**To the Church of the Thessalonians – Their Faith**

*1 Thessalonians 1*

1. **Introduction** – The Church of the Thessalonians (**v. 1**)
2. The Macedonian Call
   1. After the contention with Barnabas about John Mark, Paul took Timothy with him on his second missionary journey to revisit brethren and strengthen them.
   2. After the Spirit forbade them to preach in the Roman province of Asia, or from going into Bithynia, they came to Troas where God gave Paul a vision – **Acts 16:9-10**
   3. The church in Philippi was established because of the call in the vision, and after being beaten, put in prison, and let go, Paul and Silas went to Thessalonica – **Acts 17:1-10** – they had success, but also great trial.
      1. The conflict in Thessalonica hindered Paul from staying there as long as he wanted – **1 Thessalonians 2:17**
   4. After preaching at Berea, Paul left Silas and Timothy and departed to Athens. When Timothy came to Paul in Athens, he sent him back to encourage the Thessalonians and see how they were doing – **1 Thessalonians 3:1-3**
      1. ***“having been taken away” (2:17)*** – *aporphanizō* – literally make an orphan of; figuratively and passive, of an unwanted separation be torn away from, be deprived of, be (unwillingly) separated from (ALGNT)
      2. ***“we could no longer endure it”***
3. Paul’s Response to Timothy’s Good News
   1. Timothy’s return brought good news which relieved and comforted Paul concerning his concern for the brethren he left in Thessalonica – **1 Thessalonians 3:6**
   2. Paul preached in Thessalonica and established the church there around AD 51, and upon receiving good news from Timothy concerning them, he wrote the 1 Thessalonian letter about late AD 52 or early AD 53.
   3. When Paul abruptly left the city of Thessalonica due to persecution, the brethren there bore the brunt of great persecution. The 1 Thessalonian letter represents Paul’s effort to encourage and instruct a young congregation going through immense trial.
   4. In their new journey of faith, he wished for them to have grace and peace from God and Christ – **1 Thessalonians 1:1** – the letter contains the message that would grant them such.
4. Their Activity in Faith **(vv. 2-3)**
5. **(vv. 2-3a)** – Paul had a great concern for and gratitude for the Thessalonians.
   1. **Cf. 2 Corinthians 11:28** – deep concern for the churches.
   2. ***“constantly bearing in mind your work of faith…” (NASB)***
      1. After being taken from them prematurely, Paul consistently thought about the Thessalonians.
      2. He enumerates three things which he observed the Thessalonians given to when he was with them – work, labor, and patience.
         1. Each are attached to a particular thing which brought them about – Faith, Love, Hope.
         2. All are under the umbrella of ***“our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father”***
            1. Their newfound fellowship with Jesus spurred them on to great activity.
            2. Where they once were without God they are now before Him as His faithful children.
6. Work of Faith
   1. Faith is active and working – **James 2:14-17, 21-25**
   2. It is not separated from the activities which God commands – **John 6:27-29** – He is not distinguishing the labor from faith, but showing what God wants – faithfulness, fidelity, allegiance that leads to His prescribed activity – doing the will of God.
7. Labor of Love
   1. The “labor” is not separated from the “work,” but is demonstrative of the intensity of that work; as such, it follows with a greater motivating force which led to the activity in such intensive labor – love.
   2. Their laborious work – **Acts 17:5-9** – a Christian named Jason was showing hospitality to Paul and Silas (work), but doing so under extremely volatile circumstances (labor).
      1. **(vv. 6-9)** – when they did not find Paul and Silas, Jason and the brethren bore the brunt of their wrath.
      2. “Jason and the brethren were made responsible for seeing that the men who were the cause of the disturbance no longer taught their doctrines in Thessalonica. While Paul and Silas might go back to preaching after a stoning or a beating that they received personally, it is a different thing when their converts would be the ones suffering for the boldness of the missionaries.” (REESE, pg. 616)
      3. What led them to a willingness to be subject to such intense activity for other? – **John 14:15; 15:12-14** – love.
8. Patience of Hope
   1. The trial of their faith was immediate. They were not Christians, and then they were, and were persecuted.
      1. Their calling was one of hope – **cf. Ephesians 1:18; 1 Peter 1:18** (***“aimless conduct”***)
   2. This patience (endurance) was not a passive activity, but the continuation of the work of faith and labor of love despite the difficult circumstances.
   3. Hope kept them from quitting – **Romans 8:18, 24-25; Hebrews 6:19**
9. Their Conversion in Faith **(vv. 4-6)**
10. Elected by God **(vv. 4-5)**
    1. **(v. 4)** – **“knowing”** – *eidō* – (1) to see; (1a) to perceive with the eyes; (2) to know” (THAYER)
       1. Paul remembers their work, and in what he witnesses there is verification that they are the elect of God.
       2. ***“knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you” (NASB)***
          1. In Christ – **Ephesians 1:4**
       3. Significance – **Romans 16:13** – all Christians are the elect, but Paul makes special significance with Rufus.
       4. Thessalonians – **1 Peter 2:9-10** – once not a people, but now God’s people.
    2. **(v. 5)** – explains furthermore the knowledge of their election by God – the way the gospel came to them – i.e. the effect it had on them.
       1. NOT word only – **1 Corinthians 1:22-23** – just an empty, foolish message.
       2. In Power – **1 Corinthians 1:18, 24, 30-31** – salvation in response, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption. (**cf. Acts 11:23** – grace of God at work among them, changing them.)
       3. In the Holy Spirit and much assurance (these to joined together in the original) – **John 16:8** (convicting power); **Romans 8:16** (assurance as children; **Philippians 2:1** – fellowship); **Romans 5:5** (strength of hope through message of love)
       4. **This is language of true, observable conversion – Colossians 3:12-15 – behavior of God’s elect.**
11. Joyful Imitation of the Lord **(v. 6)**
    1. Their conversion, as all true conversion does, resulted in imitation.
    2. ***“followers”*** – *mimētēs* – (where we get mimic) – an imitator (STRONG)
    3. **Of us and the Lord** – **1 Corinthians 11:1** – the Lord is the standard, but their contact with Him was through the model of His disciples
       1. They began to walk in His steps – **1 John 2:6**
    4. Affliction – **1 Peter 2:21-23** – like Christ.
    5. Joy of the HS – **1 Peter 4:12-14** – fellowship with Christ and the Spirit, expectation of glory.
12. Their Example in Faith **(vv. 7-10)**
13. Resounding Faith **(vv. 7-8)**
    1. (**v. 7)** – they imitated the example of Paul and Christ, and then became an example to others.
       1. Macedonia – Philippi, Berea, Athens
       2. Achaia – Corinth
    2. **(v. 8)** – their faith, and the word of God by example of their faith, was like a reverberating sound, continuing to travel and reaching great distances.
       1. ***“sound forth”*** – perfect, passive – indicative of continued action, like “a loud trumpet blast whose sound hangs in the air for long while after it sounded out.” (REESE, pg. 16)
       2. ***“in every place”*** – it continues to have a lasting effect – people keep hearing about their example.
       3. ***“so that we do not need to say anything”*** – not that they don’t need to preach the gospel, but where the Thessalonians would be a good example to bring up to prime others for the gospel, it is already known!
          1. **Cf. 1 Peter 2:11-12** – admirable conduct which primes the mind of others to be receptive to the gospel when it comes to them.
          2. **Cf. Titus 2:5, 10** – opposites – word being blasphemed vs. being adorned.
14. Transformative Faith **(vv. 9-10)**
    1. Those who hear of the Thessalonian example ***“declare concerning us”*** (Paul, preachers of the gospel) – **(v. 5)** – ***“what kind of men we were among you for your sake”*** – those who preached a true, powerful message of salvation in sincerity (no gimmicks, tricks, catches, etc.)
       1. EX: **Acts 18:9-11** – Paul in Corinth – imagine the amount of people Paul met who had heard of the change of the Thessalonians and were interested in the message which led to it.
    2. **Dramatic change** – turned to the living God from idols.
       1. **Acts 17:6** – turned the world upside down (Jewish complaint but would prove true for the Hellenistic world).
          1. What a God is this who would win such people away from the many gods of our traditions?
       2. **Acts 14:15** – turning from vain things to serve the true living God.
          1. By the example of the Thessalonians, others were able to begin to see the true from the counterfeit!
    3. **Dramatic hope** – awaiting the resurrected Lord.
       1. They responded to the same messaged that was proclaimed later in Athens – **Acts 17:30-31**
       2. By their response, they did not shudder at wrath, but were delivered from it, and anticipated glory – **Hebrews 9:27-28**
       3. By the example of the Thessalonians, others were able to see that the warning had merit, but so did the promise of deliverance!

**Conclusion**

1. By divine appointment, the gospel was brought to the city of Thessalonica. The account is brief, but powerful, and Paul’s following letter to the church reflects further on the power.
2. The Thessalonians are a prime example of scriptural faith that is active, powerful, hopeful, and influential – reaching beyond the immediate surroundings to distances only explained by the power of God.