

In the early 1900s, 16-year-old William Whiting Borden graduated from High School in Pottstown, Pennsylvania. ... He was the heir to the Borden family mining fortune... so he had a clear path to wealth and success set before him.

But before Borden began his Ivy League education at Yale University, his parents sent him on a yearlong trip around the world as a graduation present. Earlier in his life, Borden had come to Christ, and while traveling the world, something happened that no one expected: he was moved by the spiritual and physical needs of people around the world.

Borden wrote a letter to his parents and informed them he wanted to spend his life as a missionary. His father violently protested. One of his friends remarked that becoming a missionary would be tantamount to throwing one's life away.

Upon his return... Borden went on to Yale and graduated. He then studied and graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary. When his ministry preparation was completed... he boarded a ship to Asia to serve among the poorest of the world's poor - **Muslims in China's Gansu province!** ... Along the way... he stopped in Cairo to learn Arabic and study Islam. ... It was in Egypt... that Borden contracted spinal meningitis. ... Less than a month later... he was dead. He was only 25 years old.

Borden had walked away from his fortune to take the gospel of Jesus to the nations of the world. Most regarded his death as a tragedy; however, God took the tragedy and did something far greater than Borden could ever do himself. ... Mission revival broke out. When young men and women read Borden's story in the newspapers of America... it inspired them to leave all

they had and give their lives to reach the nations with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

At key points in his life, Borden wrote a series of phrases on the inside cover of his Bible. During the time of his struggle with his desire to become a missionary (against his father's heavy disapproval) he wrote: "*No Reserves.*" Toward the end of his time in Yale, where he had started a Bible study attended by three-quarters of the school's student population, he wrote: "*No retreats.*" And as he lay dying of spinal meningitis in Cairo, he wrote: "*No regrets.*"

What made me think of the story of William Borden... is the remarkable story of the Thessalonian believers. Last week... I told you part of their amazing story... and today I am going to proceed to tell you more. They seemed to live by those words found in William Borden's Bible: "*No reserves... No retreats... No regrets...*" They were (in many ways) a church worth imitating.

Today... we continue their incredible story... (as the Apostle Paul tells it)... in his first letter to them.

1 Thes 1:4

What made Paul so sure that these Thessalonians were elected of God? ... (ANSWER) ... He saw clear change in their lives. ... What this evidence was... the apostle states in the subsequent verses. ... (But let me summarize what we will find in these verses.) ... Evidence that God had chosen them... was shown by the manner in which they embraced the gospel... and (#2)... by the spirit which they had demonstrated under

persecution. ... Only those who are saved can have JOY while being persecuted.

Paul... Silas... and Timothy... (you may remember from last week)... only had three Sabbaths in Thessalonica... before these three missionaries were run out of town. In a mere two weeks (perhaps three) Paul... Silas... and Timothy had affectively evangelized a very large...worldly... and busy sea port town... which had never been evangelized... ... But many leading people of the city had turned from idols and to God. A church was born.

This... **NO DOUBT** had been a “*God thing*.” God had indeed chosen them! ... But the town (immediately) began to persecute them... And after just three Sabbaths of teaching... the church founders were forced to leave. And now (less than a year later)... Timothy has just brought Paul a good report... that they were still holding firm under their persecution.

Paul could say (here) in verse 4 that he knew God had chosen them... because of the change in their lives. (Please hear me!) ... The person who claims to be one of God's elect... but whose life has **not** changed... is only fooling himself. *Those whom God chooses, He changes*. This does not mean they are perfect... but they are possessors of a new life that cannot be hidden.

Now... folks... verse 4 brings up a very sore subject for a lot of believers. It says that God chose these believers in Thessalonica. We could spend 20-30 sermons on the topic known as “election”... and probably remain every bit as confused as when we started. ... But I do feel compelled to say

something... so let me give you some of J Vernon McGees words on this subject... and then we will move on. Concerning this verse... McGee writes:

Paul doesn't mind writing about election in this epistle to the Thessalonian believers. And he presents it from God's side of the ledger. ... Paul doesn't attempt to argue election or to prove election; he simply states it as a fact.

With this in mind, let's consider something else. Have you ever stopped to consider the fact that you were born? You could have been nonexistent. I could have been nonexistent. God did not come to me and ask, "Vernon McGee, do you want to come into existence?" I wasn't even in existence so that He could ask me! He is the One who thought of it. He is the One who is responsible for my existence. And He did not ask me whether I wanted to be male or female. He didn't ask me whether I wanted to be born in this day and age. He didn't ask me to choose my parents. He didn't ask me to decide whether my parents would be godly or whether they would be wealthy -- and they were neither one. God today is running this universe because it is His. You may not like it, but that just happens to be the way it is.

Now God is no tyrant -- no one is chosen against his will, and no one is rejected against his will. God is right in all that He does.

Now let me repeat what Paul has said to the Thessalonian believers (v. 4): "For we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you." Maybe you don't like this verse, but this is the way it happened. And God is running this universe. Instead of joining a protest march against Him, I suggest that you fall down on your face before Him and thank Him that He has brought you into existence, and that He has given you the opportunity as a free moral agent to make a decision for Him. His invitation still stands, "...If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). Are you thirsty? Then come to Christ. He stands ready to receive you.

Being chosen should be an incentive to please God (not ignore him)... God's choice of us ought to energize us to obey and to serve... “No reserves... No retreats... No regrets...”

Verse 5 begins to show us the evidence that Paul was looking at when he wrote that the believers at Thessalonica were chosen by God.

1 Thes 1:5

The message didn't simply enter the minds of the Thessalonians and warm their hearts. ... No! It produced outward works of faith, love, and hope! ... Now I have to say this... even though I do not really want to offend anyone. But sometimes a person who wants to encourage me... will say at the back door after the service: “*Your sermon made me feel good*” ... or “*It warmed my heart.*” ... Truth be told... I don't want to hear that! A Walt Disney movie might do the same thing. And I am after far greater results than some emotional goose-bumps that Hollywood might give you.

I believe that the Spirit of God can (and will) take the Word of God and perform the greatest miracle possible -- changing an unbelieving... lost sinner into a child of God! And it will also (continuously) melt the heart of someone who is already a believer... and bring their life into total love and submission to Christ.

The Word of God is a supernatural book. ... But without the Holy Spirit it is merely words. Listen to what Jesus said:

John 16:7-11 (ESV)

⁷ *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I*

go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

The Spirit of God can cause the Word of God to penetrate into your heart and life (and my heart and life) so that we are transformed into ever-increasing Christlikeness... bearing a lot of fruit for His kingdom. ... Listening to a Bible-centered sermon should be more than hearing a collection of interesting facts. It is the POWER OF GOD to everyone who believes.

What is God's power doing right now in your life? It was bringing full conviction to the Thessalonian believers. ... Full conviction is a strong readiness to act on it - "*No reserves... No retreats... No regrets...*" ... Do you see evidence of the power of God at work in your life?

1 Thes 1:6

Last week as we studied how the church in Thessalonica began... we saw how the Jews watched Paul... Silas... and Timothy bring so many people to Christ. They brought a lot of Greeks... a good number of prominent women... and some Jews. But this **enraged** the Jews to jealousy. Denying their own Jewishness... they pretended a loyalty to **Caesar**... saying these three men proclaimed a different king. Then they turned to the low-lives of the city and organized them into a mob. Once they influenced a riot... the Jews turned the whole city against them.

Paul Silas and Timothy went up the road (about 11) miles to Brea. They had similar success with the Breans... but the angry Jews from Thessalonica also came there and ran them out of Brea.

The Thessalonians watched Paul... Timothy... and Silas... and how they handled persecution – with joy... rather than bitterness. The Thessalonians were inspired. ... Instead of saying “*No thanks! I don’t want to be persecuted. I think I’ll pass on this Christian stuff...*” They received God’s truth and imitated how the three missionaries remained steadfast while being persecuted. Yeah... I would call that to be strong evidence that God had chosen these people... and was working inside their lives. They were being persecuted but showed JOY... just as Paul... Silas... and Timothy had modeled. ... “*No reserves... No retreats... No regrets...*”

Will you and I be able to handle severe persecution...? I believe that we should prepare ourselves... and I suggest that one way that we do so... is by finding inspiration from “model believers”... who have held up under their own persecution. Read the biographies of Christians who lived by exemplary faith – even while they were being persecuted.

Right Now Media has some great biographies. If you do not have a subscription to this video service – let me know and I will get you a free subscription. ... Online you can find many Christian biographies... Christianity Today even has a magazine called “Christian History.” ... Now... don’t idolize them... (of course) but let God motivate your Christian walk and show you patterns for your own walk of faith through them.

... [P A U S E] ...

Instead of taking the next verses (verses 7... 8... and 9) in sequential order... I am going to have you skip on down to verse 10 with me. Verse 10 will shed a whole lot of light on them... which we will come back to... after we examine 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

1 Thes 1:10

(Folks... you have been hearing me say this in one form or another... for quite some time now... and lately to an increasing degree...) - We are on a collision course with destiny... and we cannot afford to be ignorant. ... This is one of the reasons I selected Thessalonians as our next book of the Bible to study through.

The signs of Jesus' coming are so many that I believe - Jesus is at the door. Jesus' coming is eminent. That means that He may come at any moment. (And please don't be mistaken!) We're not looking for some event to check-off on our time chart - we are looking for Jesus Christ Himself.

Now... verse 10 mentions "*The wrath to come.*" But verse 10 emphasizes that it is the Son we are waiting for! Why? Because He is going to (what?) ... (it says) deliver us from the wrath to come.

So it is the Son we are waiting for... but we do need to know about this coming wrath. Knowing what we are being delivered from makes us watch for... and love His appearing. ... What I want to say in the next several minutes is based on concepts and phrases that Adrian Rogers related to 1st Thessalonians 1:10.

Notice that this does not say "the wrath that *might* come"; Paul writes "the wrath *to* come". ... What he is writing about (here) is the Great Tribulation.

The Bible (over and over again) tells us of a Great Tribulation that is going to come (dark... terrible... horrible days.)

It will be a day of Hell on Earth. It will be a day when everything is chaotic... when the anti-Christ will have his way... and Satan will rule here... on this Earth.

The prophet Daniel talked about it:

Daniel 12:1 (ESV)

¹ “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.

There will be a time of trouble like there has never been. ... But those who have their name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life will be delivered. Jesus also warned about it.

Matthew 24:21-22 (ESV)

²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. ²² And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

There has never been anything like it since the beginning—since the dawn of history—*’til the time that Jesus was speaking, nor any other time that would come after that time, until the Great Tribulation comes...*” If God, in mercy... did not cut it off... everybody on Earth would be decimated. Daniel says, *“There is nothing like it.”* ... And in our passage... the Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about it as - *“The wrath that is coming”*

Look (if you will) in the book of the Revelation. Just leave 1 Thessalonians. Keep a finger here... but turn to Revelation 6. I want to show you just a few snapshots of this coming wrath. We don't have time to look at everything... just the "tip-of-the-iceburg" of this event.

Revelation 6:15-17 (ESV)

¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶ calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

That's what Paul is talking about in our text: this wrath.

Let's just stay here (in Revelation 6) for just a moment... because we see that this "wrath to come" is preceded by four horsemen. We call those *the four horses*, or *the four horsemen of the apocalypse*. ... (LISTEN!) We can just about hear (today) the hoof beats of those four horsemen that are coming over the horizon. It is getting closer and closer and closer and closer. Look at these four horsemen that precede this great day of wrath.

Revelation 6:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!" ² And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.

Who is this rider on this white horse? He is the Antichrist... and he is on a white horse. A white horse is a symbol of triumph. Rulers of that day... when they triumphed... would prance around on a white horse. The rider of

this horse has a bow in his hand. That's a weapon of war. It is a symbol of power.

There is coming a malevolent... wicked... horrible... indescribably powerful world ruler... of whom the Bible has several names: *the beast... the man of sin... the Antichrist... the son of perdition... the wicked one.* Riding upon his white horse with his bow in his hand... and his crown on his head... the Bible says he will go forth to conquer.

And... who's the next rider? Look at verse 4:

Revelation 6:4 (ESV)

⁴ And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

The first horse — the white horse — that's **dominion**. The red horse — that is **destruction**. ... Red is the power of blood. ... There will be war... havoc... and destruction.

The spirit of Antichrist will inflame men's hearts with hatred... and cause brother to rise up against brother... child to rise up against parent... and nation to rise against nation. The people of earth did not want the Prince of peace... and now there will be unrestrained war... swords will be drenched with blood... and the streets will be filled with the decaying... bloated bodies... of those who have died. There will be the groans of the living.

When Jesus Christ spoke about this in Matthew 24... He said, "*You better pray it doesn't come on the Sabbath day...*" because the Orthodox Jews will not flee Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. ... Jesus also said, "*Woe unto them that are pregnant with child at that time.*" ... **[P A U S E]** ...

First... the white horse (dominion). ... Second... the red horse (destruction). ... Now Third... the black horse (deprivation).

Revelation 6:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!"

(Today) one half of the world already goes to bed hungry. ... But... when you take the able-bodied men of this world and put them to war... who's going to till the fields?... How are you going to get food to the hungry? ... There is going to come - **massive** starvation.

Dominion... destruction... deprivation... and (last of all) decimation and death. ... Look at the next horse.

Revelation 6:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" ⁸ And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

The word *pale* (here) is the word *cloros*. It's the word we get *chlorine* from. It means "*a ghastly green—putrid; the color of decaying, deadly flesh.*"

So... first... there comes this anti-Christ. ... After the anti-Christ... there comes the sword. ... After the sword comes hunger. ... And after hunger... comes death. Verse 8 puts it - "*Death, **and Hell** followed with him*" (Revelation 6:8).

Here is what that means: this time is going to be so horrible (so terrible) that men will want to die. But *death* is not going to be a welcome release... because after death comes the judgment and Hell. Death will get the body; Hell will get the soul.

Just a *little more* and then we'll return from Thessalonians. We are seeing what Paul told the Thessalonians they would be spared from.

Revelation 9:1-11

Now... let's go back to our text. I just wanted to take this not-so-scenic path to help you understand some of the things that the Apostle Paul is saying... when he is saying here that Jesus has delivered us from the wrath to come in 1 Thessalonians 1:10. I'm telling you you'd better ***thank God*** for Jesus. The wrath is coming. ... The hoof-beats are thundering in the not so distant future. ... Our wait should not be all that long... when Jesus will deliver us from the wrath to come.

But (again) let me make clear... we're waiting for ***Jesus***. We're not waiting for the Antichrist. Some people think the Church is going to go through the Great Tribulation. That isn't what this says. It says, "*[Jesus] Who delivers us from the wrath to come.*" ... "**THE** wrath to come..." not simply the persecution that these Thessalonians believers were going through at the time. This was a ***future*** wrath... of well-known prophecy.

The second-coming of Jesus is a comfort! We don't have to be looking for the AntiChrist. As believers... we are not waiting for the Tribulation. Just like these believers in Thessalonica – we are waiting for Jesus!

What should we be doing while we're waiting for Jesus? (How do you wait for Jesus?) ... By the study of prophecy? That's not enough. ... By getting saved? ... Well... that's wonderful... but that's not the way to wait. ... The Bible says we're to occupy till He comes (Luke 19:13). The ESV that I read from says: "engage in business until I come." ... Now I would like for you to turn back to verse 7 (here in chapter one of 1st Thessalonians)... and we see (from this "*model church*") what waiting for Jesus looks like.

1 Thes 1:7

Are you a believer? Are you a follower of Christ? ... Then these people are an example for you...

1 Thes 1:8-9

Paul said, "*When I got there to preach... you had already been there. You were sounding out the Word of God.*" This infant church (less than 1 year old) had a reputation that spread far and wide. They had turned to God from idols.

What is Living Water's reputation...? Is it that we have joy when persecuted...? Are we turning from idols...? You say, "*Well I don't worship idols.*"

An idol is anything you love more... trust more... fear more... or serve more than God. It's an idol. ... America is filled with idols... and I am not talking about a television singing show. We have idols - we've just changed the names. The Thessalonians used to have an idol named "Bacchus" that was the idol of drunkenness. America's serving that idol. ... They had an idol called "Aphrodite" and "Venus" and that was the god of lust. ... The

world is serving that idol today. ... They had a god they called "Mars" which was the god of violence. ... The world is serving that idol today. ... They had an idol they called "Sofia" which was the feminist goddess of knowledge and sophistication. ... The world is serving that idol today.

We need to turn from idols and serve the living and the true God... because Jesus is about to return! ... We have an expectant wait; we're waiting for Jesus. And, there is business to engage in until He comes. We are to serve him. ... [P A U S E] ...

They were waiting for a train to come at the train station. The stationmaster was there, and a young lady was there. They were waiting for a train to come at the train station. But there was a difference between the two of them in how they waited: The stationmaster knew exactly when the train was to arrive. He knew the number of the train; he knew the engineer; he knew the number of cars; he knew the passengers—he knew all of that, because he had all of that information. He had his chart; he had his schedule—he knew all about it. The young lady did not know nearly as much as the stationmaster knew about that, but the young lady had her fiancé on that train. She was waiting for him to come, because they were going to get married and hopefully live forever after. Now folks, don't you study this like a train schedule. We're waiting for Jesus. We're not just trying to get facts in our head; we are anticipating the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom. We're going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air—what a day that will be! ... God forbid—God forbid—that we should be careless... and carnal... and sleeping... and selfish... when Jesus comes. The Bible says:

1 John 3:3 (ESV)

³ *And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

We're waiting on the Bridegroom. We're expectantly waiting on Jesus. And we are to “occupy until He comes.” We need to be like the believers at Thessalonica and carry-on Christ’s business with: “*No reserves... No retreats... No regrets...*”