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A1046 – November 14, 2010 – 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5
Thanksgiving For Believers

If you'd open your Bible to 1 Thessalonians we want to start with the first of 5 S'. We're going to break the 1st letter to the Thessalonians into 5 distinct sections according to the chapter divisions. So chapter 1, the first S stands for Salvation. Chapter 2, the second S stands for service. Chapter 3, the third S stands for, sanctification. Chapter 4, the fourth S stands for, surety. In chapter 5, the fifth S stands for safety. So this is the outline we're going to follow and so in chapter 1 we will emphasize the truths herein stated as they relate to the doctrine of salvation.

But to introduce, recall that last week we followed Paul's first and second missionary journeys as background. On the first missionary journey Paul set out with Barnabas and visited southern Galatia and out of that visit came one epistle, Galatians. On Paul's second journey Paul and Barnabas split up and Paul set out with Silas and re-visited southern Galatia, following up with the new converts by training. He also met Timothy, a convert whose mother was Jewish but his father was Greek and since Jewishness is passed on by the father then in the rare case that your mother was Jewish and your father was Greek you had to decide when you grew up whether you wanted to identify with the Jewish people or the Gentile people. Paul wanted to take Timothy with him and Silas so he encouraged Timothy to identify with the Jewish people through circumcision, thus making it easier for them to travel into Jewish areas and evangelize them. So in 1 Thess 1:1 we see these three men, **Paul and Silvanus**, which is the Roman form of the Hebrew Silas, **and Timothy**. We now know who these men are and where they came from and now we learn that these three men address the church at Thessalonica. Not Paul alone but Paul, Silas and Timothy. And by way of confirmation throughout the letter you will find the first person plural pronoun we, us and our, used over and over and over of these three individuals Paul, Silas and

Timothy (1:2, 5, 8, 9; 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20; 3:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 4:1, 2, 6, 10, 11, 13, 15; 5:12, 14, 25). So in one sense this letter is not only written by Paul but also by Silas and Timothy. However, Paul composed the letter because at times he uses the first person singular pronoun, I. In the examples, the three places where this occurs are in 1 Thess 2:18; 3:5 and 5:27. That Paul composed the letter is also confirmed by the fact that the vocabulary, style and theology are distinctly Pauline. So we might conclude that Paul himself composed the letter while Silas and Timothy contributed their own ideas.

Having been introduced to **Paul, Silas** and **Timothy**, whom the Thessalonians knew, **Paul** begins in verse 1 to address **the church of the Thessalonians**. Now remember that Paul, Silas and Timothy only spent about a month in Thessalonica. Ramsey grants that it may have been up to six months. But I suggest, on the basis of Luke's account in Acts that they were there three Sabbaths and then a riot occurred that brought about the arrest of Jason. Probably they spent some time evangelizing and training outside of the synagogue because the congregation is primarily Gentile. So my suggestion is that they were not there much longer than a month or two. Modern scholars are troubled by such a short period of time though older scholars typically hold to this shorter period. What also bothers modern scholars is the fact that the theology of this epistle covers a broad range of ideas as you can see simply from the five S's. However, from Paul's teaching schedule in Ephesus at the school of Tyrannus, as described in Acts 19, we conclude that Paul taught 5-6 hours a day, six days a week during the afternoon siesta, and on that rigorous a schedule Paul could easily teach a year's worth of material in a single month. Adding the fact that when Bible content is taught in a more compact period of time the learner can grasp it much more rapidly supports a shorter period of one to two months. However, there are shortcomings to catching all the nuances of doctrine in such a short period of time; namely that there will be confusion over certain doctrines. And that, in fact, is manifested in first Thessalonians in chapter 4 and chapter 5 when Paul corrects confusion on three doctrinal questions: First, "If a believer dies before the Lord's return when will he be resurrected?" Second, "Will believers who are alive on the earth have to go through the day of the Lord or not?" So there were still confusions and adding all of this information up; three Sabbaths from Acts, a majority of Gentile believers, the breadth of doctrinal content, Paul's rigorous teaching schedule and the doctrinal

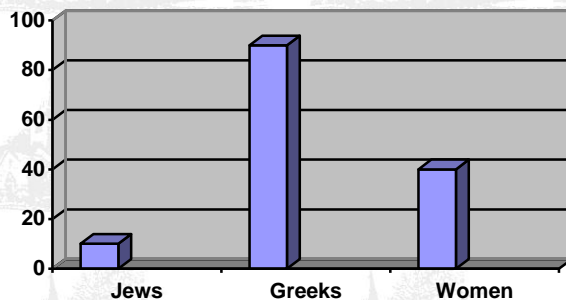
clarifications that Paul, Silas and Timothy were there for not much longer than one to two months.

So Paul's stay in Thessalonica was short but he taught tremendous content in this short period of time. The reason his visit was cut short was because a believer named Jason, a new convert, who was getting Paul and Silas a place to stay in Thessalonica, had made a blunder. And when the authorities came searching for Paul and Silas and could not find them they drag Jason and some other believers to the police station. And apparently the authorities cut a deal with Jason that they would release them if they paid them so much money but that if Paul ever came back, Paul and Silas, I should say, Jason and his friends would be put in prison. Paul considered this move by Jason to be Satanic hindrance. Now Paul and Silas can't go back and so they were limited to writing letters to the Thessalonians.

In verse one he writes the letter **To the church of the Thessalonians**. The Greek word for **church**, *ekklesia*, is often stated to be a technical term, a technical term meaning the term always means the same thing, and some dispensational scholars have tried to make the case that it always refers to the body of Christ in order to sharpen the distinction between Israel and the Church. However, it's a case that cannot be made because Acts 7:38 and 19:41 use it to refer to Israel "in the wilderness" and a pagan mob. Therefore, we cannot argue that *ekklesia* is a technical term that always refers to the body of Christ. Nevertheless, it's not necessary for *ekklesia* to be a technical term to prove the case that Israel and the Church are a distinct people. You make the case other ways. Overall, it is better to simply take the word *ekklesia* in its normal meaning of "an assembly" or "gathering" and let the context determine. In this context it refers to the local assembly of the Thessalonian believers. In many cases, people will argue that the local church refers to a gathering of believers and unbelievers. But in this context, if you read the actual content of the letter, you will see that Paul is addressing believers only.

This group of believers lived in Thessalonica. It was a large city of about 200,000 that sat along the Via Egnatia. It had been founded by Cassander, one of Alexander the Great's military generals who took over Macedonia upon Alexander's death. Cassander named the city after his wife Thessaloniki who was Alexander the Great's half-sister. Thessalonika had grown to overtake

the nearby city of Therma and was now a large metropolis of 200,000. The ministry of Paul, Silas and Timothy had resulted in a positive response from among the population, most notably among the Gentiles who were the majority and a number of the prominent women. Women in Macedonia had a peculiar influence which is a distinguishing mark in the ancient world. But there were also some Jews. So as far as the makeup of this church goes the majority were Gentiles, then a number of prominent women and finally a minority of Jews.



So Paul' greets them, **To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**; right away, the prepositional phrase, **in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ** is encouraging to the Thessalonians because it assures them that Paul, Silas and Timothy recognize that they responded in genuine faith to the gospel and have a position **in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**. We should always remember this wonderful truth that if we have believed the gospel then we have a position **in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**. Believers are no longer separated from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ because of the penalty of sin. They are justified and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1). We have a new position in Christ. And this position is totally secure, not because of our faith but because of God's sovereignty. Even if we are faithless, He remains faithful, He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim 2:13). No one can snatch them out of the Lord Jesus Christ's hand and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. The Father and the Son are one (John 10:28-30). Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39). This is our eternal, unchanging position **in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**.

Observe that Paul puts **God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ** on an equal plane. There is no inferiority of the Lord Jesus Christ as far as his essence is concerned to God the Father. They are equal in essence. God the father is not sovereign and the Lord Jesus Christ less sovereign. Lord Jesus Christ is just as much sovereign as God the Father. So equal are they that it can be said that we are **in both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**. To be in one is to be in the other. In verse 5 they will mention the Holy Spirit and so all three members of the Trinity are mentioned in vv 1-5. It should shock us that Paul and Silas, who were Jewish monotheists, had no difficulty believing that within the One God there are multiple persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That was acceptable to Jews of the 1st century.

We should mention that the title **Lord** ascribed to **Jesus Christ** is the Greek word *kurios* and when the Jews translated the Hebrew Old Testament YHWH into the Greek, in a translation called the LXX, they used this word *kurios*. So the New Testament authors, such as Paul, by using *kurios* of Jesus Christ are identifying Jesus Christ as YHWH. They very clearly state the deity of Jesus Christ by referring to Him as *kurios*. So we have no question that the NT authors held to the undiminished deity of Jesus Christ as distinct from the Father in Person yet identical to the Father in essence. There is no question. I don't care how many Jehovah's Witnesses knock on the door. If Jesus Christ is not God, then Christians are not saved. Why? Because what's eternal life? It's to know God. But if Jesus is God then when we know Jesus we don't know God. We know a creature named Jesus. But we don't have eternal life then. How can knowing a creature named Jesus be eternal life when Jesus Christ isn't eternal? So the linkage here between being **in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ** is fantastically significant. It means that to be in one is to be in the other. And that is to have eternal life.

Now then, he describes how it is we come to have this eternal life, how we came to be in this stupendous position. **Grace to you and peace. Grace**, is usually defined as "unmerited favor," but the word also means "enablement." By "unmerited favor" we mean that God... always start with God and work your way down to man. God is holy, by which we mean He is righteous and He is just. Most theologians define holiness by referring to righteousness and justice and many passages link righteousness and justice to his holiness. Holiness is the core attribute of God. Now, by righteousness we mean that

God Himself is the standard for what is right and wrong everywhere and always. And there is no standard of right and wrong outside of Himself to which God or man can reach out and say "this is goodness." The Greeks posited that there was a world of abstracts in which there is goodness, love, justice, etc.... This is not biblical Christianity. Goodness is defined by the nature of God. On the other hand, justice, the justice of God means that God does not play favorites. When God judges according to his standard your personality is not considered, your good looks are not considered, the color of your skin is not considered, how tall you are is not considered. Those things don't impress God. You're a sinner and only Jesus Christ impresses God. So when we speak of grace as unmerited favor we look at it through the doctrine of God and man. On God's side, we said that He's holy - meaning He's righteous and just. He's the standard and He's not going to loosen the standards to accept some men. The standard is rigid and absolute. Man is a sinner separated from the life of God; we have no merit with God. Therefore, it is solely through the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, through His death on the cross for our sin that his merit can be imputed to us through faith. This is what it means for God to show us unmerited favor. He poured out his grace upon us, on the basis of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ through faith.

The second meaning of the word **grace**, and there are others, but in this context we speak of these two; unmerited favor and enablement. Enablement means or implies inability on the part of man. Inability to do what? Inability to believe. Left to himself man will not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. John 6:44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." This has to happen. The Father must draw men to the Son. The way He does this is He sends men to preach the word of God, that way sinners hear the word of God and when the Holy Spirit convicts sinners of sin, righteousness and judgment they are enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved. Without that drawing ministry men will not come to believe and be saved. It's the nature of sin to reject the gospel, so if we believe the gospel it is because God has drawn us to Himself through the preaching of the gospel under the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. If you have yet to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you have not enjoyed his grace, I encourage you to partake of the free gift that He bestows on all who believe, just as the Thessalonians.

So, first you need grace. Grace is God's unmerited favor which enables a man to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and that brings us to the result, which is the second word, **peace**. **Peace** is a word used to describe a situation of friendliness and not enmity. In war allies are at peace with one another. As a result of God's grace those who have believed are at peace with God. We were formerly at enmity with Him, hostile to Him, but now we have peace through the Lord Jesus Christ. Now that summarizes Paul's, Silas', and Timothy's greeting **To the church of the Thessalonians in God the father and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace**. It's positional truth and it defines how a person enters into a position of peace with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, by grace.

Now we come to verse 2 down through verse 5, and this is a single sentence in the Greek text. And if you know your English then a single sentence has a single thought, there's one core idea to every sentence. Paul was very brilliant, his background was in Greek philosophy and Jewish theology, and he was very well-rounded in the world of ideas. And people who are exposed to the great ideas and have keen intellects are often very articulate and you may have trouble following what these people say. Paul is one such person. It's my conclusion that God the Holy Spirit chose Paul to write almost half the New Testament to keep the church busy for the next 2000 years trying to understand what he said. Even Peter said that Paul wrote many things that are hard to understand. And that's coming from a Jew and here we Gentiles are, we don't have Peter's Jewish background, we don't speak Greek, we don't live in the Mediterranean world and we live 2000 years later. So how hard do you think it is for us to understand Paul? Don't be discouraged by this but do realize this is not easy stuff. This is a complex sentence of 81 words in the Greek language. How many sentences have we written with 81 words? I don't often string together that many thoughts in a complex sentence like this.

So let's look at it. Keep in mind that these truths all relate to salvation, our first S. I'm covering many, many salvation truths. In verse 2, **We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; ³constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, ⁴knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; ⁵for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just**

as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. This is all one sentence and so let's take it piece by piece.

The first piece is the main idea of the sentence **We give thanks to God always for all of you**, that's the main idea. Paul, Silas and Timothy all give thanks to God always, or without ceasing, for all of you, that is, for all their converts at Thessalonica. Now think of the historical situation. They had come, they had preached the gospel and then suddenly they had to depart and now they were cut off from these new converts. But observe that they did not forget about them. Instead, the sudden departure impressed upon their hearts the need to continually give thanks to God for them. We all have a tendency to forget people who we spent a very short time with because we get busy with other things, the tasks at hand. So this tells you something about the lives of Paul and Silas and Timothy. Rather than forgetting past labors and past people, they remembered them each and every day and gave **thanks to God** for them. Do we do this for others? Do we intentionally remember them? Paul, Silas, and Timothy, it says, gave thanks **always for all of them**. This is continual thanksgiving, daily thanksgiving. And when we come to the conclusion of the letter and chapter 5 Paul will instruct us to "pray without ceasing." So the book begins with a mention of these men's prayer life and ends with an exhortation for us to mimic their prayer life, pray without ceasing.

Observe how these men gave thanks to God by the participial phrase, **making mention of you in our prayers**. Here we have insight into the prayer life of Paul, Silas, and Timothy. The first observation we make is that these men had a definite prayer life. And that prayer life is a daily prayer life. Whether they set aside time each day or it had become such a habit that it was an integral part of each day we don't know. But do observe that these men engaged in prayer daily. The second observation is that there is a presuppositional undergirding of prayer. The presupposition of a daily prayer life is that there's a Person on the other end of the line that hears you and is not just any person, it's a Person who is able to hear the prayers of all men and answer the prayers of all men. To do this, this person must be omniscient, knowing all things and sovereign, in control of all things. He must control whatsoever comes to pass. If He does not control whatsoever comes to pass then when He goes to answer our prayer there may be forces that can hinder His answer to our prayer. So the presupposition underneath

prayer is that there is a God who is there who is listening and who controls whatsoever comes to pass. The third observation is that it seems that Paul, Silas and Timothy had joint prayer. The reason we say that is because how could Paul who composed the letter know that Silas and Timothy had continued to make mention of them in their prayers? Paul says **we make mention of you**, not I. Granted Paul could have asked Silas and Timothy but more likely they were following the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, wherever two or three are gathered in My name I am in the midst. They prayed together.

Now another participial phrase, verse 3, **constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ**. Three famous words are used in this verse; **faith**, **love**, and **hope**. Some commentators make this the theme of the book and divide the book, according to three sections one on faith, one on love, and one on hope. But were not taking that approach, I think that's a forced approach. Nevertheless, let us understand that on a daily basis Paul, Silas and Timothy remembered these three things about the Thessalonians. So they must've been impressed with the visible changes in the lives of the new converts.

Let's look at the **work of faith**. Usually we contrast works with faith and Paul said elsewhere that we are saved by grace through faith and not of works, lest any man should boast. This is not a contradiction to this truth. We are saved through faith and not works. The **works of faith** are simply the visible manifestations of faith in God's promises. As believers have faith in the promises of God works are a result. Paul, Silas and Timothy could see the works that were produced by their faith as they learned God's word and trusted God's promises.

The second thing they remembered constantly was their **labors of love**. These are the labors that are the visible manifestation of their love for the Lord. Love for the Lord is obeying the Lord's commandments. Jesus said, "if you love me you will keep my Commandments." So as we learn to obey the Lord's commandments we have no difficulty laboring, though it may be toilsome work, though it may be burdensome, each one must carry his own load, yet it stems from loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ which Paul, Silas and Timothy observed in the Thessalonians.

The third thing they remembered constantly about the Thessalonians was their **hope in our Lord Jesus Christ**. Hope in the Greek language means certainty, not hope in the sense that we normally think of it as “I hope something happens” but I’m uncertain. This term in the Greek meant certainty. You might translate it their **certainty in our Lord Jesus Christ**. Certainty of what? Certain that the Lord Jesus Christ would return and because of their certainty they lived each day as if the Lord could return at any moment. Now this was while Paul, Silas and Timothy were with them. Paul, Silas and Timothy observed them living each day with this certainty. After they left it seems that the Thessalonians began to be confused about this doctrine and that's why Paul clarifies in chapter 4 and chapter 5, both the Surety of the resurrection and their Safety from the day of the Lord.

So we have their work of faith, their labor of love, and their **hope in our Lord Jesus Christ**. Faith, hope, and love are invisible, but they are made visible through works, labor and daily expectation. If we have faith in the Lord’s promises then there will be visible works which manifest that faith. If we have love for the Lord it will be visible labor which manifest that love. And if there is daily expectation of our Lord Jesus Christ's any moment return it will be manifest our hope. Otherwise, Paul, Silas and Timothy could not say they had remembered these things. So they were obviously made manifest for them to see.

Now it is one thing that Paul, Silas and Timothy had observed these things, but it is a wholly other thing for God the Father to observe these things. For God the Father can see not only the visible manifestations of faith, hope, and love, through our works, labor and expectation of the Lord’s coming but he can also see the motive in our hearts. And this is what it means at the end of verse three by the expression **in the presence of our God and Father**. Before him our hearts are laid open and our heart motive is laid bare. This is what really matters since this is the source that will be considered when our works are evaluated. Were our works done by means of the flesh or by means of the Spirit? If by the flesh that we may deceive others and ourselves into thinking that we are producing something for God's glory that will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ. But if by the Spirit then we are truly producing something for God's glory that will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ. However, understand that we cannot even know the motives of all of our hearts. But be encouraged because God does know the

motives of our hearts, and even if we doubt our hearts, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. In the day of the believer's judgment before the Lord Jesus Christ our motives will be laid bare and we will be rewarded accordingly. If we are continually abiding in Christ and He in us then we have confidence before the judgment seat of Christ. So there is a record of our works done by means of the Spirit **in the presence of our God and Father.**

Verse 4, here Paul comes to another participial phrase, beginning with the perfect tense of the verb *oida* which means "to know." Paul says we have come to know something; they didn't know something but then, in the past they came to know something with the effect that they still know something about the Thessalonians. So let's see what they came to know about them.

Knowing, brethren, beloved by God, His choice of you, that our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; Now the point Paul is making is that they have come to certain knowledge of their election. This is the answer to a great question. How can you know if someone is elect? Most people will say you can't know if someone's elect but Paul says you could know that. He says in Phil 4:3 certain people's names are written in the book of life. He says here he has come to know that these Thessalonians were chosen by God. So the question he answers here is, "How he knew if someone was elect?"

Now we're getting the word "elect" from the expression in verse 4, **His choice of you.** That word **choice** is *ekloge* which means "selection, choice, election." And there's nothing wrong with this word election. It's a doctrine in Scripture. Everyone believes the doctrine of election. They simply believe either that God chooses men or men choose God. Actually both are true and I want you to turn to Acts 13:48 to see this. Turn to Acts 13:48. This is more of Paul; this is Paul's first recorded sermon in the Book of Acts. It's a very lengthy record and we gather that this is how Paul delivered a gospel message in a synagogue where his address was to Jews. To see how he delivered a gospel message on the streets to Gentiles you can look at Acts 14 at Lystra or Acts 17 at Athens. The substance of the gospel is the same but the presentation is tailored for the Jewish or Gentile audience. And notice at the conclusion of this sermon to the Jews verse 48, **and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.** So which comes first? The appointment to eternal life or the belief? In the Greek grammar the participle

appointed is in the perfect tense and the main verb **believed** is an aorist tense. Whenever you have that structure it means the participial action occurs *before* the main verb which means they were appointed before they believed. So what are we going to do about this? The verse teaches that they were appointed to eternal life first, then they believed. Both are true but how do we understand this such that man is not a robot?

I want to show you that through the Creator-creature distinction and the doctrine of language how both can be true without a contradiction. Now the first point you must have clear is that Election Presupposes the Creator-creature distinction. The first thing we do is draw God in the open box, He's infinite, and He's got attributes; He's sovereign, righteous, just, love, omniscient and so forth. Down here we have man, he's locked in this box and he has attributes that correspond to God's but are not identical so we have choice, conscience, love, knowledge and so on. The problem comes when we look down from our finite position and try to figure out this big problem of God's sovereignty and man's choice. And God comes along and says, I elect so and so and at the same time tells man to believe and be saved. How does this work?

Let's apply this to the area of language. I'm convinced a lot of the confusion on this doctrine comes down to the words we use and the content we fill them with, which comes from our worldview. So let's take the verb choose and look at it from the worldview of the Creator-creature distinction. Here we have two levels so how many levels of language do we have? If we have two levels of being then we have two levels of language. So when the Creator chooses something the verb choose takes on its meaning from the being of the Creator and when man chooses something the verb choose takes on its meaning from the being of the creature. So does God choose man? Yes. Does man choose God. Yes. Both are true and there's not a contradiction because of the Creator-creature distinction. In other words, when we say "God chose so and so" the verb "chose" does not mean the same thing as when we say "so and so chose Jesus Christ" in the sense of believing in Him. It means something similar but it does not mean something identical. Why people get confused is because they think that the verb chose must mean the same thing in both sentences, but that's a violation of the Creator-creature distinction. Language cannot apply to God and man in an identical way, similar but not identical. Let me illustrate. Take the expression God loves. Is that true? Yes. Now take

the expression man loves. Is that true? Yes. But do we mean the same thing by love in those two expressions? No, we do not. It's the same thing with the verb choose. So there really is no problem with the two ideas that God sovereignly chooses certain men and certain men choose to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Both are true. The Creator-creature distinction.

What really bothers people is that he chooses some people and not others. But hey, He's the Creator, right? He chose what He created, He chose what color things are, He chose who we are, He chose the visible light spectrum for the human eye, He chose the bond angles of the water molecule, that's His choice. And He chose some of the Thessalonians and not others. We may not like that, we may feel offended, but if we feel offended, that which is in our heart that feels offended, do you know what it is? It's a prideful desire to be God. See, a lot of people don't get the point, the doctrine of election is like a 2 x 4 that comes up along the side of the head and bang, it wallops you, realizing that He calls the shots, not us. But however we visualize Him doing this we ought not to visualize God's election of us like some deterministic cause-effect reaction. That's a pagan visualization that always erases personal responsibility because paganism cannot conceive of controlling real people without force. God can do that. How He does that I have no earthly understanding.

The Second point of election is that Election Presupposes the Fall. Think about this one. We're fallen, sinful beings. The whole human race is. God didn't make us this way, God originally made everything perfect. But through a responsible human choice the human race fell under the penalty of sin. So the whole human race is screwed up. What election asserts is that God comes in as the Creator and He remakes some of it, but He leaves some of it - that is what election is all about. People say that's unfair. Is that unfair? Who are we? We're sinners. Would God be fair if He sent everyone to hell? Yes, He would. He's not obligated to fix any of the human race. He would have been perfectly fair sending all of us to hell. That's why it's grace that He remakes some of us. The real question is why does He remake some of us.

The third point of election and the one we'll conclude with today because it's taught in our verses is this: Election Reveals New Thoughts from God's Mind. When election happens in time it is revelation, its revelation never before seen by man nor predicted by man. It's a surprise event. Think about your

own life. You were trotting along somewhere going about your life, your education, your family, your business and someone, somewhere explained to you the gospel and you believed. Think of what the other person must have thought of you. They had no idea whether you were elect or not? They were just sharing the gospel, they may have thought you would never believe, but you did. That's a revelation of what was on God's mind. That person just learned when you believed, something that has always been on God's mind, heretofore never revealed.

This is a very healthy aspect of the doctrine of election and here's why. It ties election in with historical significance. One of the failures of hyper-Calvinism was you had this supralapsarian order of decrees and the elect were already decided in the mind of God before He decided to create man so that this distanced election from having any real historical significance. They speak of people walking around who are unsaved but elect. Historically that has led to a very weak evangelism among the Reformed group. In fact, what is striking is that the Puritans, some of the greatest Christian thinkers of all time,

didn't evangelize their own children because they just supposed that if they were elect then they'd be saved and the whole thing died out in a couple of generations. So that's a distortion of this. The way to think about it that has helped me is to think of time going along, and think of God's existence up here, and history down here. God in His mind has always known who the elects are and who the non-elect are, obviously because He's omniscient. But in history, what I'm trying to do is make the point that the elect do not come into existence until the gospel is preached and they believe, so if this X represents the gospel witness, somebody sharing the gospel, this is the person believing, that's the point where the elect ones exist, they don't even exist prior to that point.

ELECTION A SURPRISE EVENT

Time:



Now they exist in God's mind, yes, but so did angels before God created them. If you get this idea here, what it does, it means that every time you witness, or I witness, or we share the gospel, it means that that sharing of the gospel, that evangelism is the very means that is being used to generate the elect.

The elect are never conceived as elect, you don't ever have the spectacle in the Bible of unbelieving elect people, it's not there. The term is always reserved for post-belief. And that means that this act of witnessing, that "call" that comes through the gospel, is not an impotent sorting device but the very means by which God creates the elect in time.

Notice 1 Thess 1:4 now, Paul says, **knowing, brethren, beloved of God, His choice of you, ⁵that our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction;** in other words, what did we say earlier? God has means of calling forth the elect and it's by preaching the gospel, the gospel being the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The way Paul preaches it is not just to talk about the death and the resurrection. Again if you look at Acts 13, 14 and 17 you'll see how Paul contextualized the death and resurrection as the logical conclusion to the OT, but notice that when they preached it to the Thessalonians it **did not come to them in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.** That's a whole string of Salvation truths. The gospel is preached and it falls on ears that hear only words and they don't believe, but to some it falls on ears with **power and in the Holy Spirit** is working to **convict** that person of sin. And when that occurs the person believes. See, God has to do the work, God has to sovereignly initiate and yes, man has to believe, but man is going to believe only because God sovereignly initiates and draws men to Himself, convicting them of sin, righteousness and justice.

So how did Paul, Silas and Timothy come to know that these Thessalonians were elect? How do you know if someone is elect? It's very simple. If someone believes the Gospel they are God's elect. If you believe the gospel you are God's elect. He chose you.

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