

Thanksgiving for a Church that Shines

1 Thessalonians 1:1–10

WHAT IS TRUE? Paul and company celebrate the unmistakable work of God, noting the Thessalonians' faith, love, and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, which confirm their status as God's chosen people (the elect). Their gratitude is twofold: it stems from the missionaries' personal observations of the believers' faith and changed lives and is further reinforced by extensive reports of the Thessalonians' exemplary Christian conduct, which has become well-known throughout Macedonia, Achaia, and beyond. This passage highlights the powerful impact of genuine conversion and the outward display of faith through changed lives, which serve as a witness to the Gospel's power to produce real change in people.

1.) To the church of the Thessalonians: Apostle Paul, Silas (Silvanus), and Timothy send their greetings ("Grace to you and peace")

A. In God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

2.) The missionary team offers a prayer of thanksgiving for God's saving intervention in Thessalonica (1:2–10)

A. Paul and His co-laborers regularly pray for the Thessalonians (v. 2)

B. Real spiritual conversion changes our direction (v. 3–5)

1. A working faith, a laboring love, and enduring hope should be seen in our behaviors today, like those of the Thessalonian believers
2. The Gospel was not merely a set of empty words but the means for God's changing power in their lives
3. God's love and election of the missionaries is shown by the Spirit's power and the missionaries' confidence in the Gospel
4. Thessalonica believers have the apostles as an example; we do too

C. Real conversion leads to spiritual growth (v. 6–10)

1. They welcomed the missionaries and the Lord's "message"
2. They believed the Gospel and turned away from pagan beliefs
3. They became imitators of the missionaries and a model for the Gospel to all in their region; people everywhere talk about them
4. They turned to the true God and now wait for Jesus, who rescues sinners from God's wrath and a sinner's hell (also, 1 Tim. 1:15, Rom. 2:5, Rev 6:16, Jude 21-23, 1 Pet. 4:18)

WHAT TO DO (APPLICATION)? These applications invite believers to integrate their faith deeply into everyday living, ensuring that their faith in Jesus Christ and His Gospel message is not just a personal belief but a transformative force that impacts their community and beyond.

1.) Practice gratitude in community: Paul, Silas, and Timothy frequently expressed thanks for the faith and transformation observed in the Thessalonian believers. Similarly, it's important for believers and church communities to cultivate a culture of gratitude to God, acknowledging and celebrating one another's spiritual growth and contributions. Regularly sharing how we see God working in the lives of others can encourage and build up the community, reinforcing the bonds of fellowship.

2.) Pray and give thanks in the "gaps:" Instead of complaining about the red light or when the customer service representative puts you on hold, fill the spaces with prayer. Carve out intentional time for prayer and thanksgiving for what God is doing not only in your life but in the lives of your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ—and tell them that you are praying for them!

3.) Live a testimony that speaks beyond words: Thessalonica believers were noteworthy not just for their verbal testimony but for lives that clearly reflected their faith. This passage encourages believers to live in such a way that their actions speak loudly of their faith in Christ (be imitators of Christ and the apostles). A life aligned with the teachings of Jesus can have a great evangelistic impact, reaching others in our communities and even beyond, as seen in how news of the Thessalonians' faith spread to surrounding regions.

4.) Embrace and understand our election: The assurance of being chosen by God (election) brought a profound sense of identity and purpose to the Thessalonians. For modern believers, understanding that one is chosen by God ("before the foundation of the world," Eph. 1:4, Mt. 25:34), is not just a doctrinal concept but a foundation for living confidently and joyfully TODAY in service to God. It means that God has a purpose for each believer and that He equips and leads them to fulfill His divine purposes.

5.) Let your faith spur deeds of service, love to labor, and hope to endurance: *too often*, a believer claims to have faith in Jesus Christ as Lord but is not motivated to work to promote His kingdom or share the gospel with other people; *too often*, a believer claims to hope in Jesus as the one in control of his or her life, but when faced with difficulty or disappointment, he or she does not endure in the faith and turns away; *too often* a believer claims to love Jesus Christ, but when serving in Christ's kingdom becomes labor, he or she backs off. Faith, hope, and love must result in work, labor, and endurance that will guide all believers through life—showing what to do and how to do it. *How are your faith, hope, and love being shown?* ¹