lord Jesus and then we have the greeting that is given to this church as Paul announces both grace and peace to this church that was so close to his heart.

When we see the words grace and peace in the scriptures we might notice that they are found in almost every letter of Paul and they are always seen in this order...first grace and then peace.

Both of these words were common greetings in the world that Paul lived in and would have been common to be found in the church in Thessalonica as the church had both Jews and Gentiles that attended.

Grace was the common Greek greeting and was the word charis while the word peace or shalom was the common Jewish greeting and so really to me it seems symbolic in that the Jewish people and those of the Gentile world were one in Christ. The Word says this over in Galatians 3:26-28 when it says ²⁶ **For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.** ²⁷ **For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.** ²⁸ **There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

Now spiritually speaking when it comes to grace and peace you are always going to experience them in this order also. First, you and I must receive the grace of God and to define that word it simply means that you are receiving from God that which you could never earn. It is defined as the unmerited favor of God and of course to enter into the grace of God you must first accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Paul over in 1 Corinthians 15 said “By the grace of God I am what I am.” The truth is if we have not received the grace of God through Jesus in our lives we are in a heap of trouble.

And then after you have experienced the grace of God as found in Jesus then you can have the peace of God in your life. I can tell you first hand that before I came to know Jesus I had zero peace in my life. I was constantly at war within myself, I was angry at God, I was constantly running from the Lord...and yet when I accepted Jesus in

my heart I found that I finally had the peace that I so desperately wanted in my life.

So first grace is given to us as we come to Jesus and then afterwards we find peace within our hearts and lives and certainly this is found in the Father as well.

Let's move on here if you look at verses 2-4 which say this 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.**

I don't know about you but I would be comforted if the apostle Paul personally wrote a letter to my church and let me know that he was praying for us.

How encouraging when you receive a message from someone that you love and care for and they let you know that they are praying for you. I can tell you that for me I am always surprised at how the Lord ministers at just the right time to my heart. How many times have I been struggling or in a hard space and a brother in the Lord reaches out to me just to let me know they are standing in the gap for me in prayer.

I wonder when is the last time that you and I made mention of others in our prayers? I think if we are honest that a lot of times in life we can be very self-focused, we can be thinking of ourselves and ourselves alone or perhaps we just focus on our family and we forget about the world around us and especially our brothers and sisters in Christ.

I want to just encourage you today to make sure your prayers are not just inwardly focused but also make sure that you are lifting up the needs of those around you and don't be afraid to reach out to someone just to let them know you are praying for them.

I also want to just encourage you to maybe underline here that Paul says I mention you in our prayers to this church...To me the idea is that he is not spending hours in prayer for them but instead he simply lifts them up briefly as he thinks of them. Sometimes I think we overcomplicate prayer, we can think we need lots of words to get God's attention. We might remember that while our words fall short as we pray that Jesus is our great intercessor and that the Holy Spirit also intercedes on our behalf.

And then Paul makes mention here of three things that he was remembering as he prayed about this church...and I have to say these three things were all really positive and amazing attributes for a church to be remembered for.

Paul didn't remember them for their lack of self-control or their failure in doctrine but instead he said he remembered their work of faith, their labor of love and their patience of hope in Jesus.

I want to just remind us this morning about these three very important thoughts that Paul has just given us. First, he says that he remembered their work of faith and I have to tell you that if you are going to name the name of Christ the expectation is that your trust and belief in Him is going to produce something in your life.

I want to stress to you that the Bible is clear that we are saved by faith and not works but at the same time the Bible is clear that if you have faith your life is going to demonstrate it.

Over in the book of James 2:17-18 we have the following which says this 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.**

I cannot see how one can claim to know Jesus and not have their life change dramatically. I have said this before but the very nature of the Holy Spirit who comes and lives inside anyone that has accepted Jesus demands that we would change and become more like our Lord. You cannot in my opinion say that you know Jesus and have your life just stay the same. The two just do not go together.

This church was known by Paul to be a church that did something about their faith. They actually put it into practice...and I think we should also be working out our faith, using it throughout our lives and demonstrating to the world that God has truly changed us.

And then Paul said that he remembered their labor of love. That word for labor when you look it up in the original language means toil, effort, the beating of the breast with grief...that's kind of interesting isn't it? The word for love here is the word agape which is the love of God.

I have to remind us today that when we choose to love with the love that God does towards us that it's going to be a hard thing...to love like Jesus does means we are willing to lay down our lives for others, that

we are willing to turn the other cheek when we are wronged, that we are willing to bear with others and allow love to cover a multitude of sins...For the Thessalonians it probably meant loving those that persecuted them and tried to tear apart the church.

I don't have to tell you this but loving the world with the love of God is hard work. It does not come easy, it goes against our fleshly nature...God's love we are told in 1 Corinthians 13 is patient, kind, gentle, suffers long, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things.

To love this way will be hard, it will not come easy, it will at times require you to be at the feet of Jesus crying out for His help and strength in your life...and yet I am reminded that the love of God is what drew us to Jesus and as you and I live our lives laboring in the love of Christ it will minister to the world around us.

And then Paul says that they had patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. Patience is not a word we enjoy is it? It's so hard to trust the Lord when everything around us seems to be falling apart. It's so hard to endure the trials that we face in this world.

I suppose when I am having to be patient that the best way for me personally to continue to endure is to remember the prize at the end of the race, to fix my eyes on Jesus the author and finisher of my faith, to remember that one day the Lord will make all things right once again.

So I ask you today how are you doing with these three things? Are you working out your faith? Are you laboring in love? And are you remaining patient with hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And I do want to point out that just as the text before us says your Father in heaven sees all things. He knows the struggles we face as humans and even as believers...He can see your heart, He knows if your faith is genuine or you are just playing games...For this church Paul had every bit of confidence that they had the right heart.

Now I do have to point out verse 4 to you here this morning as it says that this church knew their election by God. The teaching of election in the Bible is one that many scholars have debated for a long time. Often people will debate whether God elects people to be a part of His kingdom or whether man has a choice in the process.

I would say the Bible teaches both. You have a choice as you go through life as to whether Jesus will be the Lord and Savior of your life or not.

God also chooses in His sovereignty. Listen to what Ephesians 1:3-5 says when Paul being inspired by the Holy Spirit wrote

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴just as He CHOSE US in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵HAVING PREDESTINED us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Jesus also affirms this doctrine when He said the following in John 15:16 to His disciples when He said **¹⁶You 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.**

There is an illustration I have heard before and the idea is that there is a door before all of us and on the side facing humanity are the words “whosoever desires may come” and once you come through the gate the other side says “Chosen from the foundation of the world”

For myself I can look at my life and I can confidently say that the Lord chose me...for what reason I cannot understand but He loved me so much that He went out and called me to Himself and He pursued me to no end...I am confident we can all say that.

Let's move forward here if you look at verse 5 which says 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.**

If you have come to Jesus Christ and accepted Him in your heart then you know that the Gospel message you heard is the most powerful in all of the world. The Gospel of Jesus Christ speaks to our hearts and bears witness that Jesus did indeed die upon the cross for the sins of humanity...It convicts us of our sin and brings us to the point of accepting the Lord in our hearts.

When Paul came to this city the truth of Jesus came with Him in power and I assume that Paul perhaps was given the gift of performing miracles and healings while He was there but I think primarily the Holy Spirit was just bearing witness to the hearts of those that heard causing them to come to faith.

And notice that Paul mentions that this church knew what kind of people that they were when they were among them...and this just

means that the message Paul gave was not only heard but it was also seen as Paul lived out His faith before them.

We might imagine the boldness of Paul and his companions as the crowds listened to them three sabbaths in a row and I'm sure that they heard the rumblings of hatred towards them as the people began to believe. I can imagine the spiritual warfare that surrounded these men was quite intense and yet Paul and his companions just kept on in their faith standing firm in the truth being an example to those that were around them.

For me personally as I came to know Jesus as my Lord and Savior one of the big reasons I came to the Lord was because I could look around me and see that there were many that had lives that were changed, there were many that used to live for drugs and alcohol but now they had a rock solid faith in the Lord, they were excited about Jesus, they wanted to talk about Him and tell others about Him.

Perhaps it was that way for you also, someone lived out their faith before you and it spoke volumes to you bringing you ever closer to accepting Christ in your heart. Perhaps we should ask ourselves what does my life and the way I live it say to those around me about Jesus? Does my life reflect the love of Jesus? If I was put on trial and my life examined would the jury find me guilty of being a disciple of Jesus? Or would they see me just like everyone else?

Verses 6-8 say this as we continue on ⁶And 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.

As those in Thessalonica heard the word and saw the example that Paul set they chose to not only follow the Lord but also to follow in the footsteps of the example of Paul.

Obviously the most important thing here is that a person would choose to follow Jesus. I mean without following Jesus you are lost in your sins and you have no hope and when you die you will find yourself in hell for all of eternity.

I also think that its important that we have those in our lives that we can learn from and that's how Paul was as he simply lived his life for Jesus. This church looked at him and they said we want to do the same things that he is doing.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:1 said this **Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.** I think we should be so on fire for Jesus in such a way that we could also say that to those around us. We should be set apart just as Paul was for the work of Jesus in us and through us...and I want to tell you today if you find someone that has faith like Paul did and they are the real deal when it comes to following Jesus that you like the church in Thessalonica should look to be around that person and to live as they live.

We all need examples to follow after and I know for me many times I can be at a loss as to what I should be doing and how I should live my life but if I see someone else that has done it or I see someone's faith in action then I can go and grab hold of that as well and put it into practice in my own life.

I always like the example of Timothy and Paul in the scriptures. Timothy was younger in the faith and younger in age and he followed after the example of Paul as a son would his father...Timothy then passed along what he knew to the churches around him as Paul told him to be an example to the believers in word and deed.

It's the cycle of Christianity...You learn from someone else's example as they follow Jesus and then you look to pass it along to someone else...Really that's the definition of discipleship right? To take what you have and invest it into someone else and they in turn replicate that same process.

We see the same thing in the church of Thessalonica...They received from Paul and then they took what they knew and actually became examples we are told in all of Macedonia and Achaia and today these two areas make up modern day Greece.

Now I want you think about this for a second...Paul came with just two others to Thessalonica. They had an impact on this city for sure but when the church in Thessalonica went out sharing their faith the gospel went to an entire country. That's the multiplication of the Gospel in action right there...I want you to know today that our little church of however many that we are can have a profound impact on the world around us as we simply go out and live for Jesus and proclaim the truth. One person can effect a group of people but if that group of people goes out and share their faith it can effect a whole nation and that's exactly what happened with this church.

Notice Paul even says in verse 8 that the witness from this church was so strong that Paul said that he and his companions did not even need to say anything...meaning the church was doing the work and this

would have freed Paul up to minister the gospel in other places as well.

I wanted to just ask you briefly today when is the last time you shared your faith with someone? When is the last time you spoke the truth to a loved one, or a relative, or a coworker or a neighbor? It is our calling in life to share what Jesus has entrusted to us.

I also want to point out one other thing here as we are told in verse 6 that this church had received Jesus in much affliction...the circumstances that surrounded those that had come to faith were hostile...You can imagine there was not only verbal persecution but also fines that came upon the believers as they looked to serve Jesus...we know that from the book of Acts 17.

I have heard it said that persecution is what fans the flames of Christianity. I believe that to be true as those nations that endure persecution often find themselves strengthened and emboldened to share their faith...It has been said that you find out who the true believers are when persecution or trials set in. Typically those who are not real in their faith will quickly clam up and fade away while true believers will stay the course and hold the line when it comes to living for Christ.

I am reminded that Jesus said we would endure persecution as we live for Him...we see often that Paul and the other apostles found difficulty for their faith...The church in Thessalonica did as well and yet we see that they continued on in their service to Jesus.

Verses 9-10 say the following as we close and move into communion today 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.

This church used to serve idols and you can imagine that there was a lot of idolatry in this city that was part of the worship of the Roman gods. And yet when they came to know Jesus we are told they left those things behind.

You know its true that when you come to truly know the Lord as your Lord and Savior that you will find yourself leaving the world behind. You will find yourself caring a lot less about things that used to consume your life and a lot more about honoring Jesus and sharing Him with others.

Paul put it this way about his own life in Philippians 3:8 which says ⁸Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ Paul had a lot of clout when it came to religion...and yet when he met Jesus everything else was like rubbish to him.

I hope that's how it is for us also as we go through life...that Jesus would become greater and everything else would fade into the background.

And notice one final thing here as Paul said that as they turned from idols that they now were patiently waiting for His Son from heaven who was raised from the dead who will deliver us from the wrath to come...it's true that one day Jesus will come and rescue us from the

wrath of God that will come upon the world. It will happen in an event called the rapture of the church when the Lord comes and removes those who are His from this world that we might be with Him.

I know I am waiting and hoping for His return. If the Lord came back right now I would be a happy man indeed and I know those of you that are waiting as this church was feel the same way.

It's worth it to serve Jesus, it's worth it to leave everything behind, it's worth it to be people that are working out our faith and laboring in the love of God...One day all the hurts and pains of this world will be gone and we'll forever be in the presence of our Savior.

Let's go ahead and move into communion this morning as we close.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 “Their Faith Sounded Forth”

Verse 1

Philippians 2:19-22

Galatians 3:26-28

Verses 2-4

James 2:17-18

Ephesians 1:3-5

John 15:16

Verses 6-8

1 Corinthians 11:1

Verses 9-10

Philippians 3:8