

The Model Church

I Thessalonians 1:7-10

Introduction:

- I want to emphasize that this letter was addressed to a Church, just as most of Paul's other letters. God's plan for us today is through the local church!
- The church was founded by Paul and Silas on Paul's second missionary journey. When Paul and Silas entered Thessalonica it was most likely the first gospel witness ever given there. (Acts 17:1-9). Unfortunately, they were forced out by enemies of the Gospel. However, in just a short time, a small group of Thessalonians came to know Jesus as their Savior and formed a church.
- This letter presupposes a basic truth: Paul thought it important, (even essential) to organize these young converts into a community. Primitive as it may have been, evidently they were still able to carry out the function of a church- a local group of believers assembled together to carry out the Great Commission.
- The church was composed of an eclectic group of people: Jews (though most opposed, some did believe Acts 17:4), Greeks who were probably "proselytes" of Judaism, Females of the more elevated rank and standing in the community, Acts 17:4. They were women of influence, and were connected with distinguished families, and converts from idolatry (1:9). The Gospel is inclusive!
- One of the main purposes of writing was to express thanks to God for them. V. 2-3
- V. 3 "Here for the first time, chronologically, in Paul's writings we have this famous triad: faith, love, hope. But Paul's stress is not on these virtues alone, but rather upon what they produce." (Hiebert)
 - Therefore, their faith produced work – as is the nature of true faith
 - Love produced labor
 - Their hope produced patience
- No one can see these- they are immaterial/abstract qualities But, they can be manifested in definite, visible ways.

I. **THEIR WORK OF FAITH- v. 3**

- a. Work of faith- could entail the whole Christian life work as it is ruled and energized by faith. "The just shall live by faith!"
- b. Faith is not a work- Romans 4:1-5
- c. Many people confuse living the Christian life, with becoming a Christian!
 - i. Faith is first used for salvation- once for all. We call this saving faith
 - ii. It is a conversion- v. 9
- d. They turned to God- the word "turned" is in the aorist tense, which means they turned once for all in a single definite act. As a result of this turning, they also began serving!
- e. Addition by subtraction! They did not simply add Christ to their pantheon of gods and deities. Mt. Olympus was only 50 miles away! Paul contrasted- the living and true God.
- f. In like manner, everyone who is saved turns to God from some false idol, false way of salvation- religion, works, self-effort.
- g. Faith and works- which Paul often contrasts, but here they are joined together. A true faith produces works
- h. What Paul knew certain things about these believers- v. 4
 - i. Election-means chosen. This is a doctrine not understood completely, but believed because the Bible teaches it. Always refers to believers!
 - ii. How can someone know if someone else is part of God's elect? V.4-6 gives the basis for Paul's confidence.
 - iii. Election speaks to the fact that God makes the first move in salvation
 - iv. V.4 Election- is from God's perspective- we need to realize God created the universe and gives purpose to the universe. He directs and guides!
 - v. The great doctrine of election recognizes God as the author and finisher of our faith

- vi. Again it is from God's perspective. The wrong question to ask is- How do I know if I've been chosen? The right approach is- since you have human freedom and responsibility, what will you do with Jesus? (Romans 10:13). If you're saved, you're in Christ and you are part of the elect!
- vii. V. 6- received- to take. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are both taught in Scripture.
- i. The meaning here seems to be, not that all the members of the church at Thessalonica were certainly chosen of God to salvation--for, as in all churches, there might have been those there who were false professors; but that the collective church had given evidence that it was a true church. There are always those in a church that are false professors!
- j. We need faith in our daily walk- illustr- disciples fishing in Luke 5. Faith is acting upon God's word: "Nevertheless at thy word..."
- k. Ephesians 2:8-10

II. LABOR OF LOVE- v. 9 "to serve..."

- a. Beloved we are saved to serve! John 14:15
- b. Love is willing to labor- beareth all things
- c. Christianity is not a life to be endured for duty's sake, it is a Person to be served for love's sake!
- d. D.L. Moody "I may grow weary in the work, but I never grow weary of the work!"
- e. Their zeal prevailed to such a degree that they were themselves examples to all about them, v. 7, 8
- f. The word example, is "tupos"- in English we would say "type." Originally meant- a mark left by a blow, an image, or pattern.
- g. Illustr- "In one residential robbery, the criminal forced entrance into a home, bound and gagged the residents, stole several items of value and then left. As he backed up to turn his car around, he inadvertently left the impression of the

vehicle's license plate clearly imprinted on a snow bank. He was apprehended within hours of the robbery.”

- h. They were a soul-winning church! V. 8
 - i. Their labor was very extensive, and reached beyond the confines of Thessalonica, even to the believers of all Macedonia, and further, in Achaia; the Philippians, and others who received the gospel before the Thessalonians, were edified by their example.
 - ii. They were a pattern for all the other churches around Greece, and even abroad. Perhaps folks traveling down the major trade route, the Egnatian Way came in contact and witnessed their remarkable testimony
- i. I Corinthians 13:13- Our lack of service is indicative of a love issue!

III. **PATIENCE OF HOPE**—see II Thess 1:4

- a. Sophocles, from Ancient Greece, said, “It is hope which maintains most of mankind.” Alexander Pope, “Hope springs eternal in the human breast.” It is human nature to try and find optimism in the future
- b. A Bible hope is different- it is a confident expectation
- c. Produces patience in your trials, showing that you have such a hope of future blessedness that it sustains you in your afflictions. It was the hope of heaven through the Lord Jesus that gave them endurance, stamina, durability.
- d. They set themselves to wait for the Son of God from heaven, v. 10. The believers under the Old Testament waited for the coming of the Messiah, and believers now wait for his second coming; he is yet to come. And there is good reason to believe he will come, because God has raised him from the dead, which is full assurance unto all men that he will come to judgment, Acts 17:31. He came the first time to purchase salvation, and will, when he comes again, bring salvation with him, full and final deliverance from sin, and death!

- e. Many today are placing their “hope” in man, thinking that man can solve all his own problems and bring peace and prosperity to the world. Our hope is not in Hollywood, Washington DC, or Wall Street it rests fully in Jesus!
- f. The rod and scepter that rules this universe is held by nail-pierced hands!
- g. Now, look: "and to wait" [1 Thessalonians 1:10]. In Greek, it is in the present tense- continuous action. What the Greek says is: "and continually, continuously waiting."
- h. To wait expresses the notion of imminence. Christ could come at any time! Many things **may** happen before He comes, but nothing **must** transpire.
 - i. The coming of the Lord is “At hand”
 - ii. The Pre-tribulational Rapture position is the only one that permits the believer to look for Christ’s coming today. We are not looking for the Antichrist, we are waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ!
- i. Wrath is coming!- v. 10
 - i. Could be referring to Hell
 - ii. But it most likely refers to the future day of the Lord, the Tribulation. This supports the pre-tribulational rapture that we will look at in I Thess 4 and 5

Conclusion

- Though these Christians had less than a year of experience, they were familiar with deep Christian truths such as election, sanctification, assurance, the resurrection, and the Day of the Lord
- V. 9-10 show the 3 great examples set by the Thessalonian church (faith, love, hope= turn, serve, wait)
- These unseen virtues are like hidden roots but bear visible abounding fruit!
- May we be a model church and embrace these virtues just the same!