

Faith, Love and Hope

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Background:

The City – It is an ancient city, originally named Therma from the many hot springs adjacent to it.

A) In 315 B.C. it was renamed Thessalonica after the half sister of Alexander the Great.

B) When Rome conquered Macedonia in 168 B.C., the city was made capital of that entire province.

1) In Roman times this city which was located on 2 major **trade routes had a population** was over 200,000

C) Today – it is called **Thessaloniki**, and is a bustling center of northern Greece. population over 300,000

1) It is one of the few cities that has survived from the New Testament era of apostolic ministry.

Date - This was written shortly after Paul visited Thes. on his 2nd missionary journey(Acts 17)

A) Paul preached 3 weeks there, then a big mob scene made him flee by night to Berea.

B) Even though Paul's ministry in Thessalonica was not a long one,

1) it was solid enough to leave behind a thriving church.

C) Shortly after leaving Paul wrote Back to them to encourage them to hang in there

D) With the exception of Paul's letter to the Galatians, the first epistle to the Thessalonians is very possibly the oldest of Paul's letters

Theme – Last Days, Coming Judgments.

Purpose – Strengthen the believers there and give them an assurance concerning the rapture of the Church and second coming of Christ.

The new Christians were confused about the return of Jesus Christ.

A) Paul had told them that the Lord would return in the air and take them home.

B) But some of their number had died.

1) The bereaved ones wondered if their Christian dead would be included in the "catching up" of the church.

C) Paul explained this in 1 Thess 4:13-18.

But there was a second confusion.

A) Because the persecutions were so intense, some of the believers thought that "the Day of the Lord" had arrived.

B) Paul wrote to Clear up the confusion! He didn't want them to be ignorant about these things.

1) Paul wrote to clear up this confusion.

C) Important letter for us – for there are 3 things that the Lord declares He doesn't want His Church to be IGNORANT ABOUT !

#1 Not ignorant about Spiritual gifts 1 Corin 12:1

#2 Not ignorant about Spiritual warfare 2 Corinth 2:11

#3 Not ignorant about Prophecy 1 Thess 4:13

A) Interesting that these are 3 areas in the Church where there seems to be a lot of confusion. {
Especially #3

B) So it is important that we study these things

C) We live in interesting times: The stage is being set for the events of the Trib. – 10 nation Confederacy

1) Cashless Society

2) Hatred of Israel – { Turned away from Tsunami relief

D) Prior to the Trib – rapture – So these are exciting times.

E) My Prayer is that this letter will stir our hearts in Several ways.

1) Not right to get right { No time to be Carnal

2) Be Bold in Sharing

3) Longing to live for Heaven

Begin read v.1 –Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

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

Paul begins with a greeting mentioning his traveling companions Silvanus & Timothy

A) Silvanus (also known as *Silas*) [took Barney place] was a long and experienced companion of Paul.

B) Silas & Timothy traveled w/ Paul on his 2nd miss journey and were with him when he came to Thesska

C) Paul would later send Timothy back to them with this letter of encouragement.

Notice that Paul gives a double address for the church, one geographical, the other spiritual.

A) They lived in Thessalonica but they are also found "in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ."

B) Of the two, that address is the 2nd more important.

1) You live in OCSD / Vista / CLSB/ San Marcos

Bonsall / Fallbrook / Escondido

C) That is your Physical address – but what matters most to God today – Are you in Him ! In Christ

1) Born again – Placed into God's Family

2) Placed into Christ – God sees you in Jesus

D) Confidence and assurance – He sees us in his Son !

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

A) GRACE & PEACE – Siamese twins

B) Grace points to God as the Source of the highest good!

Peace – refers to man as the recipient of divine favor.

C) Been said: *Grace is who God is – Peace is the result of Knowing Him*

D) Man cannot experience peace until he receives God's grace

1) because only an understanding that our salvation rests not on what we must do, but on what God has done results in true peace.

Continues V.2 1 Thess 1:2-4

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.

Paul is wanting to encourage the believers concerning their Status in the Lord

A) They indeed have been chosen by Him and are Beloved of the Lord

B) The evidence of their Conversion is seen in 3 important Characteristics that Paul is thankful for

1) Their faith, Their love, and Their hope.

C) In the NT, those are always listed as fundamental characteristics of those who have come to Christ.

1) By products of a true Conversion:

Faith looks back to a *Crucified Savior*. **Love** looks up to a *Crowned Savior*. **Hope** looks on to a *Coming Savior*.

Paul's description of these 3 Characteristics is enlightening:

A) Work of Faith / Labor of Love/ and patient Hope. .

B) It is faith which works, a love which labors, and a hope which endures.

C) These 3 Characteristics constitute the outline of Ch.1

1) **Work of Faith is seen in v. 5-7,9**

2) **Labor of Love v.8**

3) **Patient Hope v.10**

RD v.5-10

#1 WORK OF FAITH

A) What is this work of Faith that Paul is talking about!

B) Eph. 2:8-9 Make it clear that a man is not saved by his works but by faith in the finished work of

1) Faith is a response – it is an action – not a work

C) So what does Paul mean here when he says the work of faith

1) James gives us insight Ch.2:19 Faith w/out works is dead —

- 2) We are not saved by our works but by faith -
However our faith is a faith that works

D) In other words faith is evidenced by our works

- 1) That is what Paul is talking about here – The evidence of their faith

It is outlined in 4 Responses { Order of Occurrence –not as listed #1 They received the Word (v. 5).

- A) This is the starting Place: Responding to the Gospel.

- B) Faith is the response of the soul of man to the Word of God.
John 6:28-29

28 Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"

29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

Rom 10:17 *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

C) When Paul came to Thess – He came preaching the word – the gospel –

- 1) He didn't come as a story teller – didn't come to give Practical tips on living –
2) Help people find the giant with in them.

- D) He came to preach the gospel – Believed in it's effectiveness.

Notice what Paul says in v.5 about the Gospel

A) Word was in Power: Rom 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes*

- B) Power is in the message – Not the delivery
1) So encouraging: Great Speaker

C) Telegram: Won 10 million – The power is not in the Deliver / the wealth not in the deliver –

- 1) It is in the Message

D) Must not forget that! Not dependent on You

- 1) Get the message out – however you can – Tracts
2) Business cards

See the Holy Spirit works thru the message

A) That is the next thing Paul tells us -the gospel came "by the Holy Spirit."

B) HS works thru the message of the Gospel to convict people of sin and their need of a Savior

C) These people heard the gospel and were touched deeply in their hearts – they responded

- 1) Received the Word with full assurance or full conviction.

D) So that was the first evidence of their faith – They received the word.

#2 V.9 REPENTANCE OCCURRED!

A) They "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God."

B). Faith is not merely belief; it is something that changes you.

1) Faith makes you turn from what is wrong to what is Right.

C) From dark and hurtful things to right and true and healthy things.

D) And, especially, faith will turn you from the worship of idols to God.

Paul tells us in Romans 1 that the tendency of Man is to make gods in his own image.

A) Gods that are the personification of what he is of what he wants to be –

B) See this clearly in Greek Mythology – which was prevalent in during this time

C) Consider for a minute some of the Popular Greek and Roman gods – which still have a place in our culture today.

ZUES: Chief of the gods { Proverbial playboy

A) Zeus Had his way sexually with many goddesses and women – fathered a horde of Children

B) He is the epitome of the playboy mentality

Hugh Hefner - Man lives for the sexual conquest

1) That mentality is prevalent in our Culture – that promotes sex as the end all

APPOLLO – Greek god who personified youthful masculinity – known as the god of music

A) Today's Rock stars / Men Fitness / Health Right look -

B) APHRODITE – goddess of beauty and sexual love

1) Cosmo – Shape /

C) **EROS** – Greek god of love & pleasure

D) **NIKE** – Greek god of victory and competition

1) Sports and our obsession with entertainment

E) **DUONYOSOS** – Greek god of wine and intoxication and pleasure

1) That god is still worshipped today in mass –

TV commercials make it seem like it is impossible to watch a sporting event w/out alcohol

A) Drunkenness and Sport watching go hand in hand

B) MERCURY – Roman god of commerce

1) The god of the stock market and the business world

C) Now all of the god's and goddesses have one thing in Common –

1) It is the promotion of **SELF and self gratification above** all other pursuits { **Serving Self!**

D) This is where the change occurs when a person repents –

1) Change in their mentality – They go from serving self to **SERVING THE LIVING GOD**

E) A mark of a true conversion!

#3 They became disciples: They followed their spiritual leaders (v. 6 a).

A) The word "followers" is actually "imitators."

B) A Disciple is a learner – one who follows another with the desire of wanting to be like them

C) Heart of a Disciple is a Hunger for the word – 1) Blessed wed . Packed out – People here to hear the word

D) Churches all over America – Canceling – Mid week services –

1 Peter 2:2-3 *as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

E) Those who have tasted of the Lord are going to want to study his word

2 Tim 2:15 *STUDY TO present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

So the 3rd mark of their faith was seen in how they became disciples

#4 They suffered for Christ WITH JOY ! (v. 6 b).

A) In turning from idols to serve God, these believers angered their friends and relatives, and this led to persecution.

B) They endured their persecution with joy instead of with complaining –

C) They were going through much pain. They were ostracized at their work, driven out of their homes, 1) arrested and put into prison for their new-found faith.

D) But, says Paul, they had learned to see these afflictions in a new way.

1) The result was joy, joy inspired by the Holy Spirit.

There are many who will receive an easy, painless gospel, but how many will embrace a gospel that comes with adversity?

A) **Parable of the Sower** – Seed sown amongst the thorns – Shallow – emotional experience

B) Heat comes it withers –

1) There are too many today in our Churches with that mentality – follow Christ only when it is convenient !

C) The believers in Thessalonica were not like that – they followed Christ w/ Joy even in the midst of persecution

D) They became examples of how to suffer!

E) So the Evidence of their faith was seen in the fact that they

Embraced the word / Turned from idols / Became Disciples / Suffered with Joy

LABOR OF LOVE

A) Labor and love don't seem to fit together.

B) But, you see, love will labor. And when it does, it just doesn't seem to be labor.

1) A man passed by a little girl carrying a heavy baby and said to her, "Isn't that baby too heavy for you?"

C) She answered, *"Oh no, he's my brother."*

1) Love makes all the difference in the world.

D) Labor isn't labor when it is a labor of love.

A Labor of Love is A labor which is prompted by love. Bernard Newman tells how once he stayed in a home in Bulgaria - All the time he was there the daughter was stitching away at a dress.

He said to her, "Don't you ever get tired of that eternal sewing?" "O no!" she said, "you see this is my wedding dress." **Work done for love always has a glory.**

What was their labor of Love ! They Spread the Word they shared the good news throughout Macedonia and Achaia.

A) **Vs.8** – Their faith was sounding out like a Trumpet!

B) **"Sounded forth"** - Can also mean crashing out like a "roll of thunder".

C) At a time where it was safer to be **quiet to avoid danger & persecution**, the Christians blazoned forth their faith.

D) Listen to how the city fathers described their impact (**Acts 17:6** *"These who have turned the world upside down"*)

Q: What instrument depicts your faith? A Trumpet? A kazoo? A clanging cymbal?

So, how did they do this?

A) Not w/great crusades, campaigns, nor city wide meetings.

B) Nope, they shared w/their neighbors & friends what God had done in their life.

1) Guys that is effective evangelism !!! Sharing what God has done in your life !!!

One of the saddest statistics of our day is that 95% of all church members have never led anyone to Christ. (Dr. D. James Kennedy)

C) Part of our Problem is that we view evangelism as a BURDEN instead of a labor of Love !

D) Talking about my wife and kids – Love them it is easy to talk about them !

1) Same with the Lord – Sharing his word -

A recent survey of church growth indicated that 70 to 80 percent of a church's growth is the result of friends witnessing to friends and relatives to relatives.

A) Paul described his MOTIVATION in this way – 2 Cor 5:14 *The love of Christ compels me !*

B) Let that be our Motivation as well

1) Debtors to lost souls

C) Sharing your faith – Excites you – heart pounding

1) Also Protects you – taken

C) So the 2nd Characteristic of their conversion was the love of Jesus compelled them to share

#3 Their Patient hope v.10

A) A striking feature about the Thessalonian letters is that each chapter in both letters ends with a reference to the coming of the Lord.

B) It is interesting in the early church we don't notice them **looking back** to the **birth of Christ**

1) (Christmas is spoken of and) But their focus is always to the **2nd coming**.

C) They believed that he was coming again. Their hope lay in that.

D) They believed what the angels had said to the disciples on the Mount of Olives,

"This same Jesus whom you see going into heaven shall so come in like manner," {cf, Acts 1:11}.

E) It was the ever-present hope of the early church, and that hope became the dominant theme of these Thessalonian letters.

In Union Grove Wisconsin there is a Home for Mentally Challenged Kids called the Shepherds Home

The Founder of the home **Bud Wood** says one of the major maintenance problems at the home is dirty windows

How do the Windows get so dirty ? Bud *says that you can walk thru the corridors of that home almost any time of the day & see kids w/ their hands noses & faces pressed to the windows Looking to see if Christ might be coming back right then to take them home & make them Whole*

A) When is the last time that we glanced toward the sky to see if this might not be the long awaited moment when we final see him face to face

The believers in Thess had a Hope – they were waiting for the Lord to Come

The idea of waiting does not infer apathy.

A) In the Greek language, the word is used to describe what a mother does when she is anticipating the birth of her baby.

B) She readies the nursery and eagerly prepares for his arrival.

C) So, too, we should say, “Jesus is coming. I must make sure my family and friends are ready.”

D) See Revelation 6–19 describes a time called the Tribulation, when God pours His wrath on a Christ-rejecting, sinful world.

Scorpions are released. Hundred-pound hailstones come crashing down. Water turns to blood. **Islands disappear.**

There is starvation, plagues, war, and famine.

It's a hellish time, causing the people to cry, ***“Who shall save us from the day of the wrath of the Lamb?”*** (Revelation 6:16, 17).

Let me highly encourage you to miss that.

A) Become a Christian today. Believe on Him whom the Father has sent,

B) And, like the Thessalonians, you'll find yourself turning from the idols of our present day, laboring under the light burden of love, and waiting for the Son with joyful hope.