

1 Thessalonians 1:1 - 10 The grace and peace of God's elect ones.

Legacy Standard Bible

1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. 2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ before our God and Father, 4 knowing, brothers beloved by God, your election, 5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full assurance; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. 9 For they themselves report about us what kind of an entrance we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

Well, I didn't expect to spend 3 weeks in chapter 1 of 1 Thessalonians but the Lord has graciously given us two rich studies in these opening words so far and we thank Him for this mornings rich truths.

To re-cap very briefly, Timothy has brought good news, encouraging news to Paul about the infant church in Thessalonica, and Paul in turn has burst out in prayer and praise to God for them.

My mom worked for many years in neo-natal nurseries where the tiny babies were challenged to try to hang onto life by a thread because of whatever was wrong. Usually they were premies. Pre-mature birth for one reason or another, and they would get put in temperature controlled plastic bassinets and be monitored and fed as they struggled to survive.

This church is the anti-thesis of that scenario. It was born to thrive, and lost its life support almost immediately. Paul and Timothy and Silas were whisked away for their own survival and the church was left to sink or swim. Thrive or perish. And news has come back that it is thriving beautifully.

How do we know that. Well, there's evidence. Lots of hard evidence that this church is the real deal. We looked at that last week. We discovered that the universal evidence that a church is a legitimate work of God is threefold. We saw Paul give the same evidences in various other places besides Thessalonica.

They have a living faith. A faith that isn't just speak, it's a faith that does. A faith that is visible in the works that God is doing through them and with them. God is working through their faith to accomplish things that men cannot do. Only God can cause new life. Growth. Advancement into Satan's kingdom. They are gaining ground for God's kingdom and Satan is losing ground to them. When God works through faith and does that, that's hard evidence.

Next they have the evidence of love caused labor. They are working hard for the advancement of the kingdom of Jesus, and their motivation is love for Him and for each other. That's also hard evidence.

And finally they are doing what they're doing because of the hope they have that Jesus will return and rescue them from this condemned and perishing world. They long for Jesus. They are longing for the day when He returns and receives them to Himself, and rules the whole earth.

Faith, Hope, and Love. Universal to all true Christians from that day until this day. Those hard evidences define a church as a true legitimate work of God.

But in these next verses to the end of the first chapter Paul is going to

recount what happened with them and some of the results, sort of as evidence of the evidence. It's almost as if Paul is saying, we knew it was the real deal because of what happened in the short time we were there. It was obvious. God is in this. God is doing this.

5a . . . for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full assurance;

Faith, Hope, and Love are quantifiable evidences. Everybody who came in contact with these folks could see the changes. In these next verses Paul is going to give further evidence that we might categorize as unquantifiable.

You can't see the wind. But if it knocks a tree down on your house, that's quantifiable. You can't see electricity. But if it knocks you on your butt or kills you, that's quantifiable. That's kind of what Paul is doing in these verses.

Paul says, here's more evidence. When we came to you and gave you the gospel, it wasn't just some guys with words. We all know the old saying. Words are cheap. Talk is cheap. Everybody's got words. Especially these days. Blah blah blah. Talking heads. Words mean nothing.

Paul reminds them, we came to you and it was more than words. Everybody knew that. Paul starts talking and it's like the commercial with the guy in the chair and his hair is getting blown back and the chair is skidding towards the door.

Paul came to town, and it wasn't just Paul. We know from other records that Paul was less than intimidating to look at. We have a non-biblical reference of Paul that reads thus;

There, Onesiphorus sees Paul as “a man small of stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked, full of friendliness; for now he appeared like a man, and now he had the face of an angel.

That's how we picture him. He didn't walk into a room and cause a hush because of his stature or looks. Listen to his description of his entrance to the people at Corinth;

1 Corinthians 2:1 And when I came to you, brothers, I did not come with superiority of word or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the witness of God. 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, 4 and my word and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith would not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

The Corinthians described him as thus; *“His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible.”*

A little balding hook-nosed ugly man with eyebrows that meet in the middle shows up and his speaking style is contemptible, and yet, when he opens up the words of God, backed by the power of the Holy Spirit of God, the effect was definitely, your hair got blown back.

Paul writes to the Romans; *1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

The power isn't in the speaker. God purposely loves to pick the most unremarkable men to be His speakers. Any mouth will do . . . if . . . and only if the power of the Holy Spirit is the force behind the word of God. And that's exactly Paul's point here in vs 5a.

5a . . . for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full assurance;

Three weeks in the synagogue and there was no neutral territory. Either

you were swept into the kingdom or you were compelled to expel Paul from the district. That's what happened. Full assurance.

When the Spirit is doing that, there's no doubt in your mind. Paul was just along for the ride. And what a ride!

5b just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

What kind of men were they that was completely evident to the Thessalonians. Well, they weren't on the take. Their motivation wasn't popularity with men or monetary gain. So that rules out just about everybody else that showed up with some message.

Paul worked hard as a tent maker. He wanted to be able to offer the gospel free of charge. He didn't come with schemes to fleece his hearers of their money. On the contrary, He came asking nothing, only to be the deliverer of good news.

That is contrary to how this world rolls. When hucksters come to town they've always got one motivation. Whatever their particular method or legitimacy of their offerings, they have no love for you, they want what they can get for themselves. Period. That's the human condition.

Paul was trying to go elsewhere and God directed him to Macedonia in a dream. When he gets there, he has nothing but God's love and God's free gift to offer them. And as soon as you take that gift you are immediately Paul's brother, and Paul works night and day to give you the shirt off of his back.

Anyone can see, that's other worldly. They knew Paul didn't come to take, he came to give, and what he gives is more valuable than all the gold of this world.

Trouble breaks out and Paul is so tenacious in his selfless giving that it would soon cost him his life. Paul is literally willing to give up his life for their welfare. But God has other stuff for Paul to do and the brethren who weren't brethren a month ago, hustle Paul to safety for his own good.

Paul's example to them is three-fold. He has a faith that works. Night and day. Paul's motivation is to give others the gospel. For free. His faith is working through love. He says, *For the love of Christ constrains us, because we are convinced that One died for all* The love of Christ constrains us. 2 Cor. 5:14 Paul's motivation is that he is a slave who wants to please his master because of his love for the master.

Faith working through love because hope for a better world motivates them forward at any cost, even death, which Paul knows is in God's sovereign control anyways. No fear for his own safety. Love works. That's Paul's example to these folks at Thessalonica.

just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

Vs 6 Having become the real deal, actual legit christians, those characteristics of Pauls that are from a different world, become theirs. They saw how Paul lived out his faith, and they became imitators.

The greek word for imitators is; mimētai. We get our word mimic. They copy Paul. Paul's example is impossible to ignore. He's like no one else they've ever met. Selfless. Loves them. Helps them at his great cost. Otherworldly. And with Jesus living inside their hearts, they are like little children who copy mom or copy dad. Little mimics.

And they immediately have something important in common with Paul. Trouble. As soon as they sign up to belong to Jesus, trouble descends on them. The jews who were in enmity against Paul come after the new christians. Trouble. Ostracized and shunned. Locked out of culture,

family, career, everything. Trouble.

The sign of good seeds in good soil is fruit. The value of what they have gained, Christ in you, the hope of glory, far exceeds the trouble of this world. They *received the word in much affliction*

Who does that? When trouble comes, the wheat and the tares are revealed. One group says, I didn't sign up for this, and they're gone. And the wheat group says, what I gained is more valuable than anything this world can offer, and they remain steadfast in trouble.

But guess what. With trouble from the outside, joy from the inside. *having received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit*

The value of the peace and joy of relationship with Jesus exceeds all of the loss this world can throw at you in it's hatred. We may become more expert on that truth in the future. That pot is boiling as we speak.

What happens when real born again called out of this world into the kingdom of God Christians copy Paul's faith working through a Godly love and a hope that transcends all of the normal values of this world? Vss. 7 & 8 result;

7 so that you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.

The single Greek word that our translators need three words for, *has sounded forth* is *exēchētai*. It's a powerful word meaning loudness beyond the norm with perfect clarity.

Growing up in San Fernando, I lived about 1.4 miles away from a drag strip in the era of innocence before giant money got involved. Like 1965. You could hear those things screaming down the drag strip from that distance.

But in between runs, you could hear the booming loud speakers of the announcer speaking. You couldn't understand him at that distance but you could hear it.

That's what this word means. Broadcast in the purest sense. From these christians at Thessalonica, the word of the Lord was being broadcast in all directions. Remember they were on a main highway with travelers going all over the world passing through their region. On the highway from Asia minor to Rome and all places beyond.

They were models to copy, because they copied Paul, and Paul copied Jesus. Need a model christian to copy, to mimic. These folks were the models. And they were broadcasting christianity all over the place. Satan's worst nightmare

Paul says we have no need to say anything. Just do what you're doing. Tweak it so you can do what you do, even more. You can't do it better, the only possibility perhaps is do it even more.

in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.

Most of Paul's letters were correctives. The Corinthians had multiple problem areas to address. Paul wrote them 4 letters. We have 2. The Galatians were the most dangerous problem. They had changed the gospel itself and made it ineffectual. Drained the power out of the gospel. Changed to a new gospel that saved no one. Work your way to heaven.

All of Paul's letters have elements of correction. Same with Peter's and John's and Jude and James. Correctives. Only to these christians does Paul get to say, you guys are models. You copied me and I copied Christ. Don't change a thing.

9 For they themselves report about us what kind of an entrance we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true

God,

Who is the they themselves here? It's all of the people everywhere in other places who have been directly affected by the Thessalonian Christians and Paul gets somewhere he's never been to, and the folks there are telling him all about himself.

The story has gone everywhere, from the Thessalonians, how Paul came to them, how they believed, how the Holy Spirit came to them, how they became Christians, and how you can to.

Paul shows up some place and the new folks are saying, we've heard the whole story about how you got to Thessalonica and how there was unbelievable affliction and trouble, and how God did a mighty work there, and how God built a Christian church there. How those folks left their idols, yes, their very lives behind in order to know and serve the true God. It's obviously real.

How would you like to be that kind of a church. Other people in other places know you by name and are talking about the miraculous impact you've had on them because of the impact God had on folks using your ministry.

You show up in some town and the folks are like, we heard about you already from what God did with you at Thessalonica. Those folks there have impacted us here, before you even got here.

Everybody was talking about Thessalonica. What God did there and the ministry that continued there was newsworthy. Their impact was growing and continuing. People were talking. That's also an evidence. Is anyone talking about our impact. Is God doing a work here that is causing people in other places to know about it and talk about it. The news about Thessalonica and how God did a mighty work there was beating Paul to his next towns.

and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God

Faith, hope, love, effort, focus. These folks were focused on a single common goal. The living God. See the word turned. The focus of their effort had been worldly before. Individually focused on . . . whatever they had been focused on.

Money. Wealth. Fame. Sex. Stuff. Whatever it was. Those are idols. Anything that replaces straining your total faith, hope, love, effort, and focus on God, is an idol.

These folks all had mixed backgrounds, all had different focus' in this world. Until God called them out of this world. Suddenly, all of that idolatry, all of that focus on other things is focused on the Kingdom of God. They turned from serving that multiplicity of idols to serving God.

We have to ask ourselves; I'm preaching to myself now, I'm not off of this hook by any means, we have to individually and corporately take inventory and ask ourselves; What is the main thing? If I take an inventory of my thoughts, my loves, my bank account, my motivation, my effort, and I come up with a sum total that is NOT God and His kingdom, then whatever it is that my life is working towards, is an idol. There's no middle ground.

There is an old term, the warp and woof of my life. And it comes from weave of fabric. The threads going one direction are the warp, and the other threads that weave through the warp are the woof. Depending on colors and weight and type etc. the whole thing combines to become a fabric that is distinct.

Is the warp and woof of my life, the fabric created from all of the combined motivation and love and effort, is it advancing the glory of God in this world, or is it just me building my empire for the glory and comfort of . . . me?

If it's the latter, then we have not turned away from idols to serve the living

and true God. That's serious stuff. That can likely explain why nobody's talking about Tonopah Community Church. It can also explain why Satan's kingdom is not feeling any stress or challenge from the christian community in Tonopah, Nevada. We aren't a problem.

Finally, Paul says;

10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

There is a cryptic message here for those who will read between the lines. Paul's message when he got to Thessalonica was something like this:

The entire world has fallen into sin and is condemned. God's judgement on this world has already been spoken, condemned in sin, and the whole world waits for the verdict to be carried out.

Remember Noah? God judged the entire world population and He has promised to do it again, not with water, but with fire. The verdict is in place, the tidal wave is 1/4 of a mile away, and it's about to roll over this world. Total condemnation. Total judgement. Read the prophets. It's all there.

But like in Noah's case, God has provided a way of escape. Jesus, the righteous one, has died in your place, He offers you His righteousness and His death is sufficient to pay the complete price of your sins. On the third day He burst out of the grave, alive from the dead.

And He is gathering a remnant out of this world to be His own possession. Believe in those truths and cry out to Him to take you out of the condemned to be His possession, under His Lordship. In other words, get into Jesus, just like Noah and his family got into that ark. Ride out the coming storm, In Him

With that message read again the words in vs. 10. They had turned to the

living and true God, in vs. 9 in order to;

10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

The modern church has lost Paul's message. Nobody is worried about the wrath to come. Nobody needs rescuing. Nobody is aware of any danger of judgment. And thus, nobody is waiting for the hope of a returning rescuer.

At Thessalonica these believers thought the coming judgement and return of Jesus would happen in their lifetimes. Get into the Ark, NOW, because the tidal wave is coming. Quickly!

Here is a little group of people huddled together, at great cost, their lives forever altered by walking away **from** the status quo, **TO** Jesus, trouble crashing around them, who have the joy of the Holy Spirit instead of their old idols they left behind, and they're literally waiting for Jesus to return and rescue them from the wrath that is coming.

20 centuries have come and gone. Nothing has changed. That tidal wave is still a quarter of a mile off shore. God's judgment is still imminent. Today could be the day. But we have become dulled. Admit it.

Isaiah 56:12 speaks of the sinful leadership in Israel. What did they say then? The same thing we say today:

“Come,” they say, “let us get wine, and let us drink heavily of strong drink; And tomorrow will be like today, only more so.”

Tomorrow will be like today, only more so. After 20 centuries the dulled church has adopted the same belief. Tomorrow will be like today, only more so. We claim we don't believe that, but do we live like a tidal wave is a quarter mile off shore, or do we live like tomorrow will be like today, only more so?

Beloved, the reason Carl wanted to detour to this book is because we need this reminder, this wake up call. We read the signs of the times in the news and we'll see later in this very book that Paul says we are to discern where we are at on this timeline of God's wrath by what is happening around us. Time is almost up. Carl believes that. I do too.

The world thinks tomorrow will be just like today, but there is a high chance that it won't be. We've got a guy talking about using his arsenal of nuclear weapons and a supreme court justice nominee who cannot define what a woman is.

how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

There is only one name who can rescue people from the imminent wrath to come. Jesus, who rose from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, and who will soon come and rescue His own from this world, and after that happens, wrath will come to all who remain here.

Destined for salvation not wrath.

Arguments FOR the rapture

1Thess5:9 For God has not appointed us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

1Thess1:10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.