



Series Introduction:

We believe the Gospel has the power to change lives, but how often do we see this transformational power in the lives of people we know? In this series, we will consider the example of Paul's Gospel preaching ministry in the ancient city of Thessalonica. As we study 1 Thessalonians, we will see the difference the Gospel makes, read words of comfort and encouragement to help us stay faithful, and be challenged with practical steps that we can take to become more effective Gospel witnesses!

Series Goals:

First, we want to see practical steps of obedience that we can take to become more consistent and effective witnesses for Jesus.

Second, we want to cultivate in the heart of every believer a passion for the personal study of Scripture.

- **For the believer, study of Scripture is not first or even primarily an academic pursuit. The study of Scripture is an act of worship. We study so that we can know God—who He is and what He wants us to do!**

Background:

The book of 1 Thessalonians is a letter that was written by the Apostle Paul to Christians in the ancient city of Thessalonica. Paul had traveled to the city during what is sometimes called, “Paul’s Second Missionary Journey”. This trip covered approximately 2,800 miles and nearly 20 cities.



We read about Paul’s visit to Thessalonica in Acts 17:1-10.

Acts 17:1-4 *“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. 4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.”*

While it is not known with any certainty how long Paul stayed in the city, what is known is the impact of the Gospel! The Word was preached, and people believed! Once saved, the people sat under the discipling and mentoring ministry of Paul and his co-laborers. A church was established, and God began to use these believers in a powerful way! While Paul and Silas were eventually forced to leave because of persecution, they did not forget about the Jesus followers in Thessalonica! Ultimately, under the inspiration of the Spirit, Paul wrote a letter to them! In this letter, Paul celebrates the difference that the Gospel made in their lives, and gives all the glory to God! And it all starts with a testimony...

Lesson One: A Gospel Testimony

Text: I Thessalonians 1:1-10

*“Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. **2** We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; **3** Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; **4** Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. **5** For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. **6** And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. **7** So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. **8** For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. **9** For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; **10** And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”*

Introduction:

The first chapter of Thessalonians is just Paul offering a word of praise and thanksgiving to God for the work that God did in the lives of the believers in the city of Thessalonica! This is the same work that God does in the lives of all people who believe in Jesus for salvation! This is a testimony—a powerful testimony!

I. A Testimony of Salvation

I Thessalonians 1:9-10 *“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; **10** And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”*

- The change that the Gospel brings begins with salvation!

Acts 17:3-4a *“Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. **4** And some of them believed...”*

- Salvation changes our purpose. *“...ye turned to God from idols...”*
- Salvation changes our desires. *“...to wait for his Son from heaven...”*
- Salvation changes our future. *“...which delivered us from the wrath to come...”*

Romans 10:9-14 *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

- The great need of every person is to be saved by grace through faith in Jesus!

II. A Testimony of Life-Change

- Salvation is not the end of the story, it is just the beginning! The Gospel changes the way we live our lives! We have a new direction and a new purpose!

I Thessalonians 1:3-4 *“Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; 4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”*

- Verse 4 identifies the description in verse 3 as the evidence of salvation!

A. A Work of Faith

- The Jesus followers in Thessalonica were serving God and living for God by faith!

Hebrews 10:38 *“Now the just shall live by faith:...”*

Hebrews 11:6 *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*

- The focus is on God—He is the rewarder! He is faithful! We can trust Him!

1 Thessalonians 5:24 *“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”*

B. A Labor of Love

- What they did for Jesus was characterized by love!

Matthew 22:36-40 *“Master, which is the great commandment in the law? 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”*

John 13:35 *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”*

1 Peter 1:22 *“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:”*

- The phrase, “a pure heart fervently” speaks of a love that is sincere and intentional.
- Gospel change produces loving people! Be known for your love!

C. A Patient Hope

- They were resting in the hope of the return of Christ! This gave them peace in spite of the pain they were experiencing.

1 Peter 1:3-9 *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”*

- They were not perfect in this, and Paul will go on in this letter to encourage them to remember what they were taught!

John 16:33 *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”*

III. A Testimony of a Faithful Witness

- When we are obedient to the command of Christ to be His witnesses, he blesses that obedience and uses us and our stories!

A. God Blesses Obedience

- Obedience is the starting point for a consistent and effective Gospel witness.

Acts 1:8 *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*

Romans 1:15-16 *“So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. **16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

B. God Can Use Us and Our Stories

I Thessalonians 1:6-8 *“And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. **7** So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. **8** For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.”*

- The Jesus followers in Thessalonica were allowing God to use them and their story to reach others!
- God wants to use us and our stories to reach people in our world!
- The components of our story include who we were before Jesus, how we came to believe in Jesus, and who we are now because of Jesus!

