

I Thessalonians 1:8-10

The Conduct of the Thessalonians

Okay, this morning we are finishing up I Thessalonians chapter 1. Our focus will be on verses 8 through 10. We will read the first seven verses as our introduction.

Remember chapter 1 of I Thessalonians is entitled The Testimony of the Thessalonians. Paul is rehearsing for them their testimony, as we will see today, that is known throughout the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. This is a special group of people who received the word in much affliction. They began to be persecuted, even beaten, even the loss of their families, right away, as soon as they received the Lord. So Paul in his travels traveled out of Thessalonica and on into Berea, then down into Athens, and then when he got to Corinth, he wondered what happened to those Thessalonians. They have been persecuted right away and then Paul had to leave because he was chased out of town. So he sent Timothy to find out from them how they are doing, and he came and then returned.

And by the way this whole process of salvation and Timothy returning with the word as to what was happening with these people took about two years. That is a long time. And so he is writing to them concerning their testimony that he has received from Timothy now that Timothy has come back.

Verse 1 says, **Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the assembly of Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace** - the greeting in Greek and the greeting in Hebrew. **Grace to you and peace** - it is a spiritual greeting - **from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Verse 2 is actually the center verb, the center word for this entire chapter. **We give thanks to God always concerning all of you by making mention of you upon the occasion of our prayers.** First of all, by **Remembering without ceasing** three things, three characteristics about the Thessalonians. **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 three things characterized the Thessalonians.

And as I mentioned to you before the Greek is very specific to mention *the work of faith*: it is faith that is doing the work, not the work doing the faith. *Labor of love*, again love is motivating the labor, labor to the point of exhaustion, not labor producing love. And *endurance of hope*, remaining under. Hope is producing the endurance not endurance producing the hope. So **Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love and endurance of hope of our Lord Jesus Christ before God and our Father.**

Secondly, after remembering, *we give thanks remembering*; in verse 4, **We give thanks knowing**, the second thing he gives thanks for. **Knowing brothers having been loved by God, knowing your election.** The word *election* means *to call out*. God has giving you a calling and you Thessalonians have responded to that election.

In verses 5 through 7 he lists four things that make their election sure. First of all, **Because our gospel did not become to you in word only, but also in power**, - that is, it transformed your life - **and in the Holy Spirit**, it was not human, it was the Holy Spirit. **And in much assurance**, confidence that what is being said is the truth.

Secondly, **According as you know what kind we became among you on account of you**. Again, emphasizing the word *become* in each one of these four characteristics, which means it is not humanly natural. They had to become this, and Paul became, and Timothy became, and Silvanus became, what was necessary for these people to be receptive to the gospel.

Verse 6, the third thing, **And you yourselves became**, there is our word again, **imitators of us and of the Lord**. The word *imitators* is where we get our word *mime* from, *mimic*. Except in Paul's day it was those actors and actresses that came out with costumes and masks and acted out without a word the message that they were trying to get across. So when Paul uses it, he talks about "You became the expressions of us and of the Lord." Why? Because they had the same Christ that Paul had, **Having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit**. They received the word in much affliction. The word *affliction* is *θλίψις* (*thlipsis*), *mental distress*, *mental pressure*, but it was with joy of the Holy Spirit. The word *joy* in Greek has the meaning of *satisfaction*. They were satisfied to suffer affliction for the sake of receiving the word.

And in verse 7 the fourth thing, **So that you became patterns to all the ones believing in Macedonia and in Achaia**. You became types, examples, patterns. So that in Macedonia and Achaia, two provinces - Thessalonica was in Macedonia, and Achaia was just south of that, where Athens was. He says they became examples to the Christians in other cities of what it is like to receive the Lord, submit to the Lord, and follow the Lord.

Verse 7, **So that you became a became patterns to all the ones believing in Macedonia and in Achaia**. This is how Paul can say, "We give thanks because we know that you are of the election of God." We know of your election because of these fine points; what you became the moment you received Christ.

But now we are in verses 8-10. Verses 8, 9, and 10 are now examples of the three characteristics mentioned in verse 3: the work of faith, the labor of love and patience of hope. So the example in verse 8 is the work of faith; verse 9 the labor of love; and verse 10 the patience of hope. He is giving examples of them, how it was worked out in their midst.

Verse 8 is their work of faith. **For from you the Word of the Lord has sounded out not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone out, so that there is no need for us to have to say anything**. The first word in verse 8 is the conjunction *for*, shows it is a continuation of the material that he has just presented beforehand, specifically verse 3. And notice what it says. **For from you the word of the Lord has sounded out**. The word *sounded out* is where we get our word *echo* from. You can imagine a rock hitting a pool and the waves going out from where the rock was dropped. That is this word *sounded out*. The word has been sounded out, this word **not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place that your faith toward God has gone out, so that we have no need for us to say**

anything. Notice it did not say *your faith in God*, but *your faith toward God*, that is a literal translation. Their faith toward God has sounded out.

We are in a specialized study this morning on direction and focus. It was not their faith in God that sounded out to everybody, but their faith toward God. Work of faith, faith that has action to it. And notice the faith is toward God, not toward anybody else; not toward people; not toward Satan, not directed at him; it is directed toward God. So there is no need for us to have to say anything. So Paul says, "We do not have to say anything about your testimony." The fruit of God's Spirit is what is being talked about.

Then we have verse 9, your labor of love. **For they themselves report** (that is, Macedonia and Achaia) **concerning us what kind of entrance we had to you, and how you turned to God from the idols to serve the living and true God.** So again, our focal point here, interesting, *how you turned*. That is the word for *conversion*. **You turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.** So there was a change. A change in human behavior, but also in the object and goal and motivation of the person's life. They turned from idols.

Here is our main point for this morning. They did not turn from idols to God. They did not turn away from something first to go to something else. They turned to the Lord first. When you turn to the Lord you turn from something automatically. That is very important. You turn to God from idols, not from idols to God. So the turning point and the focal point of a believer's life is God. At conversion, at salvation, one turns to the Lord for one's life and lifestyle. One turns to the Lord to serve the living and true God. So when you are facing God, and trusting God, and following the Lord Jesus Christ, you turn your back on everything else. In the New Testament this is called *submission* and *resistance*. Submission and resistance. Very important.

In James, James chapter 4 verse 7, James says, **Therefore be in submission to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.** He did not say, "Fight with the devil." He did not say, "Confront the devil." He said, "Resist the devil." He has already been defeated. The only weapon he has is to grab our attention and keep ourselves occupied with his shenanigans. But James chapter 4 verse 7 says, **Submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.** Notice the promise. You face your direction towards God and turn your back on the devil and resist him, he will flee from you because he has nothing more he can do, but harasses us, try to grab our attention. It is not a battle. It is not a war with Satan, he has already been defeated.

In fact, Paul said in Ephesians chapter 6 verses 10 through 13, **In summary, my brothers, be continually empowered in the Lord, and in the grip of the strength. Put on the full armor of God for you to be able to stand against the methodical schemes of the devil. To stand against is to resist, it is the word resistance. Because our wrestling is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic forces of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual things of evil in the spirit realm. On account of this, take up the full armor of God, in order that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and after all things having been worked out, to stand.** You see, it is to resist. You put on the armor of God in order to resist.

And by the way, just as a side note from this series, we showed how the pieces of armor are Jesus Christ. And that the tense of the verbs in the participles here are what are called the aorist tense, which means it is a one-time act, *having put on the armor of God*. That after you put the armor on, you are to do that to resist Satan. It is not a fight against him, it says to resist him, **and after all things have been worked out, to stand**. To be able to stand. It is not moving out charging after Satan. It is not battling and fighting with people. This is God's way of doing battle. The battle is already won.

Peter said in I Peter chapter 5 verses 8 through 11, **Be sober, be watchful; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, is walking around, seeking whom he may devour**. Earlier in the chapter it had to do with grabbing the attention of the mind. Satan is walking around looking for people to grab the attention of their mind and devour them. It says in verse 9 of I Peter chapter 5, **Whom resist being solid in the faith, knowing the same sufferings are to be completed in your brotherhood that is in the world. But the God of all grace, the One who has called you into His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, He himself will mend you, establish you, strengthen you, and put a foundation under you. To Him is the glory and the strength for ever and ever. Amen**. So he says concerning Satan your adversary whom resist him, do not go for the bait. Submit to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you because there is nothing more he can do. He cannot physically and spiritually grab a person and capture a person who is saved. We are to resist him.

So the labor of love is to serve the true and living God: **And how you turned from the idols to serve the true and the living God**. Their labor of love. They are motivated by love to serve God, actively moving forward and resisting. Taking from verse 8 that we took just a few minutes ago, their testimony is that every place that their faith toward God has gone out. It is moving in a forward direction towards the Lord, not engaging Satan, not engaging people, not even engaging circumstances, but to serve the living and true God. One action. "Cannot serve two masters," Jesus said. So he is saying to them, "I thank God for you because of all the characteristics, all of the attributes, all of the fruit of God you display, is somebody who is saved."

Verse 10, the patience of hope. **And to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from out of the dead, Jesus, the One delivering us from the coming wrath**. Notice the word *delivering* is an -ing word, one of our participles. The One who is continually delivering us from the coming wrath, that is, the judgment that is going to come. So waiting for His Son from heaven whom He raised from the dead, Jesus.

So he says your testimony is threefold. Your faith towards God is active, and everybody is hearing about it. You are actively putting your trust in God. Secondly, you are serving the true and living God and you have left all the other stuff behind to labor to the point of exhaustion because of your love for Him. And thirdly, you are waiting for His Son from heaven. They are looking up to heaven. They are remaining in their situation. They are not budging in their relationship with Jesus Christ from the midst of hardship because they are waiting for the Lord to come from heaven. You cannot do that without the Holy Spirit. You cannot do that without belonging to the Lord.

So all of this is what he is telling them is what makes them the elect of God. He is telling them, "I know you are genuine because your life has been transformed. You are a new creation in Christ." And secondly, "You are waiting for Christ to come back. By that I know you are the genuine article."

Let's close with prayer.