

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 "Evidence Of Election"

Paul planted the Thessalonian church on his 2nd missionary journey. After returning to his home church in Antioch from his 1st trip, teaching & preaching the word of God there for some time, he began to be burdened w/the well-being of the churches he'd planted in other parts of the Roman Empire... [\(Map\)](#)

His original plan was to grab Barnabas again & kind of repeat their prior route. But as you may know, it didn't work out for those 2 to travel together so Paul grabbed another leader in the church named Silas & away they went... Initially they went up into the region of Galatia, (specifically in the area of Derbe & Lystra), where a young man whom he'd led to the Lord on his 1st trip named Timothy (whom Paul referred to as his son in the faith) joined the team. But then their plans changed. They found themselves in Troas where Paul received a vision of a man of Macedonia (northern Greece) pleading w/him to come help them.

Troas being a coastal city, they hopped on a boat, headed across the Aegean sea & made their way to Philippi. Long story short, things were going great, but in the process of time, Paul cast a demon out of a slave girl being used by her masters as a fortune teller & when they saw that their free flow of cash had dried up, they seized Paul & Silas, dragged them to the market place where they were tried on trumped up charges, beaten w/rods & placed in prison.

But around midnight (as they were praying & singing praises to God) suddenly there was a great earthquake, the foundations of the prison were shaken, the doors were opened & their chains fell off... The jailer supposing all the prisoners had escaped was about to kill himself, but Paul shouted, "We're all still here, do yourself no harm." So the jailer called for a light, ran in, fell down before Paul & said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul said, "Believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved." That's exactly what happened. The next day, the officials in Philippi voluntold them to leave, so the made their way to... Thessalonica.

They were seemingly only *there* for a few weeks when they were ran out of that city as well, so they headed to Berea. But not long after that, those who'd caused trouble in Thessalonica came down & started stirring up issues in Berea, so Paul headed to Athens, but he left Silas & Timothy to minister in Berea (& they went back an encouraged the churches in Thessalonica & Philippi while they were in the area). From Athens he called for them, but he headed on to Corinth before they got to him.

Once they found him, he asked them how the church at Thessalonica was doing (because he'd only been w/them for a short while) & Timothy said, "Paul, they're doing great! God is really moving there & they are on fire for Jesus!" So he sat down & dictated this letter (one of his earliest). (I presume Silas was the scribe because Peter used him as well, [1 Pet 5:12] but I don't know for sure).

Vs 1

So now we understand why Paul mentioned Silas (or the Roman sur name Silvanus, same guy) & Timothy along w/himself. It's because they were there w/him when he established the church among them (Timothy being the one who'd given him the report of how well the Thessalonian believers were doing).

Guys, I think it's worth pointing out the fact that Paul, though an amazing apostle of God, rarely did the work of ministry by himself. Whenever he could, he worked w/a team. It's just wise. You get more done. You're stronger together, there's accountability, a verifiable integrity... not to mention things are just generally more enjoyable when you're doing them w/others who are like minded in bringing glory to God. Paul didn't separate himself or segregate himself in an "above others" kind of way, they just did the work of the ministry together.

But he begins here, "Grace to you & peace from God our Father & the Lord J.C." You'll note that as you study his letters, it's always the same words & always the same order. "Grace & peace." & That's because you can never really know the "peace" of God until you've 1st experienced the "grace" of God...

I might also point out that it works that way in our relationships w/others as well. Sometimes, the thing that keeps us from having *peace* w/each other is the fact that we refuse to be *gracious* w/one another. Yet in writing to the Ephesians, Paul said, "*Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*"¹

It's interesting, the word translated "forgiving" is the word, "*charizomai*", if that sounds somewhat familiar w/you bible students, it's because it's related to the word, "Charis" which is translated, "Grace". When you forgive someone, you "*grace*" them. Restoration, reconciliation is granted, not on the basis of merit (because they earned it) but on the basis of grace. Now there's peace.

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Eph 4:31-32). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Peace, always follows grace. Remember the blessing that Aaron was to pronounce over the people? Num Ch 6? *"The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace."*² Grace... then peace.

"From God our Father & the Lord J.C." Perhaps I should point this out as well. Notice the church of the Thessalonians was "in" God the Father & the Lord J.C. & grace & peace comes "from" God our Father & the Lord J.C. It may not be super obvious as we see it here, but in the Greek construction it's clear. These 2 names are side by side on the basis of equality. In other words, Paul is putting plainly that God the Father & the Lord J.C. are completely equal in power & Deity.

& Let me just say that "Lord" is His title, "Jesus" is His name, & "Christ" means "Messiah" or "Anointed One". He is the Anointed One of God to be both King of kings & our Great High Priest. So, it's not 1st, middle & last name (Lord Jesus Christ). It's title; He is the *Lord*. Which implies (if you're a believer) that you are the *servant*. He gives the direction, we render obedience. Remember, Jesus said, *"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"*³ It's inconsistent, it doesn't make sense.

The name, "Jesus" gives us His mission. It means, "Jehovah is Salvation". As the angel instructed Joseph *"...and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."*⁴ & He is the "Christ", the Anointed One who will rule the earth in righteousness, God's Messiah.

It's also worth noting that though only w/them for a short time, Paul acknowledges them as a collective, The "church" of the Thessalonians. He wasn't content to leave these young converts as individuals in awe of his pious preaching. But he organized them into a collective of like-minded interests, cares & fellowship. He made sure that they were meeting & ministering to one another regularly, consistently as a body. It's so easy to separate ourselves from the community of the body, but it's so important to come together regularly in order to strengthen, encourage & edify one another.

Vs 2

You know, Paul had been bounced out of Philippi, bounced out of Thessalonica, bounced out of Berea, unsuccessful in Athens, & had real concerns about being in Corinth. So when he heard that even though he'd only been in Thessalonica for a short time, the church was flourishing and their faith was abounding... He said, "I thank God for you guys."

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Nu 6:24-26]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Lk 6:46-47]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Mt 1:21]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

I'm gonna be honest (& as you read Paul's letters you find out) some Christians can be a source of grief. (They accuse you falsely, maybe challenge your authority or don't respect the office God has entrusted to you. Maybe they're gossipers or whatever). Others, like the Thessalonians (& like the church I've been called & privileged to pastor 😊) evoke gratitude. When you think of the genuine nature of the work of the Spirit & the fingerprints of growth in their lives, you thank God for that.

I also like the transparency of Paul regarding prayer. He says, "making mention of you." He didn't allude to a long drawn out period of intercession for each individual. But he made mention of them all the time before God. (As did the others, "We" make mention). On the flipside of that, it's always encouraging to know that you have people praying for you. Paul assures them, that they're praying for them & that they give God thanks for them (notice).

Vs 3-4

Why was it that Paul thanked God *for* them? Because he remembered some things *about* them. 3 Things to be specific. #1 Their work of faith, #2 Their labor of love & #3 Their patience of hope... Their faith, love & hope... Faith, hope & love... Where have I heard that before? It's found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, "*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*"⁵

We might call them the "Trinity of traits" that Christians ought to be known for. Faith, hope & love. Now, that's not to say everything else in their lives was where it should've been. As we make our way through we'll see that they had some moral issues they needed to correct, some doctrinal issues they needed to correct... However, the fingerprints of the Holy Spirit were undeniably present in their lives as recognized through these traits of faith, love & hope.

But notice how Paul takes what would otherwise be these seemingly abstract qualities & puts them into the practical, how it is that they flesh out in our lives. He draws attention to their "work" of faith. Faith is not a *passive* characteristic that just sits idly on the couch "trusting" God to fix everything. Faith is an *active* attribute in our lives.

We make mention of it from time to time around here. It's true that we're saved by faith & not by works, but saving faith will go to work in our lives. What is the *evidence* of faith in our lives? James said it like this...

⁵ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [1 Co 13:13]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

"Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."⁶

Works (our active obedience to the word of God) is one evidence (not the only evidence) of saving faith. I read somewhere that faith is the response of the soul of *man* to the word of *God*. When you respond in obedience to the word of God (be it in sacrifice, service, study, how you handle your marriage, your money or whatever) you're walking by faith.

Leave 1st Thess & turn to **Luke 5** Vs 4-5... **5 words here that highlight faith for you & me, "...at Your word, I will..."** That's faith. Doesn't matter what I think, what I feel, what my previous experience might have been, *at Your word, I will*. That's faith.

So, their faith produced work (it's not faith *plus* works, it's faith that leads to works, big difference). Their *love produced labor*. This is that same principle that Jesus taught when He said, **"If you love Me, keep My commandments."**⁷ Why do I *serve* the Lord? Because I *love* the Lord.

& Their *patience of hope*. Which is to say, they were willing to bear up under the weight of tough times, tribulation, persecution & afflictions as they awaited the return of Jesus. It's unfortunate that sometimes people are given the impression that if you'll just give your life to Jesus, He'll make everything better & all your problems will go away. Because that's simply not true. In fact, you essentially invite a whole new dynamic of distress! Now the world is against you, your flesh is against you, the devil is against you...

But you have something of a secret weapon that causes you to not only survive under difficult times, but thrive & triumph through them. It's "hope", that guaranteed certainty, that concrete reality that Jesus is coming again. Others are w/out hope being w/out God in the world, not so w/you. You know that Jesus has gone away to prepare a place for you, & having gone, He will come again to receive you to Himself that where He is, there you may be also...

They're the 3 cardinal virtues of the Christian life, "Faith, hope & love." We might call them "Evidence of election." He says, "knowing beloved brethren, your election by God." In other words, your election by God will become evident by a change in your life. These elements of faith, love & hope will manifest in you. We might say, whom God chooses, He changes. Oh, you won't be perfect, this side of heaven, but there will be new life in you that cannot be hidden.

Now, some struggle w/the idea of God's election. But let me just say this...

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jas 2:18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 14:15-16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

No one will be *elected* against his/her will & no one will be *rejected* against his/her will. If you want God to save you, He will. Jesus said, *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink."*⁸ The door is open, *"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."*⁹ On & on we could go w/scriptures testifying to the fact that God wants you to be saved, *"Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved!"*

But if you don't *want* God to save you, you don't *desire* to take of the water of life. Then let's not get upset w/God for not choosing you.

Vs 5

In short, the gospel is neither discussion nor a debate, it's a declaration, a proclamation. "Our gospel did not come to you in word only..." It's not great swelling words of emptiness. There is power in the word of God. & This is the beauty of being in a position to give out God's word to people.

If I were just up here sharing my words, you may as well not even be here. There's not a thing that the word of man can do for you. Oh, it might make ya feel a little better emotionally, it might stimulate you intellectually, but it's of zero benefit eternally. Not so w/the word of God. There is power in the word of God. Jeremiah 23:29, *"Is not My word like a fire?" says the Lord, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"*¹⁰

The power of God unto salvation, unto transformation, unto sanctification is somehow & in some way embedded in His word. As Peter said, *"...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,"*¹¹ The Spirit of God, takes the word of God & changes our lives. It's what we've been throwing out around here as our buzz words. The gospel message won't just challenge you, it'll change you. If you stop at the door of being challenged by the gospel, but never pass through the threshold of change, you've not been saved. The gospel will change your life, you're brought from being dead in sin, to made alive in Christ... (Eph 2:1-10) You see? Salvation = transformation. I'm not who I used to be, & neither are you in Christ. You're a new creation, old things have passed away, all things have been made new. That's the power of the gospel That's why Paul said, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes,"*¹²

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [In 7:37]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Re 22:17]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁰ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Je 23:29]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [1 Pe 1:23]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ro 1:16]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

That's what he means when he says that the word came in full assurance. Paul brought the word to them w/conviction. He knew the power of God's word.

Vs 6

2 Things. He says, "You became followers (or "imitators") of us." Paul was not shy about calling people to follow his example in Christ. He told the Philippians to imitate him, he told the Corinthians to imitate him, the question is, would have an anyone imitate you? It's what discipleship, mentorship is all about. It's not limited to an academic exercise in learning biblical principles. It's demonstrating how these things look in the practical. It teaches respect for spiritual leadership, & encourages the one whom you're discipling to become an example themselves. **They watched how Paul handled persecution, affliction & accusation but stayed focused on Jesus & maintained his joy in Jesus & they followed suit. They didn't just endure their affliction w/a resigned fatalism, but w/joy of the Holy Spirit.**

Let's not forget that when Paul arrived, he & Silas were all beat up having just come from Philippi. Yet they had been singing & praising God, there was joy in the midst of their affliction due to the presence/power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They were examples to the Thessalonians. What was the result?

Vs 7

Paul was an example to them. Then they became examples to others. That's exactly how the work of God is supposed to happen. The mention of Macedonia & Achaia is to say, "Both northern & southern Greece." (Map)

The word "example" literally means, "the mark of a stroke or a blow." The gospel had made its mark upon them, & now they were leaving a mark on everyone else. Their faithfulness to God was making an impact on everyone around them...

Guys, they'd only been following Jesus for a few months! We think we need years to develop (& certainly we never stop growing) but Jesus makes a difference in our lives immediately & people will see that! Be an example to others of what it means to follow Jesus.

Vs 8-10

Part of that good example was how the work & the word of God was sounding forth from them. Paul's like, "Everywhere I go, your story precedes me! You're going to put me out of business!" They were out there getting the word out! Family, do you realize that the overwhelming amount of church growth comes *not* from social media campaigns or evangelistic outreaches... but it results from friends witnessing to friends/relatives/neighbors...

& It's not that those other things are irrelevant, it's that personal contact brings the harvest. They weren't ashamed to share what God had done in their life.

People could see, they'd broken their idols, they worshiped God, were serving Jesus, speaking about His return, they're no longer out getting drunk or partying & people were talking about it. It was obvious they'd changed!

Vs 9-10 correlate w/Vs 3. "Your work of faith... you turned to God from idols." "Your labor of love... to serve the living & true God" "& Patience of hope... to wait for His Son from heaven."

I should also say that "waiting" for Jesus isn't a passive posture, just hanging out doing nothing, waiting around... It's a very *active* posture. Think of a waiter at your favorite restraint, they're waiting on you, serving you, there for whatever you may need. That's what it is to "wait" on the Lord.

"Even Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come." We all the time talk about being "saved". What are we saved from? From a # of things actually, from sin (both its presence & its penalty) from the world, from the power of darkness/the devil. But something Paul brings out something here we don't often think about. Jesus delivers us from the righteous wrath of a holy God! & Paul will develop this further as we get into the letter; so for now, we'll leave it alone.

& Let's close w/a ready reminder of the evidence of election. Remember, whom God chooses, He changes. What was the evidence? Their work of faith, their labor of love, their patience of hope, they received God's word, endured affliction w/joy, became examples in their walk w/God & eagerly awaited the return of Jesus.

Let's pray & ask God to anchor these attributes in our hearts/lives as well. That others might be saved & that He might be glorified in our lives.

Prayer Points:

God, that's our prayer. That this "trinity of traits", faith, hope & love would become manifest, more & more in our lives. Lord that we would follow You & in so doing have lives worthy of others to follow. That we would shy away from the responsibility of personal discipleship. Renew Your joy in our hearts & be magnified/glorified in us.

Maybe the message the gospel has challenged you today, it's got you thinking. That's not enough, God wants to change you today. You can leave here different, the gospel contains the power of God to transform your life & make you new. If you're thirsting for more than what this world has to offer, come & drink. Believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved.