

COMMENDED

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT:

- The church at Thessalonica was established on Paul's second missionary journey.
- Barnabus had gone with Paul on his first missionary trip. Why was he not with Paul on his second? Silas was with him and Timothy joined them at Lystra.
- At Troy Paul had planned to go into Asia but the Holy Spirit would not let him.
- In a dream, God sent a Macedonian man begging Paul to come over and help them. So the next day they crossed over to Philippi.
- In Acts 17 they come to Thessalonica. This city was the major city in Macedonia and had a population of about 200,000 according to one source. They had a sea port on the Aegean Sea and the Egnatian Way went through the city. A Roman road from Rome to the Orient. There was also a large population of Jews there as well. Thessalonica was one of the wealthiest and most flourishing trade centers in the Roman Empire.
- They were there less than a month and left for Berea during the night because of persecution.
- Paul went to Athens and eventually to Corinth while Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea, but joined Paul again at Corinth. Timothy was able to report to Paul that the Christians in Thessalonica were not succumbing to persecution but were standing firm and propagating the Gospel.
- Paul writes his first letter to them around 51 AD after getting Timothy's report. It is among the first of the known epistles from Paul.

PARTNERSHIP! Read 1 Thess. 1:1

1. How do partnerships advance God's kingdom? (We can support and encourage each other. Jesus chose twelve disciples to partner with Him in ministry and carry on after He ascended. Every believer is essential to the body of Christ.)
2. Paul seemed to always have someone with him on his Missionary trips. Why do you think that was the case? (He was mentoring them and passing along what God had taught him about spreading the Gospel.)

In 2 Tim. 2:2 Paul challenges Timothy to pass along the things he had learned to reliable people who could then pass it on. William Barclay has said, **"Every Christian must look on himself as a link between two generations."**

3. When we think of church, we tend to think of a building. How did they think of church back in Paul's day? (The Body of Believers. Ekklesia in Greek means "Called-out group" not just the church but over time it seemed to take on the definition of "Church.")

We as believers are the "called out ones" by God the Father.

"Grace and peace" was a common greeting, especially among Christians during Paul's day.

4. Who has influenced you the most in your life?
5. Who are you working to mentor today?

EVIDENCE! Read 1 Thess. 1:2-5a

1. What evidence of their conversion did Paul see and mention in his prayers? (Verse 3)
2. To what evidence might a person point as proof of salvation? (Transformed lives evidenced by their actions.)

The church members knew that God's Spirit was working in and through them because He was actively and powerfully changing them individually and collectively as a church.

3. How do faith, love, and hope inspire Christian service? (Christian service is tangible evidence of the gospel's power. Faith in Christ initiates living for Him. The greatest commandments are loving God and loving others—Matt. 22:37-39. Hope in Christ's imminent return sustains believers and motivates us to share the gospel.)
4. **Read verse 5a** again. How does sharing the gospel involve more than mere words? (God's power, not man's, changes hearts. God's power manifests when the gospel is shared; miracles happen. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, reveals God's righteousness, and judgment against Satan—John 16:8-9.)

The work of the Holy Spirit is not only instrumental in salvation but in transformed lives after salvation occurs.

Notice how these Christians endured and influenced, despite severe persecution.

INFLUENCE! Read. 1 Thess. 5b-8

1. How did Paul, Silas and Timothy conduct themselves while they were in Thessalonica? (They demonstrated how the Christian life was to be lived. It is remarkable that they were there just over three weeks and yet had a profound impact on the lives of the new converts.)

These new Christians desperately needed to know how they were to live out this new found freedom in Christ.

2. How would you define the importance of modeling the Christian life?
New Christians are looking for examples of what it means to walk by faith, love God, love others, grow in the Lord, etc. We must show them this life is not just around church members or at home with my family. It is to be lived out at home, at work, at church, in bad times and good times. It is a total lifestyle transformation from the inside out by the Holy Spirit in all areas of life.
3. Paul commended them for modeling their lives after him and the LORD. How comfortable would you be saying to a new believer, "Just follow my example and you will be fine."?
4. What was the result of them living a life committed to the Lord in the face of persecution? (They became an example for Christ to all in Macedonia and Achaia AND every other places their faith in God had gone out. Because of their strategic location, perhaps they were talked about in the known world!!)
5. What is the value of a model who continues to proclaim Christ despite risk?
6. How is suffering for the sake of the gospel worth the outcome? (The Scripture tells us we can anticipate suffering for the cause of Christ—1 Thess. 2:14; 3:3-4; 1 Pet. 4:12-13. Sufferers for the gospel are encouraged to rejoice and to glorify God for their status in Christ. We shall spend eternity with Jesus!)

7. What is the value of a good reputation? What is its role in influencing others for Christ? (We are called to be Christlike in character, conduct, and conversation. People are drawn to, or influenced not to receive the gospel, through both the collective and individual behavior of the Christian community.)
8. How far does your influence for the gospel reach?
9. How can you expand that influence?

PURPOSE! Read 1 Thess. 1:9-10

1. What evidence of transformed lives do we see in these verses?
2. Why do you think people are reluctant to give up their idols and turn to the true and living God? (Today, idols are more than statues. To admire or have devotion for anything or anyone more than God is idolatry.)

Very few people today would admit to idolatry even though there is something or someone who is more important to them than God. I heard someone say the other day that they had a lot of CEOs in their church. I thought that's not unusual. They went on to say these CEOs were Christmas and Easter Only members. They may not confess it but they worship the idol of convenience.

3. What does it mean to actively wait for Jesus' return? (Jesus instructed His followers to spread the gospel throughout the earth while we wait. Waiting is not idleness. Believers are to be actively working to reach others for God's kingdom.)

"You will have many chances to disciple someone—to show them the path to Jesus. Try to be alert and take advantage of every one. No effort is more important. Who is watching you today, ready to walk in your footprints?"—Max Lucado

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE!

1. How is our church similar to the Thessalonians?
2. How is our church different from the Thessalonians?
3. What role are you willing to take to make an impact for the sake of the gospel?

We cannot live lives separated from our society and expect to have an impact for Christ. Our lives must be different—living for Christ in the midst of the fray we find ourselves in. We must live lives founded on the TRUTH of God's Word while demonstrating God's love to those around us. We have to proclaim God's love without being judgmental. The world thinks we hate them when we only hate the things they do but love them. We must show it!

"In 2009, a Barna Group study found that 41 percent of self-proclaimed Christians believe that "the Bible, the Koran and the Book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same spiritual truths" despite the books' vastly contradictory teachings on truth, salvation, and the nature of God. And only 46 percent of born-again adults believe in the existence of absolute moral truth." —Ray Comfort

Someone is not being disciple!