



## Becoming An Example 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10

Throughout the history of the New Testament the church has predominantly been characterized as being unfaithful and worldly.

### 1. John's Letters (Rev 2-3)

Of the 7 churches that John addressed 5 of the 7 were so unfaithful and worldly that God gave them a severe rebuke and stern warning that if they didn't repent and turn away from wickedness and return to their first love that He'd be forced to judge them.

- Ephesus - remove their lampstand
- Pergamum - war against them with the sword of God's own mouth
- Thyatira - cast them on a bed of sickness
- Sardis - appeared healthy on the outside but were already dead inside
- Laodicea - lukewarm and spit out of God's mouth

### 2. Paul's Letters

All but one of the churches that Paul wrote letters to caused him great heartache. It's clear that he had serious concern about their vitality because most of them were drawn towards carnality, licentiousness. They were spiritually weak, legalistic and drawn towards mysticism. The church at Corinth was so bad and so worldly that Paul was concerned that he might have labored in vain, that all he had suffered and invested and endured on their behalf had been for nothing.

The only church that appears to have brought Paul joy, the only church that appears to have been strong and growing and faithful is Thessalonica. What is it about this church that made them so special, that gave Paul so much joy, that made him so thankful?

## Review

**1 Thessalonians 1:2-5a** We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, 3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

- Paul was thankful because he was able to bear witness to the evidence of their salvation.

- He mentions knowing that they were chosen. How'd he know that? (He saw the birthmarks of the Holy Spirit's activity and presence in their lives.)

Work of faith - outworking of their saving/genuine faith in Christ

- (describe - change and adjust to conform to their new Lord/King/Savior)

Labor of love - intensity of their love for Jesus, church, world

- (describe - sin, world, church, brothers)

Steadfastness of hope - full weight of enduring confidence

- (describe)

### 1 Thessalonians 1:5b You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

- They not only heard the words of the gospel, but they saw it lived out in the life of Paul (how?). There was **harmony** between the content of the message and the character and conduct of the messenger.

There is no greater witness/testimony than for others to see Christ in you!

- salvation isn't just a transfer out of hell and into heaven
- the will of God is Christ-like character (Phil 1:6, 1 Thess 4:3)

What evidence is there in your life of genuine salvation? Is there enough to convict of being Christian? What do others really see?

- it's not just about what you "know" but about how you live, about your character (Christ formed in you - Gal 4:19)

### 1 Thessalonians 1:6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

- **imitators** (mimetes) - to mimic, imitate or copy

The idea is that the Thessalonian believers were following the example of what they saw in the life of Paul (not that he was perfect, but he was an example of godliness), with Christ Himself serving as the final object of their imitation. Paul would be the imperfect example, Christ the perfect, unblemished example.

- cycle, pattern
- it's easy to set an example when times are good, these guys set the example in much afflictions

Who are you choosing to imitate today?

- **affliction** (thlypsis) - hard pressed (visual of capital punishment with heavy boulder)

one of the first things they'd do in ancient times is separate the family

- not simply name calling or petty suffering

Paul was beaten and run out of most cities because of the gospel (Acts 16-17)

- Jason was beaten, thrown in jail, forced to pay bail money

Thessalonian believers

- ridiculed, physically beaten and persecuted, thrown in jail, seen as community outcasts and traitors, disowned from families, lost jobs, etc.
- great personal cost

- **joy of the Holy Spirit**

not dependent on external circumstances (Acts 16:25 - Paul and Silas singing in jail)

dependent on the internal reality that comes from life in Christ (how? why?)

- knowing we've been rescued, saved from God's wrath because of our sin
- understanding how much we've been forgiven and knowing that we are no longer at war against God

salvation might have brought temporary affliction/persecution/suffering, but it promised eternal rejoicing

can't artificially generate joy...happiness yes, but not joy

it's a choice we make...where is our focus/anchored?

**1 Thessalonians 1:7** so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

- **became an example** (typos) - meaning as a stamp or a die, as in instruments to make an impression with.

Paul was commending the Thessalonians for being model believers which were leaving their mark on others throughout Greece- Macedonia in the north and Achaia in the south.

this is the only church that Paul wrote telling them that their faith was an example that inspired the discipleship of others

mission of disciple-making disciples is a process - they followed the example of Paul and grew and matured in their faith until ultimately they set the example and made disciples of others

This is discipleship 101...Paul was obeying what Christ commanded in Matt 28 AND modeling it for/with Timothy

- layers of discipleship (church, CGs, smaller discipleship groups)

**Matthew 28:19-20** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

**2 Timothy 2:1-2** You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 2 and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Idea is that discipleship is by design and doesn't end with just the growth and maturity of the elect individual. Discipleship is a continuous cycle of spiritual multiplication whereby believers first look to others stronger and more mature Christians to follow (imitate), so that (purpose) they can then become examples of others to follow...unending cycle of making disciple-making disciples of Jesus Christ.

**1 Thessalonians 1:8** For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.

- they became both models and messengers of the gospel

following Paul's example, there was harmony between the message of the gospel and the character of the messenger

Idea is that the story of what God was doing in the Thessalonians believers was so out of the ordinary/impressive that others/witnesses were already spreading the word about it as they traveled throughout the known world at that time.

Paul probably received word from travelers while he was still in Corinth

What was happening that so impressed others? (vs. 9-10)

- reception of Paul, Silas
- turning to God from idols

**1 Thessalonians 1:9** For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

- **kind of reception** (vs. 3-5)

responded to the gospel evidenced by changed lives

work of faith, labor of love, steadfastness of hope

- grew, matured, never wavered
- 2 Cor 8:1-5 speaks about the sacrificial giving of the church in Thessalonians

- **turned to God from idols**

Greek mythology and Roman cultic worship deeply ingrained and normal part of everyday life in that society

- Worship/sacrifice to various Gods depending on what they wanted
  - Nike - Goddess of victory (war, olympics)
  - Poseidon - God of the sea (safe voyage)
  - Demeter - Goddess of agriculture (abundant crops to eat)
  - Ares - God of war (victorious over enemies)
  - Athena - Goddess of wisdom (big decisions)
  - Hermes - God of roadways (safe travel)
- When they turned from idols it would have made them look so radically different from the world around them.

What are some of the idols people follow today?

- pleasure, entertainment (TV shows, sports teams, etc.), success, fame, American dream, money, power

Idea is that God and idols can't coexist. You can always tell what someone really values by how they spend their resources (time, money, passion, etc.).

So how does God view idolatry?

- folly of idolatry (Isaiah 44:9-20)

**The greatest impact we will ever have on the world around us is the gospel lived out, not just the gospel proclaimed. The true gospel is not just proclaimed, it's practiced.**

**1 Thessalonians 1:10** and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

- **wait for his Son**

those who truly love Jesus will naturally long for and begin to anticipate His return because they know it brings to fulfillment God's eternal purpose

- eternal purpose - for Jesus to die for the elect so that they could be delivered before God pours out His wrath
- The more you grow in your faith the deeper you love for Jesus, His word and His church will be. The more your faith and love grow and develop the stronger your desire will be for Jesus' return.

- **Jesus who delivers** (John 6:35-40, 14:1-3)

delivers from what?

- wrath to come
- Idea is for them not to **misunderstand** that affliction from the world it's not the same as God's wrath when He returns.
- We will endure affliction, be delivered from wrath

**Chosen by God...this is how we know (1 Thess 1:2-5)**

**Becoming an example...this is how it is designed to work (1 Thess 1:6-10)**

**If God would have one of the apostles write a letter to our church, what would they say about us? Would they commend us for being disciple-making disciples of Jesus Christ or correct us for being a weak and worldly?**