

## The Book of 1 Thessalonians

### “The Comings and Goings of Christ in His Church”

#### 1: 1-10

### “The Power of the Gospel”

#### I.) Intro.

#### II.) Vs. 1-4 Thanking God For His Work

#### III.) Vs. 5-7 The Power of the Gospel

#### IV.) Vs. 8-10 The Testimony of a Changed Life

#### I.) Intro.

When you consider the spread of Christianity to the known world the arrival of Paul to Thessalonica was perhaps the greatest turning point. In 1980, leaders from all over the Western world attended the First Global Conference on the Future. The chairman of the conference opened saying: *“The bad news is that the end of the world is coming. The good news is, not yet.”* Years earlier, in 1972, a group of international industrial leaders and thinkers, called the Club of Rome, suggested six proposals that humanity must put into effect if we are to survive the first proposal was: *“The survival of this planet necessitates new forms of thinking that will lead to a fundamental revision of human behavior, and, by implication, of the entire fabric of present-day society.”* Simply put, **“If we cannot discover how to change people, there is no hope for saving the world from ultimate collapse.”** Thank God He is in the people changing business!

This letter was written to a church that Paul founded in a city named Thessalonica that had under gone just such a change. A Greek city, (today called Salonika), that was

originally called Thermai which means “Hot Springs”. It was a prosperous city of some 200,000 built on a harbor s located on the Egnatian Road that linked East to the West a “Free City” in that it had no Roman troops. The story of Paul’s arrival there is found in the book of Acts chapter 16 - 17:

*“After Paul’s first missionary journey with Barnabas and John Mark there arose a dispute over John Marks faithfulness. Paul decided to go with Silas when they came to Derbe and Lystra they met Timothy a young believer and took him with them going through the region of Galatia where we are told that “they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word in Asia.” They came instead to Troas where Paul received a vision from a man from Macedonia asking for them to come over to help them. So they got on a boat and sailed across the Aegean Sea landing at Neapolis, then walked to Philippi. There they met a lady named Lydia and led her and her house hold to Jesus. A church started in her house until some false charges were made whereby Paul and company were beaten and jailed. God used that to lead the jailer and his family to Christ. They stayed there long enough to encourage the new believers in Philippi then left and walked 100 miles to Thessalonica. In Thessalonica Paul preached 3 Sabbaths in the synagogue and had great success among the gentile converts to Judaism, but not among the Jews. they attacked the house that he was staying and dragged out a guy named Jason taking security from him they released him. Paul and Silas took off to Berea, where the Jews and Greeks both received the Word until the Jews from Thessalonica found out and went to Berea to stir up trouble. They sent Paul away by boat (without Silas and Timothy) to Athens were Paul preached on Mars hill and waited for his two friends. When they came to Paul he was so concerned for the church in Thessalonica that he sent Timothy back to encourage them with his love. When Timothy returned and told Paul of their wellbeing he wrote this letter and a short time later he wrote 2 Thessalonians.*

This letter (perhaps Paul’s earliest was written when Paul was most likely about 18 years old in Christ) is a praise report at the health of a church that he had only founded in three weeks. Deep in doctrine, covering all the major doctrines but of great importance in this letter is the “*work of the gospel*” in the life of the believer. At the end of every chapter Paul mentions the Second coming of Jesus. It is apparent that the church was confused as to what the rapture meant and what it should produce in the life of the believer. The eminent return of Christ should produce in our lives:

A.) *Comfort and encouragement*: We shall both escape the wrath to come as well as be in His presence, (chapters 1-2, 4).

B.) *Holy and blameless life*: We are to set apart our “body soul and spirit” for His glory knowing that soon we shall be with Him, (chapters 3, 5).

## II.) Vs. 1-4 Thanking God For His Work

Vs. 1 When Paul wrote this letter, Silas (or Silvanus) and Timothy were with him. Silas we are told in Acts 15 was a leader among the brethren in Antioch and in 2 Cor. 1:19 we read that he was a “*faithful preacher*”. Timothy, was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother, both his mother and grandmother were devote believers as he had been instructed in the Word since childhood.

Paul identifies the church as geographically as well as spiritually, they were living in Thessalonica but they were: “**IN** ....*God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” That means that *it was not our idea, it was His*. The church is not about what we intellectually believe or a door you go through once a week. It’s about a relationship founded in Gods reaching out to you through His Son. 17 out of the 27 books that make up the N.T. contain the words Grace and peace as an introduction. This was a typical Greek greeting but with the words of being IN God give you the basis of your grace. Paul also uses the typical Jewish greeting of “peace”. Many people are trying to find peace in their lives, but you will never come to peace with yourself or others until you begin to appropriate God’s grace in your life.

Vs. 2 Paul always found something good to encourage the church before he exhorted it to change. Paul thanked God for the Thessalonians he did not thank the Thessalonians as he knew that it was God that was at work in them.

Vs. 3 Remember that this is a church only a few months old yet Paul thanked God for 3 things:

- A.) **Work of faith**: Verse 9 tells us that they had turned from idols to the living God. Our faith is not just words it is visible in a changed life, from serving idols to serving a living God. One author put it this way, “**Those whom God chooses, He changes!**”
- B.) **Labor of love**: Their labor produced love which caused them to “*serve the true and living God*” (verses 9). Our service will not be out of constraint or obligation it will be out of love. Religion is busy doing things but ought of obligation not devotion.
- C.) **Patience of hope**: Our patience of hope is in, “*Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God our Father.*” Faith that works will be seen in our labor of love which will enable us to be patient in hope as we “*wait for His Son from heaven.*” Saints, we can have patience because we have hope in Christ, His coming is certain not just wished for.

But did you notice that the, “*faith hope and love*” is clarified by Paul as “**Faith that works**”, “**love that Labors**” and “**hope that endures**”? What possess us as changed people is active not passive!

Vs. 4 Paul calls them, “*beloved brethren*” because they are elected by God. God is not willing any should perish so He sent His Son to die for the sins of the whole world, that

whoever would believe in Him would not perish but have everlasting life. *Election is God knowing the whosoever are!* How do you know if you are elected? Repent and trust in Jesus and you are clearly chosen! If I don't want to and you die that way then you were not chosen!

### **III.) Vs. 5-7 The Power of the Gospel**

Vs. 5 The Word of God is not about making you feel better it is about making you more like Jesus! The Gospel is powered by God the Spirit and it is He that makes it powerful to change a dead life into a new creation. Paul says the evidence of the truth of what they preached was seen in their own lives for they too had been transformed by the Gospel!

Vs. 6 The Thessalonian believer had become imitators of Paul and his fellow believers. These guys had received the Word in much affliction, yet with joy from the Holy Spirit. Receive the Word of God meant that they were going against the popular way of living.

Vs. 7 Not only were they imitators of Paul they themselves became ones to imitate! They had been Christians only a few months and already they were ones to follow.

### **IV.) Vs. 8-10 The Testimony of a Changed Life**

Vs. 8 These young Christians were examples to follow their changed life made them evangelists. The phrase "*sounded forth*" is literally to blow a horn and we see that they we are not blowing their own horn, as they were too make music for Jesus. Everybody knew that they were believers by the way they lived and what they said. Evidently the whole region was talking about the Lord because of the change that had taken place in their lives.

Vs. 9 The whole area knew their testimony that they had at one time served idols. An idol is not just some statue I people serve the idol of popularity, or the idol of materialism or the idol of pride! Saints, have we turned from that dead thing to serve the living God? Do others see that in your life? Notice the order as Paul says that they:

A.) First they turned to God.

B.) Then they turned away from idols.

C.) Lastly they served the true and living God.

There is a correct order in this as we first turn to God, then we turn from idols, finally we turn to serving the Lord. Sometimes this all happens at once other times it takes some time.

Vs. 10 They had turned to God, forsaken the former life and even served the Lord now they were learning to wait for the Lords return. When we have an attitude of expectancy we will be a holy church!