

Knowing Your Election ó Part II  
(I Thess. 1:7-10)  
By Randy Wages  
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

- I. **Introduction:** Today we will be continuing our consideration of I Thess., chapter 1 in this, the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of a 2 part series titled, “Knowing Your Election.” Those of you who were here last week heard Part I of this series and if you missed it, I would encourage you to get a copy of that message so that you get a better sense of the full context of these verses, I Thess. 1:4-10. Here Paul cites the reasons he could say to these believers at Thessalonica that he, Silas, and Timothy gave thanks to God for them, referring to them as brethren, beloved of God, knowing of their election by God as we read in verse 4.

Today, we will be focusing our attention on verses 7-10; however, to capture the fuller context, let us refresh our memories by begin our reading back in verse 4.

As I pointed out last week, verse 4 is the closing of a sentence that actually began back in verse 2. That is, from vs. 2 this would read, “*We give thanks to God always for you all*, (and the thought continuing into vs. 4), “*Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.*” And you will recall I pointed out last week that the literal reading of the verse would be, “Knowing, [brethren ó beloved of (or by) God], your election.”

(Continue reading vss. 5-6).

And this brings us to our text for today and once again, as we continue in verse 7:

- II. Verse 7: “*So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.*”
- A. Note the verse begins with the word, “*So...*” In essence, Paul is saying, “I know you are the beloved of God, the elect, chosen unto salvation in Christ for the reasons cited in verses 5 & 6, as you identified with our Gospel.” And now he cites further evidences as he adds, “*So that ye were ensamples to all that believe...*”
- B. Now the word “ensamples” is translated from a Greek word referring to a die, a stamp, a pattern, and as such ó an identifying characteristic. And here he tells them, we know your election because as “ensamples,” you possess the identifying characteristics of all that believe. You fit the pattern and acted in accordance with these identifying characteristics of true believers.

II. B. Verse 7, “ensamples” (Con’t.):

1. Last week I briefly mentioned this verse to show how all of these descriptions are just as relevant to us today as they were to these Thessalonian believers and likewise to the elect in every generation. It’s for this reason, we can know that the gospel comes to all of God’s elect, “... **not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance**” <and they too receive> **the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:...**” as we studied last week.
  2. You, know kin folks often bear some resemblance. And here we see that all of those who are translated into the kingdom, as children of the king, spiritually having a kinsman redeemer in Christ, their Substitute, bear resemblance to one another, fitting the pattern of others who believe ó as we read here, even “...**to all that believe...**” So I believe the sense here is that all of God’s elect (when possessed with God-given faith) are ensamples with these identifying characteristics. And as such, unless and until we also possess these identifying characteristics, we have no warrant to presume ourselves to be among the beloved of God as one of His elect.
  3. Many of you are familiar with Christ’s words in the Sermon on the Mount when He said, “**Ye are the salt of the earth...**” and “**Ye are the light of the world.**” That is not an encouragement for believers to try to be salt and light, but rather it is a statement that they are. As redeemed, born again sinners, they have been translated out of darkness into the marvelous light of His kingdom and while they there are certainly degrees of growth in grace and knowledge and while believers remain afflicted with the presence of sin throughout their lives on this earth; nonetheless they are light, and salt, and ensamples. They possess these characteristics.
- C. And notice that in the opening phrase of verse 8, it says that they “...**sounded out the word of the Lord...**” That is they sounded out the specific Gospel message that had come to them in power. This too is an identifying characteristic of believers.
1. You see, if you truly care about anyone, and know with certainty that they are in danger, your automatic reaction will be to sound a word of warning to them. If a house is on fire and in danger of collapsing, you are compelled to warn the folks in peril if you care about them and their welfare. We don’t even have to stop and think about it. The danger is real. As Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 5:11, “**Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;...**”
  2. Scripture tells us to use wisdom here as we’re instructed to not cast our pearls (the treasure of the gospel) before swine (i.e. ó those we’ve already recognized have no interest at the time and so may treat what we treasure as worthless). We’re told to be ready to give an answer of where our hope lies, but with the caveat ó to everyone that asketh. So believers are not to force the gospel upon anyone. But believers do truly desire that others hear it for that is God’s means ó His word, (the word of this specific gospel message) heard and believed upon (as it is if and when it is applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit).

II.C. Verse 7, "sounded out the word" (Con't.):

3. So know that I am not trying to setup some standard that would prompt you to measure the degree to which you or I are faithful witnesses of the gospel, but rather, from the perspective that this is cited here to be an evidence of the faith God gives to His elect, then let us ask ourselves, "Do we desire that others hear of it? Do we truly recognize the danger in continuing upon the religious road that we too once traveled - the broad road that leads to destruction? Do we support efforts to spread the good news of the Gospel at least in whatever capacity we are gifted or able to do?" For example, if the truth of the Gospel has indeed been received as vital to your eternal destiny, then you will pray for and be supportive of the spread of the gospel and choose to be identified with its message, even if you are not in a position to take a more active role. We all can and should pray that God would deliver His Gospel to those we care for and for that matter, for all of His elect wherever they might be. Again, this is not intended to get you to do something, but to observe that it is cited here as an evidence by which we might examine ourselves.
4. As I think about how the gospel goes out from this small group of ours here in Albany, Georgia, it encourages me and I am thankful for the efforts that make that a reality and for our church's determination to support the spread of God's Gospel. I am thankful that it could be accurately said of Eager Avenue Grace Church, that from you has "***...sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in ...<Albany, Georgia and its surrounding area>, ...but in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad;...***" so that this ministry too might possess the identifying characteristics of these Thessalonian believers as a true Gospel ministry.

III. Verse 8a:

A. Now, we see that these characteristics are evident wherever their faith is known unto others:

1. Notice that verse 7 reads that they "***...were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.***" Thessalonica, as well as Philippi, Berea, and Athens were all located in the region or province known as Macedonia, much (if not all) of which lies in present day Greece. In Acts 17, it is recorded that after Paul left Thessalonica, he traveled to Berea and then further south within Macedonia into Athens. We then learn in Acts 18 that he traveled from Athens a short distance south to the city of Corinth which was located in the adjoining province of Achaia. In fact, it was from Corinth that Paul wrote both of his letters to the Thessalonians as well as the letter to the Romans. But my point here is that when Paul makes mention of believers in Macedonia and Achaia, he is still speaking of those in the same general region. And I believe Paul is making note of the fact that they resembled the pattern of believers and were so identified with the gospel, first - where they were - in their local area, Macedonia and Achaia.

III A . Verse 8a, (Con't.):

2. Now as we proceed into verse 8, we see that this pattern is made known, not only in their local area, for he adds, *“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad;...”* That is, you fit the recognizable pattern of believers everywhere your faith toward God is known. It was recognizable because *“the word of the Lord...”* (the specific Gospel message) was *“...sounded out...”* That word *“sounded out”* is a word that means *“echoed”* or *“resounded.”* That is, they knew their election by the gospel they preached and promoted elsewhere *“it being the one and the same as that which they had delivered to them “the Gospel which came not in word only but in power and thereby we know it was the Gospel wherein the righteousness of God “the merit of Christ’s satisfaction to God’s law and justice in His obedience unto death “was set forth and revealed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul isn’t simply saying we know of your election because you are missionary minded. While it is true that all believers possess some desire to spread the word of the Gospel that is vital to their souls “it is this specific word, God’s Gospel of grace, that is resounded or echoed “whereby Paul and others could say, we know your election.*

And in the description give there in vs. 8, we see still another distinguishing characteristic of believers

B. God-ward Faith:

1. Notice that the faith which identifies God’s elect, of which they are ensamples, is a *“God-ward”* faith *“i.e. “a faith which is toward God. Herein we see a contrast to the false faith of multitudes who call themselves Christian and profess to have a faith in or toward God, when in reality, their gospel (i.e. “how they imagine God saves sinners) could more accurately be identified as a man-ward faith. And this can be said of all of us initially as spiritually dead sinners, born in darkness. Whether your faith is a God-ward faith or a man-ward faith is exposed by an honest analysis of what you presume makes the ultimate difference in your salvation. We all start out in concert with the popular religious notions wherein we rely upon something we do, or is done by us, or in us “i.e. “in the man. And so our attention is focused on what man does. And as long as that is so, then God’s gospel, the one Paul calls “our gospel,” has not yet come in power, and in the Holy Spirit “not yet convinced by the Spirit of the sin of the folly of such imaginations, thinking salvation to still be based upon (at least in part) some condition or requirement we meet “our faith, our reformation, our sincere interest in religion, “whatever “as we dare to place the work of our hand in rivalry with that which it took “the obedience unto death of the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ.*

2. And such a false faith that might aptly be called a man-ward faith, is not the religion of grace, but of works ó the works of man, though there are varying degrees to which it may be disguised so as to deceive us into believing that our faith is toward God. Some of you may recall how our former Pastor described this to us several years ago as he related howí
  - (a) 1<sup>st</sup> there is the blatant form of works religion practiced by those whose gospel can be summarized as a work of man for God.
  - (b) 2<sup>nd</sup>ly, there is the somewhat more subtle form of works religion (or a man-ward faith) practiced by those whose gospel can be summarized as a work of man with God, giving God some credit for that which they imagine the sinner himself is able to do to acquire his own salvation.
  - (c) 3<sup>rd</sup>, there is the even more subtle form of works religion (or a man-ward faith) practiced by those whose gospel can be summarized as a work of God with man. Notice the greater emphasis upon God's involvement in this description by which men are often deceived. Here is the point where many who mistakenly imagine that they are adherents to the gospel of grace are most likely deceived as they make much to do about what Christ did for them ó yet they stop short of Christ actually accomplishing their redemption, clinging to the natural notion that God has done 99% of it, but ultimately you mustí .<fill in the blanks> in order to secure your own salvation.
3. But none of these various descriptions of the religion of works (no matter how subtle) can be applied to the God-given faith of which God's elect are ensamples ó by which they are identified. As Paul indicates here, their faith is to God-ward. It can be summarized as a work of God for man ó a God-ward faith without any contribution from man and therefore, there is no basis whatsoever upon which man can boast.
4. You see a faith toward God is one that is concerned with His glory ó how He, a holy God, could be just to justify me, a sinner. Under the Gospel in which they hear of the necessity of Christ's obedience unto death in order for God to be both a just God and a Savior, their focus is turned toward God and how He could accept me, a sinner. And that answer is only found in the gospel of grace which sets forth that all of the conditions for the salvation of the elect were met by Christ in His life and death on the cross. And so, their focus is no longer turned toward man, consumed with the issue of whether or not you, the sinner have accepted Christ as your Savior. But rather their focus is turned toward God, consumed with the truth of how a holy God could accept me, an otherwise ungodly sinner, in and by the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and what He merited, His righteousness, being imputed to me.

IV. Verse 8b & 9a. Now here at the end of vs. 8 and the beginning of vs. 9, Paul adds, “...*so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you,...*” I think Paul is continuing to explain his confidence in counting them as his brethren, beloved of God, knowing their election. The fact that they received what Paul called ðour Gospelö was reaffirmed to them as Paul heard from others how they had truly identified with them in like-minded faith and repentance. And so where their God-ward faith had been made known to others, Paul had no need to add anything to it for it expressed the same specific gospel doctrine concerning how God saves sinners by Christ through the righteousness He established in His life and death on the cross.

V. Repentance from Idolatry: Verse 9b: And now letö consider the rest of vs. 9 as it reads, ***For they themselves***, <those fellow believers to whom your faith toward God has been spread abroad> ***shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;***”

- A. Here, Paul is saying that we know of your like-minded, God-given faith which evidences that you too are an object of Godö everlasting love, chosen unto salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, for such faith only comes to those for whom Christ procured life (both spiritual and eternal) in His death for them on the cross. And we know that because as a result of God having effectually applied the word of the Gospel to these believers, they exhibited this evidence of genuine God-given faith which is always accompanied with the inseparable gift of repentance from former idolatry.
- B. Few in our day will admit to having been an idolater for none of us will naturally recognize, (apart from a work of Godö Spirit), that we all begin our religious walks as idolaters. Graciously, God reveals this to His elect under the sound of the Gospel and so they repent. No one knowingly will continue in idolatry for no one knowingly trusts in and worships a false god ó an idol. But it takes a new birth and its accompanying faculties of spiritual life for any to perceive the reality of their former idolatry.
- C. First, consider that the scripture proclaims that repentance, a radical change of heart and mind, a 180 degree reversal, must and does take place in the hearts and minds of Godö elect in each generation when the Gospel comes to them in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance. The scripture is clear that the way that seems right to us by nature is a way that ends in death (Prov. 16:25). So clearly, there must be a u-turn taken along that road.
- D. As we read last week in Acts 17:30-31, as Paul completed his famous sermon on Mars Hill outside of Athens, he noted how God “...*commandeth all men every where to repent:* <sup>31</sup>*Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness...*”, a righteousness that they cannot produce for themselves.

V. Verse 9b, Repentance from Idolatry (Con't.):

- E. In Luke 13, both in verses 3 & 5, our Lord says, “... ***except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.***” True God-given faith and repentance from former idolatry are not evidences that may or may not be manifested in God’s elect, but rather they are identifying characteristics that if absent, give evidence of one who is perishing.
- F. Many imagine, as I once did, that this characterization of all lost sinners as idolaters couldn’t possibly be applied to me for I never worshipped a physical idol made of stone or some graven image. And yet the Bible is clear that spiritual warfare involves the ***“Casting down <of> imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”*** (II Cor. 10:5). So, an idol of our imagination is just as much an idol as one carved out of stone.
- G. As our own Winston Pannell and others often have related to us, idolatry consists of ascribing unto God qualities of character that do not belong unto Him and / or failing to ascribe to God the qualities of character that do belong unto Him. And we all begin our religious journeys imagining that a holy God will save me, a sinner, in a way that denies in part every attribute of God’s character (although in our blind, lost state of darkness, we don’t recognize that fact). Why, we just don’t even consider how God could be just and still show mercy ó not initially possessing a God-ward faith that causes us to examine how He might accept us. No, instead we naturally major on figuring out what we must do to get ourselves saved and sadly, many describe the nut of the issue to be whether or not you, the sinner, will accept Him, imagining that salvation is a product (not of the blood bought sacrifice of Christ) but of man’s free will decision ó his election, not God’s election to be delivered by the blood bought redemption in His Son at the cross.
- H. Faith is accurately described as a revelation of God whereby the sinner turns to God. And if we turn to something which beforehand had not yet been revealed then of necessity it involves turning away from the direction we were heading, the broad road that leads to destruction wherein we blindly worshipped an idol of our imagination. We can learn something about the idol we turn from when we consider the description here of what God’s elect are brought to turn toward. Here in vs. 9 we learn that believers are identified as elect by virtue of having ó ***turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;***”

1. For your god to be true, he must possess the qualities of character that are true of Deity. He must be holy, just, love, all-powerful, all knowing, infinitely great in every attribute of character. And so many, like myself in years past, will presume to ascribe to their god these character attributes and yet in their ignorance of the reality of or the necessity of the righteousness of God ó the perfect satisfaction which Christ alone established at Calvary, the very righteousness which is revealed if and when the Gospel comes in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in full assurance ó they expose that their God (i.e. ó as they perceive God to be) must not act or live accordingly. They assume that God will save sinners in ways that actually deny the very attributes they think they agree constitute the one true God.
  - (a) Just? ó but presume He punishes sinners for sins that Christ had already died for
  - (b) Love? ó but while able to intervene, opts not to engage all of His infinite attributes to ensure the well being of the objects of His love
  - (c) Omnipotent? ó yet unable to save a sinner unless that sinner acquiesces and provides the finishing touch by his work of faith or whatever.
  - (d) Omniscient? ó yet perhaps couldn't foresee the obstacles to save His people ó perhaps just unable to foresee how obstinate some sinners would be.
2. Now if they've yet to repent of their false gospel ó imagining that God saves sinners based upon some condition or requirement met by the sinner (the gospel of works) and if they cling to their seemingly accurate understanding of the true character of the one true God, then they expose that the God they worship is not the living God. He doesn't act in accord with what they presume to be true about Him. Being ignorant of or not having submitted to the righteousness of God, like the Jews of Romans 10, they by default or going about to establish a righteousness of their own. And in that ignorance, they worship a god who cannot save (as God describes it in Isa. 45) ó for the one true and living God cannot save a sinner apart from the righteousness that Christ alone established in satisfaction to God's law and justice ó the righteousness revealed in God's gospel of grace that comes to an elect, justified sinner in power.
3. You see, the living and true God is One who (1) is true to the infinite qualities of character that belong only unto God and (2) as a living God, exercises those qualities of character on behalf of all the objects of His everlasting love. And as such, they are brought under the gospel and it is effectually applied to their hearts (minds, affections, and wills), so that they behold something of God that is only revealed in the face (Person and work) of Jesus Christ ó they see His redemptive character ó how God can be both a just God and a Savior, based solely upon the righteousness of Christ being imputed to the elect sinner. They turn from idols to serve the living and true God.



VI. Verse 10: And then in vs. 10, he further describes how these other believers, who have heard or observed these evidences whereby one can know of their election, having related their awareness of how these Thessalonian ensamples had in faith and repentance turned to God from their idols, adding in verse 10, ***“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”***

- A. You see, those to whom the Gospel of God’s grace has effectually come, as it does to each one of the elect of God, they (like Paul) can wait expectantly with anticipation as they will be able to love His appearing, even the One who will come in strict justice for they’ve come to see how Christ perfectly satisfied justice as their Substitute. And of these, Paul says that they too have laid up for them a crown of righteousness (II Tim. 4).
- B. And this added description *“...whom he raised from the dead even Jesus, ...”* is not to merely identify that the Son of God that they wait for is the one who in time was raised from the dead (though that is a fact), but it says far more. For you see it is His resurrection that attests to us that the full assurance of faith that the elect come to is justified ó for righteousness demands life and His resurrection testifies of the fact that He truly got the job done. As Romans 5:21 teaches us ***“...grace reign<s> through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”***
- C. And notice the last phrase, ***“...even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”*** He came out of the grave. Who? Jesus ó God our Savior óa God who can save. He too now lives and that is sure and certain evidence that each and everyone for whom he lived and died shall likewise live eternally for He delivered them from the wrath to come ó the wrath that all of us deserve as fallen sinners.
- D. God’s wrath against sin must be poured out and ultimately it shall be upon all ó all except the objects of God’s everlasting love, His elect, because God’s wrath against their sins has already been poured out upon Christ, the elect sinner’s Surety and Substitute, on the cross of Calvary. There, with all the demerit of all of the sins of God’s elect being charged to Him, Christ endured the punishment that they deserved but which He willingly bore for them. He died for sins that He had no part in producing that they might possess a righteousness that they had no part in producing. What mercy and grace!
- E. We only know the living and true God by the Person and work of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## VII. Closing:

Well, my prayer for everyone listening to this message is that they too might know their election as objects of God's everlasting love. As we've seen today, we only know of our election unto salvation in Christ if the fruit and effects that He purchased for all the elect are evident in our own hearts and minds. And where these are evident, there is much assurance. Are you an ensample, possessing the characteristics of all who receive the gospel in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance?

Have you turned from your idols (even the idol of your own imagination) to serve the living and true God? Sadly, so many will insist, regardless of what the Bible says, "I'm not an idolater." Well, do you wait expectantly for One who truly saved (this Jesus ó God who saves) ó for One who truly delivered you from the wrath to come by His bearing away all of your sins or do you continue to presume that something remains to be done by, in, or through you the sinner to gain your acceptance before God?

We can see from our passage today, that true God-given faith of those who look to Jesus as the author and finisher of the faith ó as One who truly has delivered a people from the wrath they deserved ó is always accompanied by repentance from former idolatry.

Can you say of yourself as was said of these Thessalonian believers (and can ultimately be said by all of God's elect in every generation once God effectually brings the gospel their way) ó "I *have turned to God* <from my idol> *to serve the living and true God*, <and now I wait with expectation> *for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered <me> from the wrath to come*"? I pray so, for these are the evidences whereby we can know our election. May God so richly bless you!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself ó the Bible.