

# 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10 “The Model Church’ May 7, 2023

## I. Welcome and Review

A. Good morning! Ohayogozaimasu! Welcome to Calvary Chapel Iwakuni. It is so good to be here with you all as we gather to worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

1. *Welcome any new faces and those streaming online.*

B. Before we continue any further, let’s go ahead and dismiss our elementary aged children to their Sunday School class.

1. *As well as the Bible English class (Second Service)*

C. Last week we started a new study in our verse by verse teaching of the NT by doing an introduction and overview to Paul’s letter to the church in Thessalonica.

1. We looked at a number of background details regarding the writing of this letter. Things like who wrote the letter, why he wrote the letter, and the timing of the writing of this letter. We looked at the details surrounding the formation of this church and the main theme of this letter written to the church in Thessalonica.

2. We also took just a few minutes to look at Paul’s initial greeting to the church in verse 1 of chapter 1. It is the same greeting he used in pretty much all his other letters. “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

a. Paul loved to start his letters out this way, reminding people that it is only because of the grace of God that we can have the peace of God.

b. Peace with God was granted to us through faith in Jesus Christ. But the peace of God comes when we finally understand that the gospel really is all about the grace of God. When we know and understand the grace of God, how we cannot earn or merit God’s favor, that no manner of works will improve

our standing before God, we can finally live in and appreciate the peace of God in our hearts and minds.

D. This morning, we're going to continue in our study of the book, getting into the rest of chapter 1 and what stood out to Paul the most about this church in Thessalonica.

1. In this opening chapter, we're going to read about the amazing work God did *in* the Thessalonians and *through* the Thessalonians.
2. Even though Paul didn't have a whole lot of time with them to lay a broad foundation and framework for the church to build upon, we'll see that what they did receive took root and brought about an incredible work of God's Spirit.
3. The hope for us this morning is to get through the entirety of chapter 1 and to hopefully even have some time to come to the Lord's Table through Communion seeing as how it is the first Sunday of the month.

E. So, without any further delay, let's jump into God's Word.

1. If you haven't done so already, please make your way to the book of 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. Our text this morning is going to be 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 verses 2-10.
2. I'd like to invite you all to rise to your feet in honor of God and His Holy Word. I'm going to read through our text this morning from my Bible, do your best to follow along in your own Bible. Paul continues the beginning of his letter with the following in chapter 1 verse 2... (R & P)

## II. Intro & Outline;

A. It's been said that there is no such thing as a perfect church. And that if you ever come across what you believe to be the perfect church, that you shouldn't join it because as soon as you did, you would ruin it.

1. The truth of the matter is that there is no such thing as a perfect church, for a perfect church would require perfect people. Which you and I are not. We are imperfect people, being perfected by the sanctifying work of God's Spirit.
  2. It is a work that God will continue to do until the day He calls us home.
- B. So there is no such thing as a perfect church. But there are model churches, or ideal churches, churches that are exemplary and worthy of our emulation.
1. And it would seem, based upon our reading this morning, that Paul had high regard for this particular church in Thessalonica. Paul was amazed and so thankful to God for the great work God had done, and was continuing to do, in and through them.
  2. So much so that this church became a model for other churches throughout the area to learn from and follow after.
- C. The title of our study this morning is going to be "**The Model Church**".
1. The church in Thessalonica was not a perfect church; they had their issues, some things that they struggled with and certain doctrinal points that confused them.
  2. But they were a model church. A church that other churches heard about and were encouraged to follow after. A church Paul was very proud of and thankful for.
- D. As we go through our text this morning we're going to note why Paul was so thankful for this particular church and what it was that set them apart.
1. For those of you who like to take notes and/or outline our text, we're going to break up this text into 5 small sections. And within each section will note a few things that stood out to Paul, things Paul mentioned

that made this church the kind of church we can model ourselves after.

2. My hope as we go through this text is that the things we note about the church in Thessalonica would be things that are characteristic of the work God is doing here. And if they aren't that we would look to learn and grow where we fall short, that we too may be the kind of church that God can use to as a model for what the church ought to be like today.

E. So let's dive into the first section of our text this morning in verses 2-4 where Paul gives **thanks to God for the church in Thessalonica.**

III. 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4; Thanksgiving to God for the Thessalonians

A. In these verses Paul writes about how thankful he was to God for the church in Thessalonica and how he was constantly reminded of the amazing work God was doing in and through them.

1. This church was a very young church, a church that didn't have a ton of experience in their newfound faith, and yet they were a church that God was moving mightily through.

2. As Paul went to the Lord in thanksgiving and prayer, he was constantly reminded of four things regarding this church. Four things that stood out to Paul and gave reason for Paul to be thankful. Note them with me.

B. First of all, Paul was thankful to God for their **work of faith.**

1. During Jesus' earthly ministry, there was a time when the people came to Jesus and asked him something very important. They asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" (**Jn. 6:28**)

a. You see the people had just been miraculously fed by the Lord, some 5,000 of them (not including

women and children), Jesus was doing amazing things, signs and wonders were with Him, and the people wanted to know what they could do in order to be able to do the works of God.

2. Jesus responded to them, “**This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.**” (Jn. 6:29)

a. The most important work we can do as a church is to believe in Him whom He sent; to believe upon Jesus Christ whom God the Father sent to us.

b. That is the work we are called to do; it is a work of faith.

3. Now it is very important that we understand that the church in Thessalonica was not saved because of their work of faith. Works do not save us.

a. We are saved by the grace of God through faith, and that not of ourselves it is the gift of God, not of works” according to **Eph. 2:8-9**.

b. Nonetheless faith in the Lord will produce works of faith. They are a natural byproduct of faith. James writes in his epistle that “faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” (**James 2:17**)

c. We don’t want to have a dead faith. We want to have a living faith, a faith that does work.

d. James spoke of how he is able to show his faith by his works. That his works testify of the faith that he has in the Lord. [**James 2:18**]

4. This church in Thessalonica was living and operating by a living faith and it was producing a great work in them. And Paul thanked God continually for their work of faith.

C. But that wasn’t all. Paul also thanked God for their **labor of love**.

1. The word “labor” here speaks of something of great toil, something that involves wearisome effort.

2. The word “love” is the Greek word “agape” which is a selfless sacrificial love. The kind of love that God displayed for us when He willingly died for us upon the cross of Calvary.
3. Putting these two things together we see that these believers in Thessalonica were willing to give of themselves, even if it meant hardship and trials and great toils, in order to serve one another.
4. They exhibited a selfless sacrificial love toward one another through their service of one another. They looked after one another and worked tirelessly to edify and build up one another.
5. This idea of a labor of love can be seen in the kind of love a mother often has toward her children.
  - a. Many mothers spend countless hours laboring in the home, doing their best to keep things up, doing their best to care for and provide for their children, especially when the children are young toddlers.
  - b. The job is a never-ending job, a wearisome and laborious job. But yet, a mom seems to always have enough in the tank to take care of their little ones no matter how challenging the job becomes.
  - c. Moms don’t throw in the towel and give up on their children. They continue to serve them, they continue to take care of them, they continue to pick up after them, why? Because of their love for them.
  - d. Being a mom is a labor of love. It is a selfless sacrificial love that continues to give even when it is hard, even when it is difficult, and wearisome, and brings great toil. They still love for and care for their children because it’s a labor of love.
  - e. Guys, here is your public service announcement; next Sunday is Mother’s Day. Make sure you do something special for the moms in your life. Truly theirs is a labor of love.

6. These believers in Thessalonica loved one another and served one another. This is something that should be part of any model church.

D. The third thing that Paul thanked the Lord for was their **patience of hope**.

1. This church was patiently hoping for the return of Jesus Christ.

a. The word patience speaks of a steadfast endurance. These believers were experiencing great persecution because of their newfound faith. But they endured the persecution, they did not give in or surrender to circumstances, but kept the faith.

b. Because they lived with a hope in Jesus Christ and His coming for them and the eternity that awaited them with Him.

2. As we noted in our overview of the book, the main theme throughout this letter is the return of Christ. It is mentioned over and over again throughout this small letter.

3. Now the word hope that is used here is not like our English word “hope”.

a. In English, the word “hope” carries with it a wishful type of thinking, something that we long for but are not sure will actually take place. It involves doubt and uncertainty.

b. But in the Greek, the word for “hope” is different. It carries with it a certain expectation. When the word “hope” is used in the NT it often refers to something one looks forward to with great confidence.

c. It wasn't that these believers in Thessalonica were hoping for Jesus' return, as if they were “*wishing upon a star*” or something like that. No, they lived with a certain expectation and certainty that Jesus Christ was coming back for them. They were eagerly awaiting Him.

4. These believers lived each day with the mindset that Christ could be coming back for them at any time. They persevered and endured all things because they wanted to be ready for when Christ came for them.
5. Knowing that Christ is coming back for us, and knowing that we have eternity to look forward to, ought to motivate us and encourage us to live our lives in such a way that brings honor and glory to the Lord, that we would be ready for Him when He returns.

E. The fourth and final thing that Paul mentioned when thanking God for these Thessalonians was their **election by God**.

1. The doctrine of election is one that many like to debate and argue over. It is something that has led to a lot of division and disruption to the body of Christ.
2. The doctrine of God's election, according to one of my Bible dictionaries refers to "the gracious and free act of God by which He calls those who become part of His kingdom and special beneficiaries of His love and blessings."
  - a. The concept of election is seen in the Bible in three different ways.
    - i. "Election sometimes refers to the choice of Israel and the church as a people for special service and privileges.
    - ii. Election may also refer to the choice of a specific individual to some office or to perform some special service.
    - iii. And still other passages of the bible refer to the election of individuals to be children of God and heirs of eternal life."
3. Election is basically the idea that God chose you apart from anything you ever did. He chose you as an act of His grace alone.



4. The Bible clearly teaches this doctrine.
- a. In his opening to the letter of Ephesians Paul speaks of how God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,” (**Eph. 1:4-5**)
    - i. God chose us before He even created this world, long before we were ever born or even imagined in our parent’s hearts.
  - b. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul wrote of how God has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.” (**2 Tim. 1:9**)
  - c. But this wasn’t just something Paul spoke of, Jesus spoke of this as well. Jesus said, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain,...” (**Jn. 15:16a**)
  - d. This isn’t just a NT doctrine either, but we see evidence of it in the OT as well. God chose Israel as a holy people to the Lord. Deuteronomy states, “the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;” (**Dt. 7:6-7**)
    - i. God didn’t choose Israel because they were special, or more in number, or greater than any one else. Just like He didn’t choose us because of anything we did. His choosing was an act of His grace and love.

5. Now, while the Bible clearly teaches the doctrine of God's election, it also clearly teaches the responsibility of man.
  - a. Though God has chosen us, we still have a responsibility to respond to God's calling. Each person is held personally responsible for his decision to trust or not to trust in Jesus Christ.
  - b. Romans teaches us that "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (**Rom. 10:13**)
  - c. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (**Jn. 3:16**)
  - d. He continues saying, "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (**Jn. 3:18**)
  - e. So clearly we see that the Bible teaches that we have a responsibility to believe, a responsibility to call upon the Lord. And we will be held accountable to whether or not we believed and trusted in Christ.
6. While both God's election and man's responsibility are clearly taught in the Bible, what we don't have found in the bible is how both can be true at the same time.
  - a. It is something that is apparently incomprehensible to us in our finite minds. We look at these truths as being mutually exclusive from one another. We think it is either God who chooses us or we think it is us who chooses Him. But both are actually true.
  - b. How? I don't know exactly. All I know is that the word of God clearly teaches both, and so I'm going to believe and trust in both. To me these are parallel truths that never seem to intersect, but in God's mind and in God's ways these two paths do intersect.

God has chosen us, and we have chosen to believe upon Him. Both are taught in the Bible, both are true.

F. Looking back to our text we move on to our next section dealing with **how the Gospel came** to those in Thessalonica. Read verse 5 with me.

#### IV. 1 Thessalonians 1:5; The Coming of the Gospel to the Thessalonians

A. Here in verse 5 Paul speaks of the coming of the Gospel to the Thessalonians. And he mentions 4 ways the gospel came to them. Note them with me.

B. To begin with, Paul noted how the gospel came to them **in word**.

1. Paul writes how the gospel did not come to them in word only. But words were definitely shared, words and messages were proclaimed.

a. We often say that we should preach the gospel to those around us and to use words if necessary. I understand the meaning of that phrase, that our lives, the way we conduct ourselves, should speak volumes to the people around us. I understand the idea that actions speak louder than words.

b. But using words is good. Using words is encouraged. Romans states, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" (**Rom. 10:14-15**)

c. Paul concludes, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (**Rom. 10:17**)

2. When Paul speaks of the gospel coming to them in word he is speaking of his preaching the gospel to

them in the synagogues and throughout the streets. Proclaiming the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the offer of forgiveness of sins to all who place their faith in Him.

- C. So Paul brought the gospel to them in word, but that wasn't all. The gospel also came **in power**.
1. The word power is used in a couple of different ways in the NT.
    - a. It can be used to speak of the power of God. In Acts 1:8 Jesus assured His disciples that they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses to Him throughout the land. (**Acts 1:8**)
    - b. The gospel message itself is the power of God to salvation according to Romans chapter 1 verse 16. (**Rom. 1:16**)
    - c. The gospel has the power to change minds, hearts, and lives.
  2. But the word power can also be used to speak of miracles, signs and wonders.
    - a. It could be that Paul along with Silas and Timothy were empowered by God to work certain miracles as a way to validate their message as being from God.
    - b. Mark's gospel describes how Jesus' disciples went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs." (**Mk. 16:20**)
  3. And so it could have been that the gospel simply came to them through these men that were empowered by God to be witnesses of Christ, or that it came to them in word and with accompanying miraculous signs, or more than likely it could be referring to both. That they not only were empowered by God to be witnesses to Christ, but empowered by God to do miracles through Christ.

D. The gospel came in word, in power, and **in the Holy Spirit**.

1. This is key. For the gospel can be preached in word and in power, and still not produce any sort of fruit.
  - a. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was empowered by and filled with the Spirit of God, he did great wonders and signs among the people according to Acts chapter 6. (**Acts 6:8**)
  - b. He boldly preached the gospel message and yet his hearers didn't get saved. Far from it. When they heard him speaking of seeing the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God, they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord, cast him out of the city and stoned him to death. (**Acts 7:57-58a**)
2. What was wrong? What was missing? Why didn't these people respond in faith to Stephen's powerful declaration of the gospel? Because the Holy Spirit was not there drawing them to salvation.
3. You can have the greatest presentation in the world, you can have accompanying signs and wonders, but if the Holy Spirit does not draw a man to the Lord, then there will be no conversion.
4. The key to the success of Paul's ministry in bringing the gospel to the Thessalonians was the work of the Holy Spirit drawing them to the Lord.
  - a. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. (**Jn. 16:8**)
  - b. Without the Holy Spirit convicting a sinner and leading them to Christ, there is no way for a person to be saved.
5. And so the presence of the Holy Spirit leading and guiding the Thessalonians was key to them ultimately coming to faith.

- E. The last thing Paul mentioned about how the gospel came to them was that it came **in much assurance**.
1. The idea here is that it came with complete certainty, or full conviction. When Paul and his companions came and shared the gospel with these people they did so with great confidence in the gospel.
  2. These people believed whole-heartedly in the message that they were preaching. There was no doubt or uncertainty in their proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
  3. This describes the preacher who really believes what he preaches. I am shocked and dismayed at times when I read of preachers and teachers of the gospel that don't truly believe in the word and the gospel message as described in the Bible.
  4. There are all sorts of preachers out there that are preaching something other than the gospel, they preach a feel-good message, or talk about self-help and social programs, they preach a prosperity gospel that is twisted for their own well-being. I fear that most of these people do so because they simply lack the conviction to stand upon the truth of God's Word.
  5. This was not so with Paul and his companions. They whole-heartedly declared the gospel message of Christ. They spoke of Jesus' death and resurrection, they spoke of the need for repentance and turning from sin, they spoke of God's election, they spoke of His coming again, they spoke of God's wrath and judgment to come upon a Christ rejecting world.
  6. They didn't shy away from declaring to them the truth. Because they actually believed in and were confident in the message of the gospel.
- F. As I consider how the gospel came to this church, how it came in word, in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much

assurance, I can't help but believe that this is what the church desperately needs today.

1. We need more churches that will preach the word, churches that will rely upon the power of God and look to the Spirit of God to work mightily through the gospel. A church that truly believes in and lives out the gospel message.

G. Well, let's turn now to our next section dealing with how **the Thessalonians responded** to the gospel. Take a look at verse 6.

V. 1 Thessalonians 1:6; The Response to the Gospel by the Thessalonians

A. In verse 6 Paul describes how the gospel was responded to by the Thessalonians. And I'd like to note four things about their response of the Gospel from this verse.

B. Number 1, we see that the Thessalonians responded to the gospel by becoming **imitators of Paul**, Silas, and Timothy.

1. I think it is very important for new believers to have an example that they can look to and see in real life. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were just that for this church.
2. For most of the believers in Thessalonica this was all new stuff. Most of them were Gentiles, they didn't have a foundation of monotheism and an understanding of the OT scriptures to help guide them.
3. The example of Paul and other spiritual mentors and leaders was critical to their reception of the gospel and their growth as believers.
4. We should never look to place our hope in man. We are all imperfect and we will all blow it sometime or another. But that doesn't mean we still can't be an example to others. We may be an imperfect example at some time, but hopefully we serve as an example that most can follow.

5. That should be our goal. This was the goal and desire of Paul. On numerous occasions he asked people to follow him as He followed the Lord.
    - a. To the church in Corinth he urged them to imitate him. (**1 Co. 4:16**)
    - b. He exhorted them to imitate him, just as he also imitates Christ. (**1 Co. 11:1**)
    - c. To the church in Philippi he wrote, “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.” (**Phil. 3:17**)
    - d. He encouraged Timothy not to despise his youth and to be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity.” (**1 Tim. 4:12**)
    - e. The author of Hebrew tells us to “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.” (**Heb. 13:7**)
  6. So we see throughout the NT an exhortation to follow spiritual leaders that have gone before us, those that have been given to us as a pattern to follow, those we can look to imitate as they imitate Christ.
  7. For the Thessalonians, that was Paul, Silas, and Timothy. They learned what it was like to be a Christian through their example.
- C. But we see that they didn’t stop with just imitating their spiritual leaders. For Paul also writes how they responded to the gospel by becoming **imitators of the Lord**.
1. When a new believer first comes to faith many of them don’t know how to receive from the Lord. They don’t have an understanding of God’s word, they usually don’t have an understanding of how to pray, they don’t have an understanding of how God desires to speak to



them and so spiritual leaders are needed to help disciple them and train them up.

2. But there comes a time where new believers start to grow and learn how to receive from the Lord themselves. They learn how to spend time in prayer, they learn how to read the Scriptures and how to apply them to their own lives. They learn how to commune with the Lord, to sit quietly before Him, to be still and know the Lord.
3. These are all spiritual disciplines that come as we continue to grow in the Lord. The growth of the Thessalonian believers' spiritual lives were evidenced by the fact that after spending time being imitators of Paul, Silas, and Timothy, that they eventually became imitators of the Lord Himself.
4. Jesus lived His life here on earth as an example for us to follow.
  - a. He said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and My burden is light." (**Mt. 11:29-30**)
  - b. Jesus said to His disciples, "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." (**Jn. 13:13-15**)
  - c. John writes that "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." (**1 Jn. 2:6**)
5. While it is great to have spiritual mentors and leaders, Jesus is ultimately the best example to follow. He will never lead us astray and He will never let us down.

- D. The third way the Thessalonians responded to the gospel was that they received the word with much affliction. They responded to the gospel **despite persecution**.
1. When we did the overview of the book last week we noted how the church was first started and how some of the Jews who were not persuaded by Paul, became envious of Paul and the growth of the church, that they decided get some evil men from the marketplace and gather together a mob, setting the city in an uproar. **(Acts 17:5)**
  2. Because of this, Jason and some other believers ended up being dragged to the rulers of the city and accused of turning the world upside down. **(Acts 17:6)**
  3. They also tried to accuse them of acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar by claiming that there was another king besides Caesar—namely Jesus Christ. **(Acts 17:7)**
  4. Evidently the persecution continued to pour forth after these people turned to faith in Jesus Christ. But the persecution did not detour them from responding to the gospel and living out their faith.
  5. Even in their suffering they were being imitators of both Paul and the Lord.
    - a. Paul suffered a great many of pains, trials, persecutions, and heartaches as a result of his faith and proclamation of the gospel.
    - b. Jesus said to His disciples, “**Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.**” **(Jn. 15:20a)**
  6. These were not fair-weather believers. The Thessalonians immediately felt persecution when they came to faith in Christ, but they didn’t let that keep them from following the Lord.

E. The fourth and final thing to note regarding their response is that they responded to the gospel with **joy of the Holy Spirit**.

1. How was it possible for this church to respond with joy while in the midst of great persecution? It was because their joy was not based upon their circumstances, but upon their faith in Christ and their life with the Holy Spirit.
2. These people had the Holy Spirit of God dwelling within them. When they came to faith, the Holy Spirit came and took residence within them, sealing them in their faith, and guaranteeing their place in heaven with the Lord for all eternity.
3. Their sins had been forgiven, and their eternal place in heaven had been secured.
4. When we realize the magnitude of eternity in comparison to this life here on earth, we come to realize that our lives here on earth are as James described, it is but a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. (**James 4:14**)
5. And so, we can experience all sorts of difficulties, and short comings and still remain with joy of the Holy Spirit because we know that the persecutions of this life are temporary, and we are living for something that is eternal.
6. The church and the person that lives with the eternal in mind and in heart, is able to look beyond these temporary afflictions and remain steadfast in joy, knowing that they will spend eternity with the Lord.
7. "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things

which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Co. 4:16-18)

F. Let’s take a look at verses 7 & 8 as we look to our next section dealing with the **sharing of the gospel** from the Thessalonians.

VI. 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8; The Sharing of the Gospel from the Thessalonians

A. There was a flow of progression in this church that Paul highlights for us. The gospel came in to them, it was received and responded to by them, and then it went out from them. And I want to note two ways the Thessalonians shared the gospel and the result it had.

B. Number 1 we see that the gospel went out from the **as an example** for all the other churches.

1. As the church in Thessalonica received the gospel, they became imitators of Paul and the Lord, and despite the persecution they received, they became an example to all the other churches in the area of what it meant to be a believer and how to live with the joy of the Spirit.
2. Paul may have spent the least amount of time with the church in Thessalonica than any other, but despite that fact, they became a model church for all the other churches throughout the Grecian peninsula; the church in Philippi, the church in Berea, the church in Athens, and the church in Corinth. They could all look to the Thessalonians and follow their example of living out the gospel.
3. What a beautiful thing to see when churches can look to one another as examples and be encouraged in their own faith and walks by what God is doing in and through other churches.
4. We have to remember that we are not in competition with other churches. We are all on the same team.

We are all part of the greater body of Christ. Each church is important and plays a part in the greater work of the Lord.

a. We aren't in competition with the chapel, or with Faith Baptist, or with Rock Point church. We're all on the same team.

5. We can be encouraged by what we hear God is doing in and through other churches. Hopefully we can be like the Thessalonian church and be a model to one another in some form or fashion.

C. The second thing I want to point out is the magnitude of their **reach to others**. Paul wrote how the word of the Lord had sounded forth from them and how their faith toward God has gone out so that they need not say anything.

1. The phrase sounded forth carries with it the picture of a trumpet blasting, or of a thunder booming. The word used in the Greek is the word "execheo", it is where we get our English word echo from.

2. The idea being presented here is that the Thessalonians received the word of the Lord and then in turn each person sounded it out all the more. Each one echoing out the gospel as it was given to them.

3. The gospel rang out throughout the land, a reverberating echo of the voices of Paul, Silas, and Timothy. So much so that when these missionaries went out to other places, the word of what God was doing had already gone before them.

a. They didn't have to say anything at all about the work in Thessalonica because everyone throughout the land had all heard.

4. The gospel message went out exponentially as each person who received from Christ went and told others about the word of the Lord and their faith in God.

- a. For every one person Paul, or Silas, or Timothy spoke to, they turned around and reverberated, echoed out their words to others, who then shared with others. And the word of the Lord and word of their faith spread like wildfire.
- b. Remember that Thessalonica was home to a major seaport. They were a successful and popular city. There was a lot commerce in this area, goods being shipped in and shipped out day by day.
- c. Well the Thessalonian church became a major exporter of the gospel message.

5. I love the picture this creates. It wasn't just the spiritual leaders out sharing God's word. It wasn't just Paul, Silas, and Timothy. But everyone was involved in proclaiming the word of the Lord and sharing their faith.

- a. This is how it ought to be in the church. We all have received the same message. We all have received the same Spirit. The same Holy Spirit that lived in and empowered Paul, Silas, Timothy, and the Thessalonian church lives in and empowers us today.
- b. May we follow in the example of this church and sound forth the word of the Lord and share our faith with the world around us.

D. Well, let's turn to our final section of scripture in verses 9 & 10 as we look to **the impact the gospel** had upon the Thessalonians. Read with me the final two verses of the chapter and then we'll look to wrap things up.

## VII. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; The Impact of the Gospel upon the Thessalonians

A. Here in these final two verses Paul brings things around full circle. He started off his letter in verses 2 & 3 thanking God for three things. And here he gives examples of those three things. Note them with me.

B. As Paul and his travel companions went out, they would enter into a new place and the people there would already be familiar with their story.

1. They knew about how they were received in Thessalonica and how God was doing an amazing work in them and through them.

C. They would hear about how the people in Thessalonica turned to God from idols.

1. This was a demonstration of their **works of faith** mentioned at the beginning of our text.
2. The people of Thessalonica who believed were primarily Greeks. They were used to worshipping and praying to all sorts of different Greek gods; their city was barely 50 miles from Mt. Olympus, where the Greek gods were said to live and dwell.
3. They had different gods for all sorts of different things, there were gods of war, gods of love, gods of fertility, gods of the hunt, gods of agriculture, gods of the sea, gods of the dead, and gods of the weather just to mention a few.
4. When Paul went to Athens he noticed how the city was given over to idols. Everywhere he looked there was another god, another idol, another statue set up for people to worship. (**Acts 17:16**)
5. When he was invited to speak with the philosophers of the city at the Areopagus he proclaimed, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:" (**Acts 17:22-23**)
6. Thessalonica was just like Athens. The people there worshipped all sorts of gods, that were nothing more than dead idols.

7. The people in Thessalonica turned from their dead idols and put their faith in the one true and living God. And this resulted in a lot of persecution.
    - a. Not only from the Jews who were not persuaded, but also their fellow Greeks who feared their turning from the Greek gods would someone invite the ire and fury of the gods upon their city.
  8. But as we already noted, the persecution they encountered did nothing to keep them from their new faith in God.
- D. The next thing I want to note is how they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.
1. This was a description of their **labor of love**. They now served the living and true God. The one and only God of the universe, who was in control of all things.
  2. They simply didn't add Jesus as another one of their many gods, but they forsook all the other gods and yielded their lives completely and wholly to Jesus Christ alone.
  3. Once they received the gospel and they understood the love of God and how He demonstrated His love through His Son, the only natural response was to surrender to Him and serve Him wholeheartedly.
    - a. Paul beseeches us all to respond likewise. He wrote in Romans "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." (**Rom. 12:1**)
    - b. The only reasonable thing to do in response to God's love for us is to completely surrender ourselves to Him and His service. We all will serve someone or something, far better to serve the one and only true and living God who has the power to impact lives and grant us entrance into heaven throughout eternity.



- E. The last thing that was spoken about the church in Thessalonica was how they waited for His Son from heaven.
1. This of course speaks of their **patience of hope** Paul thanked God for in verse 3.
  2. People all around heard about how these people in Thessalonica were patiently waiting and expecting the return of God's Son from heaven, the same Son that God had raised from the dead, Jesus Christ who delivers us from the wrath to come.
    - a. Now we'll talk more about Jesus work of deliverance from wrath as we continue in our study of this book.
  3. The main thing I want to draw your attention to now is the hope they had, the hope of Christ's return. It was something that defined them, something that was part of their testimony and story.
- F. People knew that they had turned from idols to God, that they now served the one true God alone, and how they waited expectantly for the return of God's Son from heaven.
1. Those three things defined them as believers. This is what people spoke of when they spoke of the church in Thessalonica. They spoke of their faith, their love, and their hope.
  2. These three virtues are said to be the core of our Christian faith. They are said to be the three greatest evidences of our salvation in the Lord.
  3. And they all founded upon Jesus Christ. The church in Thessalonica exercised saving faith in Christ in the past when they had believed the gospel, they were loving Christ in the present, and they were hoping for His return in the future.
    - a. Their past, present, and future, was all tied up in Jesus Christ. Their faith, hope, and love was directed to Jesus.

4. These are the same three things that ought to define us as a church. That we would be a people of faith, a people of love, and a people of hope in Christ.
5. I am reminded of what Paul said in his letter to the Corinthian church. He wrote, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” **(1 Co. 13:13)**
6. Jesus said the world will know that you are my disciples “if you have love for one another.” **(Jn. 13:35)**

G. May we be a people of great faith, a people that live for the hope of eternity, and most of all may we be a people that are known for our love for one another. Amen?  
Amen.

## VIII. Conclusion & Communion;

A. Well, we're going to close our service this morning by coming to the Lord's Table and remembering what He did for us. The worship team is going to come back up here and the ushers are going to prepare to distribute the communion elements.

B. And here is what I'd like for us to do. I'd like to encourage you all to receive the communion elements and take some time to think about what defines you as a believer.

1. Are you living a life of faith in the Lord. The kind of faith that is active and living, the kind of faith that produces works of faith?
2. Are you living for the hope of eternity? Do you look beyond the worries and trials of these days and long for the return of Christ? Are you ready for His return? If He were to come back today, or tomorrow, or next week or next month, would you have any regrets?
3. And are you living a life of love devoted to the Lord? Does the love of God fill you and flow through you?

Do others see and know that you are the Lord's based upon the love you have for them?

C. Let's take these next few moments and pray and seek the Lord. I want to encourage you all to remember what Christ did for you. Truly that is the reason we come to the communion table. It is to remember His broken body and His shed blood for us.

1. Take these next few moments to take inventory of your life and allow the Lord to search you. Allow Him to show you areas in your life where you may need some help on and confess those things to Him, ask for His help, and thank Him in advance for how He is going to work in and through those situations.
2. The worship team is also going to lead us in song. Feel free to join in with them as the Lord leads.
3. And then after a few minutes, I'll come back up in lead us in partaking together of the communion elements. Let's spend some time with the Lord.

D. *Upon returning read through 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 and lead the body in partaking of the communion elements. Close in prayer.*