

This study most appropriately begins in **Act 17:1-15** where we see that Paul, Silas (aka Sylvanus), and Timothy first reach Thessalonica. (The same 3 men in **1Th 1:1**.) As a side note, I have given the Thessalonians a bad rap in the past by generalizing their acceptance and study of the word when comparing them with the Bereans. Need to be a little clearer in that assessment. The problem was with the Thessalonian Jews there, not the church in general. Paul left the Thessalonians in the midst of heavy persecution. We understand the timing of this letter because we know Paul was concerned about them while in Athens and sent Timothy to check on them in **1Th 3:1-2**. In **1Th 3:6**, Timothy returns, an event that takes place while Paul has moved on to Corinth in **Act 18:1-5**. So, this letter comes while he's in Corinth AFTER hearing of their state from Timothy.

Having known them only a few months, Paul says regarding their spiritual state, "I know you're elected!" (**v. 4**) Read **1Th 1:3-10** to see the evidences leading to this conclusion.

- 1) Working faith (**v. 3**) – This reveals true faith (**Jam 2:17-20**). Like faith in **Heb 11**; it was active!
- 2) Loving labor (**v. 3**) – There are many that will labor, doing a lot, but with what motive? Many who do so only do so for their own gain. Faith works how per **Gal 5:6**? Some are incapable of serving as instructed in **Gal 5:13**. The faith and works of **1Co 13:1-3** are of no profit without love!
- 3) Hopeful patience (**v. 3**) – These don't give up, but patiently press on because of hope in the Lord! The labor in our last point doesn't wear out according to **Rom 2:7** because there is a hope beyond this life! There's no doubt that the Lord will save. If things get tough, there is a calm assurance that the Lord will not forsake. They have hope, so they are patient, not anxious. **Isa 40:30-31** "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." True hope in the Lord produces patience!
- 4) Effectual preaching (**v. 5**) – This verse is about preachers' experience as the word went forth (see end). One thing we are assured of concerning those hungering and thirsting after righteousness is that they shall be filled (**Mat 5:6**). The apostle had assurance of their election because of the preaching done among them. It was powerful, Spirit-led, and in assurance (or "entire confidence"). Paul said, "I knew God was feeding you through me! The time I spent among you was one in which I was clearly led by the Spirit and confident in what God would have me to say." Not just once, but repeatedly among them, the preaching was powerful. True belief among the congregation prompts a mighty work in the pulpit. The opposite is also true in **Mat 13:58**. Paul said that wasn't the case in Thessalonica, but the word was effectual (**1Th 2:13**).
- 5) Godly imitators (**v. 6**) – Now we begin to see the experience of the congregation as the word was preached. They followed the pattern of godly men and so were in fact following the Lord. Paul said in **1Co 11:1**: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ." The Thessalonians were looking for others obedient to God and were imitators of them per **1Th 2:14**. Who do you pattern yourself after? Who do you want to be like? Is it the rich and famous, the talented, the wise men of the earth? Are you driven by a desire to be recognized as they are? Do you copy their style, their mannerisms, etc. Or are you more interested in being like that humble, lowly saint serving God with no desire for anyone to notice? Are you patterning yourself after those that are in Christ's pattern

in **Php 2:7-8**? The evidence of being a son is that you are an imitator of the Father (**Joh 5:19**)! We can't say it in the perfection that Christ could, but in one sense, though imperfect, when people see us, they should see the Father!

- 6) Joyous affliction (**v. 6**) – This doesn't come from Adam!! This wasn't short-lived and easy; it's described as "much," yet their joy was steadfast. There were no stony-ground hearers who "when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." (**Mat 13:21**) Just being afflicted was evidence of spiritual life (**2Ti 3:12**), but the fact that they rejoiced in it was especially telling! There's something different about a person that will pray and sing praises to God after being beaten and thrown into prison. (**Act 16:23-26**) like Paul and Silas. After being beaten and forbidden to preach Christ, the apostles rejoiced they were deemed worthy to suffer shame for Christ's name (**Act 5:41**). 1) Rejoice b/c a privilege. 2) Rejoice b/c of effect (**Jam 1:2-3**)
- 7) Living examples (**v. 7**) – The natural result of point 5 (imitating godly men), is that we become examples for others to follow. There's an issue if we don't progress to this point. The Hebrews are rebuked in **Heb 5:12** for only being students (followers) and not teachers (examples). Paul told the Corinthians that they were living epistles known and read of all men (**2Co 3:2**). For a true believer, the word not only gets into his head but also his manner of life. The fact that others are looking to them as a pattern reveals growth and maturity, the evidence of life (**Eph 4:12-15**).
- 8) Outward confession (**v. 8**) – True salvation isn't only a heart experience. It begins inwardly but progresses outwardly (**Rom 10:10**). Paul didn't have to tell others of their faith. The word of God was like a geyser rushing out of them! When your heart is fixed on something, your mouth will declare it ("out of abundance of heart..."). If you met Christ while He was walking around on this earth, you'd hear the word! Shouldn't our love for Him and our concern for the souls around us prompt the same? **2Co 5:11** says the fear of God should cause us to try and persuade others. Persuade them of what? To be reconciled to God! Christ isn't physically here any longer so, we are to plead on His behalf or in His stead! (**v. 5:20**) (hold place in **2Co 5**)
- 9) New creation (**v. 9**) – Some turn to God but not away from idols. That's not regeneration (**2Co 5:17**)! The one looking back isn't fit for the kingdom (**Luk 9:62**). Jesus said in **Luk 14:33**, you must forsake all you have to be His disciple. The Thessalonians did! To be clear, if you're outside of Christ, I have not been given you a list of steps to salvation, a set of rules to keep. This point is where you begin your journey with the Lord. We could whittle this verse down to a single word: repentance. That's where you start, turning from your idols to God, confessing your sin and crying out to God for mercy. I don't want you to hear the list of items mentioned and say, "Yeah, I need to do better in that area." No! Coming to Christ means confessing you can't do better. It means admitting you've fallen short. It means recognizing you need God to forgive you, to save you. He will put His Spirit in you, THEN you can do these.
- 10) Waiting pilgrims (**v. 10**) – The idea conveyed here is one of not simply waiting but a longing for the Lord Jesus. Interlinear translates, "eagerly to await His Son". They are as Paul in **Php 1:23** in their desire and as the faithful in **Heb 11:16**. **Rev 22:20b** expresses the cry of their hearts!

Note, Paul didn't say stop here. Read **1Th 4:1** to see we need to abound more and more!