

## **I Thessalonians 1:4-5** **The Call of the Thessalonians**

We are continuing in our new study in I Thessalonians. Today in chapter 1 verses 4 through 7. Last time we took the introduction and the first three verses. We will take a review of that today before we get into verses 4 through 7.

I Thessalonians chapters 1 through 3 is The Inspiration of the Believers in Thessalonica. Chapter 1 is The Testimony of the Thessalonians. So this is a book of testimony.

Chapter 1 is the Testimony of the Thessalonians.

Chapter 2 is the Testimony of the apostle Paul.

Chapter 3 is the Testimony of Timothy.

Chapter 4 is a Testimony of the Lord Concerning His Return.

And chapter 5 Our Testimony in light of all of these things.

Five chapters in this book. We should be able to finish in shorter than seven years, you would think.

The letter starts off I Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 1, the circumstances surrounding this letter. And remember the letters were sent in scrolls. You unscroll the top and you get to see from whom it is written, and to whom it is written, and the greeting. Much like on the outside of our envelopes. So, when you unroll the scroll, you see **Paul and Silvanus** and we saw last time that it is also Silas, the same person. **Paul and Silvanus and Timothy**, three people, **to the assembly of Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

So, Paul and Silvanus and Timothy. Paul and Silas started out from Antioch, which is north of Jerusalem by quite a distance - Antioch of Syria. And they left Antioch. This is on Paul's second missionary journey. They went straight north and then west across Asia. And Paul said in the book of Acts that he prayed about going north, and he prayed about going south, and the Lord stopped him from going both directions. So he just kept going West across Asia until he got to the seaport of Troas. And they did not know where the Lord wanted them to go from there. And so that is when Paul received what is known as The Macedonian Vision, where a man from Macedonia, which is a province over in Greece - where a man from Macedonia bid them to come over and preach the gospel to Greece, to Macedonia. So they took off and set sail and went across crossed the Aegean Sea and wound up in Philippi, where Paul wound up in jail for preaching the gospel. So he leaves Philippi and goes down to Thessalonica. That is in Greece, so he is a long way from home. This is his second missionary trip. They now have Timothy with them. They picked him up back in Lystra after they left Antioch.

So they get to Thessalonica, they preach the gospel there. And people were upset with Paul preaching - some of the unbelieving Jews. So they came against Paul, and his two helpers, and the rest of the Christians there in Thessalonica; they came upon them and persecuted them. So Paul and Timothy and Silas left Thessalonica.

And the center point about the Christians in Thessalonica is that they heard the gospel for the first time. They received Christ, were born of the Spirit of God. And the persecution against them - the physical beatings, the taunting, the loss of jobs, the disassociation of family - all happened right away. No time to grow as a Christian, just persecution right away.

And that is what Paul is writing to them about. Because once they left Thessalonica because of the persecution, they wound up in Berea. And the same troublemakers in Thessalonica followed them to Berea and caused trouble for them there. So Paul thought it would be best if he would leave. He leaves Berea by himself, goes down to Athens, ministers in Athens by himself. Gains a few believers to accompany him and help him, and then he winds up in Corinth.

It is in Corinth that he is troubled and worried about the Christians back in Thessalonica. They were persecuted right away. They were suffering right away for their faith. So he calls for Timothy and for Silas, and he calls Timothy to go back to Thessalonica. Paul is in Corinth now - for Timothy to go back to Thessalonica and check on the welfare of the Christians there who have suffered so much as a young group. So Timothy comes back, tells Paul all that is happening which prompts Paul to write this letter to Thessalonica, to the Christians in Thessalonica.

First of all, The Testimony of the Thessalonians in chapter 1, that is the title of the chapter. So he says, **Paul, Silvanus and Timothy to the assembly of Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** As I said to you the last time the word *assembly* is the literal word translated *church* in the English Bibles. The actual word for *church*, *church building*, or *church organization*, is not the same Greek word found in the Scriptures. The Greek word in the Scriptures means *assembly*, assembly of believers. It is not the name of a building. It is not the name of an organization. It is the name of an assembly of believers gathered together for fellowship. He says, **Assembly of Thessalonians in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.** So the assembly is designated there as believers.

Then he gives his greetings to them, **Grace to you and peace.** *Grace* is the greeting to Greeks, *peace* is the greeting to Jews, *shalom*. **Grace to you and peace.** This is a spiritual *grace* and spiritual *peace*, **because it is from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

So he talks about the characteristics of the Thessalonians in verses 2 and 3. **We give thanks to God always concerning all of you, making mention of you upon the occasion of our prayers.** *We give thanks* is the main verb of the whole chapter. **We give thanks.** So after he heard the report of what was happening to the Christians in Thessalonica; how they were holding up, and how they were trusting the Lord in the midst of all the persecution, he gave thanks. How did he give thanks? **By making mention of you upon the occasion of our prayers.** What did he make mention of? **Remembering without ceasing your work of faith,**

**and labor of love, and endurance of hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before God and our Father.** So remembering three things about them, three characteristics about this group in Thessalonica.

The first was work of faith, then labor of love, and endurance of hope. As I mentioned to you last time in the Greek text the way that the language is formed, *work of faith* - it is not work producing faith it is faith producing work. Labor of love - labor is not producing love, love is producing labor. And patience (or endurance) of hope - hope is producing endurance, not endurance producing hope.

1) So remember your work of faith, remember the word *work* is the word *activity*. Remembering the activity of your faith. It is very active in the midst of hardship and tribulation. Labor of love, *labor* the word means *to labor to the point of exhaustion*.

2) So love produces labor to the point of exhaustion. These Thessalonians labored night and day to help each other out, to fellowship, to function in the love of Christ.

3) And thirdly, the patience of hope. The word *patience* is the word *endurance, to remain under*. That is the hope of our Lord Jesus Christ before God and our Father. Hope, the word *hope*, **ἐλπίς** (elpis), does not mean *I wish*. It is a word of certainty. So again, the best example I can give is a person who shipwrecked and floating around out in the ocean and hoping that someone will find him. That is a wish. That is not the word here for hope. But when a ship sees him, and signals that they see him, and they are coming to pick him up, that is a hope of certainty. His hope is certain he is going to be picked up. So the endurance of hope. Their certainty is resting on the endurance. They are remaining under their hardship because of the hope and the certainty of the coming of Christ. Just as Paul preached to them, and as we will see later on what their testimony is.

Now for today verses 4 and 5, The Call of the Thessalonians. Verse 4, **Knowing, brothers, having been loved by God, your election.** He says, *knowing*. First of all, the chapter is divided up by two participles. Participles are -ing words in English denoting continuous action. The first participle is the word *remembering* in verse 3: **Remembering without ceasing.** The second participle is this word *knowing* in verse 4. **We give thanks to God** - remember that is the leading verb of the chapter in verse 2 - **we give thanks to God by knowing** something, continuously.

He says, **brothers**. He calls them *brothers*. Very interesting phrase to use. Understand every time you read this in Paul's writing you can understand what he means. *Brothers* was a term used much like it is used today. You have the brotherhood of a union for instance, the Teamsters union is a brotherhood. In Paul's day the Jews called themselves *the brotherhood, the brothers*. I had somebody call me *brother* the other day, it was not my brother. But I was doing business someplace and the guy said, "Thanks a lot brother." It is like, "How do you know I am your brother?" I did not say anything, I said, "Yeah, same to you. Thank you." But I knew what he meant. There are people that call other people - just because they are human beings, call them *brothers*. It is the same terminology that was used also of the body of Christ. And this is for Christians only within the body of Christ, they were called *brothers*. So when Paul uses the term

*brothers* he is using it affectionately in a family way. So it is, "Knowing, brothers" - family members.

Thirdly, **having been loved by God.** *Having been loved* is a perfect participle. When it is in the passive voice and it is coming from God it means *the objects of God's love*. So he says, "To you who are the objects of God's love, my brothers," brethren in the Lord, family in the Lord.

**Knowing, brothers, having been loved by God, your election.** This is what he knows. **Knowing your election.** The word election is **ἐκλογή** (eklogē) and it means *to call out*. *Election* means *calling, to call somebody out*. There is another terminology that is used in Scripture, the adjective form of this word, **ἐκλεκτός** (eklektos) that is used for the elect of God, naming the elect of God. That would be the Jews, the Jewish people, they are called *the elect*. We have experienced election. The Jews are God's chosen elect but the believer has experienced election. So he says, **Knowing, brothers, who have been loved by God, your election.** He is certain about them. He knows this about them. Their election from God is certain because of their testimony and this is what he is listing for them.

And a good example of election is in John chapter 10, The Parable of The Good Shepherd. In those days the shepherds, especially in the wintertime, would bring their sheep all into one sheepfold at night, all the sheep together, high walled sheepfold. And there was a doorkeeper who would open the door to the shepherd to let his sheep in, and he would open the door to the shepherd to let the sheep out. Jesus talked about He is the Good Shepherd. And the Good Shepherd - **To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear His voice, and He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out.** The sheep have no markings. They just respond to the shepherd's voice. So the shepherd stands in the middle of the doorway and calls for his sheep. In fact, Jesus said he calls them by name. Dancer and Prancer and Comet and Vixen.

**The doorkeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.** John 10:4, **And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will never follow a stranger, but will flee from him: for they do not know the voice of strangers.** Interesting the Lord's sheep, the ones that He calls will not listen to the voice of a stranger. Will not. Point of fact.

That is why when people had trouble Jesus and they began to argue with Him - it is told to us in John 6 that Jesus said to the crowd that came to Him, He did not argue, He says, **All the Father gives me, John 6:37- 44, All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never cast out.** But John 6:43 says, **Therefore Jesus responded and said, do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him: and I will raise him up at the last day.** So the Father draws people to Jesus. They hear the Lord's voice, and they respond. This is called the election process of hearing and responding, surrendering to Christ, to His name. So he says this about them, about their election, **Knowing your election.**

And now in verse 5, **Because**, he gives a reason that he is so certain about their election and their right standing with God. ~~Chapter 5 verse 1~~ [actually chapter 1 verse 5] says, **Because our gospel did not become to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, according as you know what kind we became among you on account of you.** So your election is certain in my mind, Paul is saying. You belong to Christ. You have responded to His voice, and you belong to Christ. He says, *Because*. He knows that they have been elected by God because of four things about them. There are four things. We will get to two them today, verse 5.

It is all centered around this word **γίνομαι** (ginomai) in Greek, which is the word *to become*. It is what became amongst them, or what they became. Said, **Our gospel did not become to you.** The English translations say *come to you*, but it is *become*. **The word of our gospel did not become to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance.**

Secondly, **According as you know what kind we became** (there is our word again) **among you on account of you.**

In verse 6, **And you yourselves became** (that is the third thing) **imitators of us and of the Lord having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit.**

And fourthly, **So that you became patterns to all the ones believing in Macedonia and in Achaia.**

So four things. First, he says, **Our gospel did not become to you in word only.** Interesting he uses the term *our gospel*. He did not call it *the gospel of Jesus Christ*, he calls it *our gospel*, which is an interesting phrase.

The emphasis about Paul is always made from Galatians chapter 1 verses 8 and 9 where Paul says, **But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than that which you have received, let him be accursed.** That is because Paul's gospel was of Christ.

In fact, he says, he goes on to say in Galatians chapter 1 verses 11 and 12 that his gospel came from Christ. He says, Galatians 1:11, **But I make known to your brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.** He says after he was saved, he went out into the Arabian desert and there he met with Christ and received the message of the gospel.

So he did not say, "It is the gospel of Jesus Christ," but it is. Paul's teaching was put at the beginning of all the teaching in the Bible. We have the Gospels, four Gospels and then we have Paul's writings, all of Paul's letters second in the order of the Bible. The reason is because the early church agreed also with Paul that he was given the mysteries of Christ. That anybody's

teaching can be compared with his teaching. So *because our gospel*, which is the same gospel of Jesus Christ. He got his gospel from Jesus Christ.

So back to number one again, **Because our gospel did not become to you in word only.** After *become* there are four things under this first phrase, *to become*. **Our gospel did not become**, which literally means to become active when it was not active before. **Our gospel did not become to you in word only.** Not just words. Words are boring. Words are without power. Even the Bible with words on the page sitting on the shelf means nothing unless the Spirit of God ministers those words. **Not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance.** So it did not happen by word only. It was not just words, but rather it was the demonstration of the Holy Spirit and power of the Holy Spirit bringing much conviction and confidence, which is what *much assurance* means.

It is interesting what Paul shared in I Corinthians chapter 2 verses 1 through 5 where Paul presents the method of his ministry to the Christians in Corinth. And he says in I Corinthians chapter 2 verses 1-5, **And also, when I came to you brothers, I did not come according to excellency of speech or wisdom, while proclaiming the mystery of God. For I judge to know nothing among you, except Jesus Christ, and this one crucified. And I became toward you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my message was not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power: in order that your faith might not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.** So in the human I was weak. Fear and much trembling. He did not have persuasive speech. He did not use man's wisdom to try to entice them to follow Christ. He wanted their faith to be based in the Spirit of God ministering through the word with power. Power produces a transformed and changed life; gradual in some cases and other cases it is drastic.

So first of all, our gospel did not become to you in four ways, **In word only.** Secondly, **But also in power:** it came with changed life, it changed your life. **And in the Holy Spirit:** the Spirit is one who did the work. **And in much assurance:** that is full confidence.

And then the second thing. The first *become* is, **become to you in word only.** Secondly, **And according as you know what kind we became among you on account of you.** This is the key to ministry. One on one, especially your testimony of believers, is that we must be sensitive to become like our hearers need us to become. It needs to be taught and preached by a lifestyle, the power of the Holy Spirit in a lifestyle, taking in consideration the people that we are affecting. To affect others is the key to ministry.

So first of all, it was their response to the ministry of the word. Now it is what Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, what they became among them on account of them. They took into account these people, and their hardships, and what they were going through, and the kind of people they were; and they became in such a way so that their lives would be effective for Christ. So now Paul introduces that they became in their lifestyle and in their behavior, everything that they did, all the decision-making was based on how is this going to affect these believers that we are ministering to.

So it is not just speech and the power of God's Spirit through speech, but it is the power of God's Spirit through life. The decisions we make. The places we go. The things that we do, affect everybody around us. Immediately with family, and neighbors, and friends, and the brotherhood is all affected by the lifestyle we live, and the life that we live. So Paul is saying that *we became*. It is something that we were not before we came to Thessalonica, but we became what we needed to be to make sure that you get the gospel, to make sure you get the truth of the gospel, ministered by us.

We will finish this section out next week, in verses 6 and 7. Let's close with prayer.