

Sermon Notes

1 Thessalonians 1: 1 – 4

27 Jan 2019

1) Reason for series on First Thessalonians

Many – Hallelujah! We're going to deal with Eschatology

Rapture Question

Anti-Christ – who is he really?

To be sure – these epistles touch on Eschatology

Every chapter in 1 Thessalonians concludes with a reference to 2nd Coming, many ref's in 2 Thess

BUT – Eschatology is not Paul's primary purpose for writing to the Thessalonians

Our approach throughout this series is to answer 3 questions:

- 1) What does this text/passage teach me about Christ?
- 2) What does this teach me about myself? My neighbor? My church?
 - a. What changes to my life do I need to make?
- 3) How do these things both bring glory to God?

Passage: (ESV)

¹ Paul, 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, 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

I. To Whom was the letter written – The Church at Thessalonica

- Thessalonica
 - o Located on the major “interstate highway” between Rome and the East (Constantinople-Byzantium)
 - o Located on a deep-water port – therefore a major trading city
 - o Established about 12 years after death of Alexander the Great
 - o Supported the “right side” in Roman Wars (1 Cent BC) therefore earned “independent city status in the Roman Empire
- Paul
 - o 49 BC – Jerusalem Council – dealing with Judaizing
 - o 2nd Missionary journey
 - Acts 16:9 – “Come over to Macedonia to help us” vision
 - 51 AD – Paul sails to Macedonia
 - Established church in Philippi (Lydia, jailer) – asked to leave the city
 - o Luke left there – Luke 17:1 (transition from “we” to “they”)
 - On to Thessalonica – establishes church – asked to leave
 - o “turning the world upside down” with the Gospel (Acts 17:6)
 - On to Berea – believers examine the scriptures
 - On to Athens (Timothy, Silas left in Berea – Acts 16:15)
 - o Great presentation of the Gospel to unbelievers in Acts 17
 - On to Corinth
 - o Stayed there for 1 ½ years
 - o Wrote both Thessalonian letters there
 - 53 AD – Returned to Jerusalem/Antioch from 2nd Miss Journey
- Point –
 - o The Apostle Paul initially spent no more than a couple of months in Thessalonica
 - o In that time

- He worked to support himself
- He “ticked off” the Jews because he took many of their Gentile proselytes (God fearers) and leading women (so much that the Jews followed him to Berea)
- He developed an intense bond with the Thessalonian believers
 - **NOTE: the letters we have in written form were sent to a group of believers who had only been in the faith for a little time (no more than a year to year and a half)

Text

I. v.1 – From Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy

- Silas – replaced Barnabus for 2nd Miss Journey
- Timothy – picked up in Lystra (from 1st Miss Journey)
- Luke had been left in Philippi
- Silas and Timothy left in Berea
 - Joined Paul in Athens
 - Sent back to Thessalonica for encouragement
 - Now back in Corinth w/ good report of how Thess Christians were doing
- Some commentators – Paul is responding to written request of questions to answer (maybe/maybe not – no biblical data)
 - “Now – as to . . .” (4:9, 5:1)
 - Other abrupt change of topic

II. Paul’s Rejoicing in Thanksgiving (v. 2 – 3)

- Constantly (ESV v.2) bearing in mind – your work of faith
 - Your labor of love
 - The steadfastness of your hope
 - Apparently – Paul is really appreciative of the wonderful works that the Thess believers have done, their great evidence of faith
 - NOTE: **Paul is thanking God for the things the Thess believers had or had done**
 - Normally one thanks the person who has done something for them
 - Thanks for opening the door
 - Thanks for returning my call
 - Thanks for mowing my grass
 - This is correct
 - God is actually behind the faith, love, hope that the Thess believers have
 - Yet, they are the ones doing the works and labor
 - To be sure
 - The believers are the ones doing the work
 - God is the one whom Paul is thanking
 - NOTE: this is the essence of biblical Christianity
 - Paul puts it much plainer in Philippians 2:12 – 13
 - You always obeyed . . . therefore continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling
 - Not the Old Covenant fear and trembling
 - “I’d better do this or God will “get” me”
 - But New Covenant fear and trembling
 - “I can’t help but to do this because of all that God has done for me!”
 - (New Covenant motivation) – because God is working in my both to will and do (work) according to His good pleasure!”
 - Paul is saying what the 19th Century hymn writer said (#466 – Red)
 - I sought the LORD and afterward I knew
 - He moved my soul to seek Him (as He was) seeking me
- v. 3 – I find, I walk, I love, but O the whole of love
is but an answer, LORD, to Thee.

III. The Basis for Paul's Thanks (v. 4)

- "knowing, beloved of God, His choice of you"
- Knowing – different Greek word
 - o (*oida*) – having a full understanding
 - o (*ginosko*) – gaining a knowledge of
 - John 8:55 – (Jesus to the Pharisees) "you have not come to know (*ginosko* – gaining knowledge) Him but I know (*oida* – full, deep understanding) Him"
- The Apostle Paul makes a reference to the deeper understanding of the results of their faith which works, love which labors, and hope which gives steadfastness
 - o He knows (full understanding) that the whole of what the Thessalonians are experiencing is rooted and founded in God's eternal purpose –
 - Which flows from Him in His Electing Grace
 - (2 Thess 2:13) p Paul tells the Thess's again that they were "chosen from the beginning for (*eis*) salvation through (*en*) sanctification

The point for us

- Where God is working His perfect, eternal plan out, all these things come together
- The evidence that the faith of the Thessalonian believers is genuine, God-wrought faith is that it "oozes out of every pore" of their bodies, minds, etc.
 - o Their faith issues forth in works
 - As James puts it – it is a faith which is demonstrated by the works it does
 - It is the faith which produces works
 - Not as the Roman Catholic theology teaches that through works we earn salvation
 - We are not saved by our works, but by grace through faith
 - Yet our faith is working
 - For that faith, the Apostle Paul thanks God for
 - And their labor flows from love
 - Which was planted in their hearts by God in the first place
 - And the hope that is engendered
 - Hope – the forward-looking ability
 - It produces endurance which sustains the believer

Next time – we'll see that all of this was happening in the midst of great tribulation
Yet the Spirit of God within them produced joy (how is that possible?)

Question – "How can I know that I'm an elect of God?"

- 1) Election is God's business
- 2) Your business is to believe in Him and be living a life which
 - a. Pursues holiness
 - b. Works in faith
 - c. Exercises love toward God and others (your neighbor)
 - d. Experiences steadfastness and endurance because of the hope that is within you
- 3) Others will recognize the grace of God within you (as Paul did the Thessalonians)
 - a. As you live out your faith
 - b. Work out your salvation
 - c. As your hope for the future gives you endurance for the present

The purpose of our even knowing about election is to encourage our souls (and the souls of others)

It gives us hope when things are challenging

It enables us to see God's Hand when we wonder "What on earth is going on?"

It helps us to see our place in God's Eternal Plan

It reminds us that God has not forsaken His promises

Does this thrill your soul?