

SIX MARKS OF SAVING GRACE

1 THESSALONIANS 1:4-10 • TV140B

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1 Thessalonians 1:4-10

“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

I have a message for you taken from the **Book of 1 Thessalonians chapter 1**, entitled: **“SIX MARKS OF SAVING GRACE.”**

I think you will find this most interesting but I would like for you to open your Bible to **1 Thessalonians chapter 1**. We are going to begin with **verse 2 and go through verse 10**. The subject is: **“SIX MARKS OF SAVING GRACE.”**

Now, the apostle Paul wisely ascribes all things to God. In **verse 2** of this chapter of **1 Thessalonians**, he says: *“we give thanks to God always for you all.”*

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Now, Paul had ministered to these people and they were special to him. He loved them; he had actually been God's instrument to bring them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He had preached the Gospel to these people and they had heard the Gospel from Paul and believed it and they had been saved by God's grace.

Paul takes no credit or praise; he gives all thanks to God. He says: "*We give thanks to God always for all* (every one of you, old and young, rich and poor, and black and white); *we give thanks to God for you.*"

Our Lord Jesus Christ said to his disciples: "*you didn't choose me; I chose you.*" Again, Paul wrote these words: "*we are his workmanship; created in Christ Jesus.*"

Then he said: "*It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Of him are you in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*"

So, Paul had every reason to give thanks to God because "*all things are of God.*" So, he begins this passage of Scripture with these words: "*we give thanks to God always for you all.*"

Over in **1 Thessalonians**, I believe it is **Chapter 5:18 or 19**, it says: "*in everything give thanks.*" (in good things and bad things, in everything). "*In everything give thanks always to God for this is the will of God for you.*"

It's not hard for us to give thanks for good things is it? It is rather difficult for us to praise and to thank God for trials and tribulations, heartaches, and these things. But, he says: "*in everything give thanks.*"

So, here the apostle begins this passage of Scripture with these words: "*I give thanks to God always, for all of you.*"

Then he says: "*I pray for you. I remember your work of faith.*" Now, it's because you believe that you work in the Master's vineyard. You don't work in the Master's vineyard in order to receive his favor, it's because you are an object of His favor that you do work. It's because you believe that you do work. He calls your work: "*a work of faith.*"

Then he says: "*I remember your labor of love.*" It's because you love Him that you labor in the service of others, because you love.

Then Paul says: "*I remember your patience of hope,*" it's because you have a good hope in Christ that you are patient in trial. You see; Abraham's trial did not produce faith, it revealed faith. God didn't send Abraham through these trials to see if he had faith; it was to prove his faith. It was to reveal his faith.

Because we have faith, we work. Because we love Christ, we labor in service of others. Because we have a certain, sure, stead-fast hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, then we can be patient under trials, "*for*

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all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

We know that and then we can have patience. Patience is built upon that foundation, the foundation of hope.

All right, let's see where we are now. Paul opens the chapter and says we (Paul, Silas and Timothy) send our greetings to the church at Thessalonica. They said: *“grace be unto you and peace from God the father and from our Lord Jesus Christ:*

“We give thanks to God for you.” We don't take the praise and the credit for you or for your faith or for your stead-fastness, or for your loyalty, or for your salvation. We don't take the credit. We don't brag about the fact that we have won you to the Lord; *“We give thanks to God for you and we pray for you.”*

I don't know of anything that we can say about or to one another that carries more meaning than this; *“I pray for you:”* I call your name in prayer. I make mention of you in prayer every day: *“for I remember your work of faith. I remember your labor of love. I remember your patience of hope.”*

Now, look at **verse 4**; Paul said: *“knowing brethren, beloved, and your election of God.”* Brethren; I know that you are God's elect.

First of all: Paul knew that God had an elect people! Over in **Romans 11:5** the apostle Paul says: *“even so, at this present time there is an election according to grace,”* (not of works but according to God's sovereign grace).

What made Paul say this? Well, there was a prophet by the name of Elijah who was all alone. He thought he would battle the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel; he would battle wicked queen Jezebel and King Ahab.

All the people were turned against him. He just said: *“Lord; why don't you kill me; I'm the only one left. Why don't you just kill me and take me out of this world; I'm the only one left.”*

God said: *“Elijah; you are not the only one. I have reserved unto myself 7,000 men. I have reserved to myself 7,000 men who have not bowed their knee to Baal.”* That's when Paul said: *“Even so; at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”*

So, Paul knew that God had an elect people. It doesn't matter how dark the day; God has an elect people in this day, *“out of every tribe, kindred, nation and tongue, under heaven.”* That's why we are exhorted to *“go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”* because God has a people in every tribe and nation under heaven.

Secondly: Paul knew not only that God had an elect people but he knew that those elect people must and will hear the Gospel and believe that Gospel

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He says: *“The preaching of the cross is foolishness to them who are perishing but to them who are being saved, it’s the power of God, and it’s the wisdom of God:*

“God hath chosen by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, for faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” Our Lord said: *“He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life.”*

Are you with me? Paul knew that God had an elect people; he knew that. He knew that those people must and will hear the Gospel and believe it.

Thirdly: He was willing to endure all things that those people might hear that Gospel! He was willing to endure stoning and shipwreck, imprisonment, hatred, suffering, whatever. He says in **2 Timothy 2:10:** *“Therefore, I endure all things for the elect’s sake that they may also obtain that salvation which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

One time Paul was abused and mistreated and hated in a certain city and he was just about to leave. He was leaving there and the Lord came to him and said to him: *“Paul; don’t be afraid. No man is going to do you any harm; you stay here and preach; I have much people in this city.”*

Paul stayed there a year and a half and God saved many people: *“I have much people in this city so don’t leave, stay around.”* So, Paul was willing to endure whatever persecution or hatred or humiliation or whatever, in order that God’s elect might hear the Gospel.

Fourthly: Paul rejoiced and praised God when he found those who heard, believed, and embraced the Gospel! He wrote in **2 Thessalonians 2:13:** *“we are bound to give thanks always to God for you beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.”*

I had a man say to me one time: “I don’t believe in election.” I said: “You don’t; are you a Christian?” He said: “Yes.” I said: “Are you a believer?” He said: “Yes.” And you don’t believe in election? “No.”

I said: “Answer three questions for me. Will you answer three questions and answer them from the Bible. Don’t answer them from the top of your head now; answer them from God’s Word:

First of all: Did you choose God or did he choose you? Well, he said: “God chose me.”

Second: When did he choose you? Well, he said: “When I believed.” I said: “That’s not what the Bible says.” It says: *“He chose me before the foundation of the world.”*

Third; Why did he choose you, why, why you? He said: *“According to the good pleasure of his own will.”* I said: “My friend; any man who believes the Bible, who believes God, has got to believe in election. The word is used too many times in God’s Word.

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“God shall send forth his angels and gather his elect.” The Lord said: *“The antichrist shall deceive many. If it were possible, the very elect, but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.”* You can just go right on through the Word: *“elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth.”*

Then, here in **1 Thessalonians 1:4** Paul says: *“Brethren; I thank God for you, pray for you. I remember your work of faith and he said: I thank God that you are one of his elect.”*

He gives six reasons; why he believes that these people were elect people, were God’s chosen people or God’s special people.

You know, the Scripture calls them a *“holy nation, a royal priesthood.”* It calls them: *“God’s jewels.”* The Lord Jesus Christ called them *“my sheep, the brethren, a holy nation.”*

Here are six reasons Paul gives for believing these people at Thessalonica were the elect of God!

First of all: In **verse 5**; do you see it? He said: *“Knowing brethren, beloved, your election of God, verse 5 now: for our gospel came not, not to you in word only.”*

That’s the way that most men hear the Gospel, in fact, that’s the way that every man hears the Gospel. That’s the way every man has to hear the Gospel, in words, vehicles of thought.

There’s no way that you can know what I am thinking if I don’t tell you. I have to either write the words or speak the words. If I just stand before this camera and look into this television set and never open my mouth, you are not going to know what I’m thinking.

Words are vehicles of thought. So, everybody who hears the Gospel hears it in words. You have to hear it that way. Our Lord said: *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”* You’ve got to hear it in words.

But, he says to these people: the elect of God, hear in another way, another way besides just words. How’s that? He says: *“They hear it in power and in the Holy Ghost.”* They hear it in much assurance. The word of faith we preach to you is a word that you hear with the heart.

Now, the Gospel is called *“a mystery”* in the Word of God. There’s a difference in hearing words and doctrines and truths with the natural ear than hearing the Holy Ghost teach the Gospel in the heart.

There’s a difference. When you hear the Holy Ghost speak in power you find out who God is. You find out the attributes of God, the glory and character of God and the power and wisdom of God.

You find out the condition of man by nature, his fall, his inability, his sinfulness. You find out who Christ is that he came into this world, that God gave Christ to come into this world to redeem sinners.

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You find out about the active and passive obedience of Christ. You might say: “what’s that preacher?” Our Lord in His active obedience fulfilled the law of God and the Word of God. He met it head on and obeyed it and fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law. He actively engaged in fulfilling righteousness for us.

Then, He allowed Himself to be crucified, He was passive, He submitted humbly and passively to the wrath and death and condemnation of the cross. You learn those things; the Holy Spirit teaches them.

You find out about His intercessory work and His priestly work. He said: *“I know your election because you didn’t just hear the gospel in words and doctrines; you heard it in power; you heard it in the Holy Ghost and you heard it in much assurance.”*

Secondly: The second mark of saving grace; Paul says: *“I know you are God’s elect because first of all you heard the gospel in power and in the Holy Ghost:”*

Then he said in **verse 6:** *“You became followers of us and the Lord.”* Our Lord Jesus Christ in describing His sheep in **John Chapter 10** said: *“my sheep hear my voice and they follow me.”* You see; salvation is not just hearing, not even just hearing with the heart, but salvation is following Christ; it’s a committal to Christ.

The apostle Paul said: *“I know whom I have believed. I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed, (I’ve committed, intelligently, willingly, conscientiously I have committed myself to Christ).”*

“If thy shalt confess me before men I will confess you before the Father in heaven. You deny me before men, Christ said: I will deny you before my Father which is in heaven.” Believers are identified with Christ; they follow Him!

So, Paul said: *“I know your election. You heard the gospel with your heart, not in word only, but with the Holy Ghost and power and assurance and you became followers of the Lord.”*

And not only followers of the Lord but believers follow and are identified with one another. They love other believers. They like to be with them. They like to encourage them. They like to exhort them. They like to worship with them. They enjoy the fellowship of other believers.

They are not happy with those who do not love their Lord. They do not enjoy the comradeship or companionship of people who do not love Christ. They love them and wish them well but they would rather be with those who know the Saviour.

So, this is the second mark of saving grace! You hear the Gospel with your heart and believe it and understand the wisdom and the glory of God in the redemptive person, in the redemptive character of Christ and then you follow the Lord.

Thirdly: Look at **verse 7,** *“And you were ensamples (examples), to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.”*

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Now, no believer professes to be perfect. We don't claim perfection, either inwardly or outwardly. We can all say with the apostle Paul: *"I'm not perfect; I have not arrived. I have not apprehended. I have not laid hold upon that for which I've been made hold of by Christ Jesus."*

I'm telling you this, if any man is in Christ Jesus, if any man is in Christ by faith, by the power of God, by the new birth, he's a new creature; he's a new person. He's an example to others.

I didn't say that he was a perfect example. I didn't say he was without fault but he is an example. He said: "You became examples to your friends, to your family, and to your neighbors, examples of love; you love one another and people know that you do."

They detect that spirit of love in your hearts, in your words and in your actions. You are an example of humility. You are an example of honesty. You are an example of grace. You are an example of forgiveness.

You don't hold grudges and seek vengeance. You are an example in giving. You are an example in faithfulness. You are an example in perseverance. You walk and talk like believers; you are examples. *"You became examples;"* that's a mark of saving grace.

Let's look at them again briefly: He said: *"I know brethren, your election of God because you have heard the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and you became followers of the Lord."* You declared yourself. You committed yourself. You openly identified yourself with the master and you became examples to people around about you. They saw something happen in your heart, in your life; something has taken place and you were changed, you were different; you were not the same person.

Fourthly: Then he said: *"You became witnesses!"* He said: *"The word of God sounded out from you in Macedonia, Acacia, and in every place."* In other words, you became a witness of Christ. Our Lord said: *"Ye shall be witnesses unto me and you are my witnesses."* True believers can't help but tell others about Christ.

I hear grandmothers and grandfathers sitting around and talking about their grandchildren. They just can't get them to be quiet; they demand equal time to talk about their grandchildren, why, because they love them. I believe that if a man loves Christ, if he loves the Gospel he is going to talk about it.

I was down in Mexico last week visiting with some missionaries and I had the privilege of preaching in several pueblos there. I went out to one little village, a two or three hour drive over a dirty, rough and rocky road. There were some people knitting like their ancestors did a thousand years ago.

They were grinding their corn with rocks and cooking on rocks outside. They were living in little mud huts with thatch roofs and dirt floors and sleeping in hammocks. They had a group of believers there, a church. I preached to 70 or 80 people there in that little church that they had built, not with American dollars, not with somebody putting a church up and financing it. They did it themselves

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and it took them four years to do it but they laid every rock and every stone and every piece of roofing and they did it themselves.

I talked to these different believers through an interpreter. I preached the gospel through an interpreter. These believers were going to other villages telling about Christ, preaching the Gospel. They were going to these villages and one of them was six hours long one way; they walked six hours one way to preach and six hours back.

They asked us to help them to get a motorcycle so they wouldn't have to walk so far. They said: "But whether you get the motorcycle or not, we are going on and telling men about Christ."

We can't help but tell men about the Lord. He's done so much for us and we are so grateful for his grace and mercy. We love his Word. These men, five of them, seven of them in all, were walking for six hours to preach every week in this village, walking two or three hours another way and walking two or three hours another way, barefooted, some of them, in their old sandals to tell men about Christ.

Witnessing; that's a mark of saving grace. You must tell others about Him whom you love, if you love Christ.

Fifthly: The mark of saving grace in **verse 9**; Paul said: "*you turned to God from your idols to serve the living God.*"

Now, my friend, our God is not dead. We are not worshipping a Christ lying in a coffin. We are not even worshipping a Christ hanging on a cross. We don't worship Christ hanging on a cross. We are not worshipping a dead Christ; we are worshipping a living Lord.

"*You turned to God from your idols to serve the living Lord.*" He died for our sins but He lives. He reigns; He's seated at the right hand of God. Christ said, "*Because I live, ye shall live.*"

Therefore, God is not a statue. God is not a picture and God is not an idol; God is a living God. David said: "*As the deer panteth for the water brook, so panteth my soul after thee, the living God.*"

Jesus Christ our Lord said in **John 17:3**: "*this is eternal life that they might know thee, the only true God (the living God).*" Our Lord said to the woman at the well in **John 4:24**: "*God is Spirit. They that worship him worship him in spirit, (not in picture, not is a statue), but in spirit and in truth.*"

"*Turn from your idols.*" My friend; just like those folks in Mexico, they were persecuted when they turned to Christ, when they turned from these big cathedrals and turned from these old stone cathedrals with their three foot thick walls and burning candles and statues and pictures and all of these things and started worshipping God in spirit and truth.

They are persecuted but they no longer; they tell me they can't worship idols and worship the living God. The Lord Jesus Christ doesn't dwell in temples and cathedrals made by men's hands, with ivy growing on the walls and moss growing on the inside and dampness everywhere.

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He lives; He lives in our hearts. *“We worship him in spirit and in truth. You turned to God from your idols to serve the living God.”*

Our Lord lives. Now, some people’s idols are not all just religious idols. There are idols of fame and idols of pride and idols of self-glory. We make idols out of our children. We make idols out of a lot of things. We idolize people.

We are all just the same and one in Christ. We are brethren. There’s no high and low and rich and poor and male and female and bond and free and Barbarian and Scythian and so-forth. We are one in Christ. Christ is all. We are nothing. He’s everything.

Sixthly: The mark of saving grace; he says in **verse 10:** *“you turned to God from your idols to serve the living God and to wait for his Son from heaven whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come”*

My friend; let me tell you something: I don’t, you don’t, and nobody else knows when the Lord’s coming. And I don’t, you don’t, and nobody else knows what’s going to take place when He comes. A lot of people think they do but they don’t.

They are just making money on these propositions and they are making money on books and other things. They are hucksters and merchandisers of men. They are forecasting the future, and prophesying the future.

We don’t know what’s going to happen when Christ comes. There are some things that I do know:

First of all: He’s coming back; he said so! He said: *“I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again.”*

In His ascension the angel said to the disciples: *“ye men of Galilee; this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manners as you have seen them go.”*

John closed the Bible with these words: *“Even so; come, Lord Jesus.”* He’s coming back. He’s coming back to this earth and He said, *“his reward is with him.”*

I know this; when Christ comes back the dead will be raised and the living will be changed. When He comes back we are going to *“see him as he is.”* We are going to be made like Him.

But, until he comes back I am going to wait for His coming and I’m going to continue to preach the Gospel of His redeeming grace.

I’m more interested in the reign of Christ in your heart right now than the reign of Christ in a little kingdom in Jerusalem so many years from now as some say!