

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Good evening everyone. I trust all of you are well. Welcome to Facebook Live in my home office, which also doubles as my dining room. If you've been with us on these Wednesday evening Bible studies – you know we worked our way through the Minor Prophets over the last couple of months.

Well, tonight, we're going to start working through another book of the Bible, and this time – the plan is to go verse by verse through the books of 1 & 2 Thessalonians. I haven't penciled all of it out yet, but it's probably going to be a couple of months as we work through these 2 books verse by verse.

Background

Where in the world is Thessalonica?

Well, that's a great question. Remember – Paul would write these letters to a church or a group of churches (Galatians) – he was writing to a family of believers – and these 2 letters are no exception. Thessalonica was a major city in Greece – named after the half sister of Alexander the Great. In northern Greece today.

And, if you're familiar with the book of Acts, you may remember that the apostle Paul took 3 major missionary trips. Risking his life to take the gospel to other nations. And, on this second trip, we read about the founding of the church in Thessalonica:

The founding of the church:

READ Acts 17:1-10

17 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." ⁴ And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. ⁵ But the Jews^[a] were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. ⁶ And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, ⁷ and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." ⁸ And the people and the

city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things.⁹ And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

So – the pattern we have with Paul is that he preaches first in the Jewish synagogue – reasoning with them and persuading them from the Scriptures to see Jesus as Messiah.

And, when the Gospel is preached – people believe – and churches are planted. That's the picture we have in the book of Thessalonians. Paul though, was what we'd call a serial church planter (kind of like a serial entrepreneur). His calling wasn't to plant and then pastor the same church – his calling was to plant, train up a pastor to leave behind and then go plant another church.

So Paul plants this church, and continues in his ministry. He sends Timothy and Silvanus to go check on them, they come back to him with a good report – and Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, about 6 months after planting the church, Paul would write this letter to them – that is inspired Scripture.

PRIMARY THEMES:

So the primary focus of this book is THE CHURCH → and how the Gospel creates, shapes and then sends the church to the mission field. Specifically – what we'll see all over this text starting with tonight's passage:

- What do healthy churches look like
- What does faithfulness in ministry look like for the elders of the church
- Where is the hope of the church
- The Missionary nature of the church

READ 1 Thessalonians 1:1

To the church

- Ekklesia – the assembly
- There were a lot of assemblies in the 1st century context – but there was something unique and extraordinary of the assembly IN GOD OUR FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

IN God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

- Make no mistake – the church isn't a sect of Judaism – even though many of Paul's first converts were in fact Jewish.
- It's an emphasis on the equality of the Father and the Son

Grace and Peace

- Shalom – that whole person well being – a lot is lost in translation

READ 1:2-4

² We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly^[a] mentioning you in our prayers, ³ remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ For we know, brothers^[b] loved by God, that he has chosen you,

We see a pastoral burden that Paul carries for the church at Thessalonica, as well as a starting point – an initial picture – of the church that the Gospel of Jesus Christ (life, death, resurrection) has brought into being.

And hear me – Paul’s confidence is in what GOD has started. Not what he (Paul) has started, not how great a preacher he was. Paul’s only source of confidence was the cross – which points us to the COMPLETE and TOTAL faithfulness of God. The full character of God on display.

V3 – Remembering work of faith, labor of love, steadfastness of hope

- These 3 words so frequently are used together
- Hear what Paul’s writing – he sees and has heard of their faith, hope, and love. The beauty of the gospel is on display, and being seen, in the church at Thessalonica
- Faith – directed toward God
- Love of others
- Hope in the future return of Christ
 - Steadfastness → unwavering, fixed, permanent

- And these are being lived out and on display for the world to see – they are active.

V4 – Loved by God and chosen. Not because they were awesome, or because they were deserving, or because of anything other than the love of God.

So in these opening verses – a picture of the church. The next few verses – how the gospel is received and then passed on to others.

READ V5

4 phrases for us to think about here:

- Word
- Power
- Conviction
- Holy Spirit

The gospel that Paul, Timothy and Silvanus preached to them was in WORD – it has to be spoken. The gospel absolutely has to be spoken. News must be SHARED.

I think Paul is giving us a blueprint for preaching here.

- Words have to be spoken
- But carrying the Power of the Holy Spirit and full conviction

If you look at the Biblical requirements of an elder/pastor – to not be a recent convert. There's a seasoning that is necessary, while a man gains this conviction – a conviction that is fully rooted in the unchanging Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Have you ever heard a message where you didn't think the preacher really believed what he was saying? Now some of that is cultural, and some of it is natural → but regardless of how loudly or softly spoken a pastor is – you can tell when they're just kind of faking it.

Not so with the Apostle Paul – their message came with full conviction, and in V6 he commends the church at Thessalonica for imitating him, and setting an example for all the believers in the region.

Our student group talked a lot about this a few weeks ago – if any of them are on the call tonight, maybe they remember – about living a life for the glory of God that is worth being imitated. Being careful who we imitated and living a life worth imitating. Paul's ministry was being imitated by the church – and they were ringing the bell of the gospel everywhere

READ V8.

The picture here is of a thundering clap that echoes, or maybe a blasting trumpet. I went to high school with this dude named Danny Williamson. He could scream through his trumpet – these ear-piercing high notes – higher than any of the other kids in our band groups – and let me tell you, you could hear it. We jokingly called him Ralph. Ralph on the double G. You could probably have heard him outside the building in the parking lot, it was such a screaming sound.

What Paul’s commending the church here – is built on the God-centeredness of this church – and their commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ – the whole area could see them and Paul didn’t need to say anything.

John Stott calls this “Holy Gossip” the most effective evangelism tool the church has ever had – the excited transmission of the impact the Gospel is having on people.

READ V9-10

How they lived accompanied their message – SHARE AND SHOW.

Closing – Here’s a question for you – Can anyone hear your trumpet? Maybe a better question though, is what trumpet are you playing?