

The Thessalonians - A Church to Emulate **1 Thess. 1:1-10**

by Ted Gatza

“Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” - Matt. 5:16

People always evaluate themselves. Before we go somewhere, we look in the mirror to make sure we are presentable. On the job, we always try to make the right impression. We want to be just right so that no one will think ill of us and find approval for all that we do.

The church at Thessalonica had made the right impression and Paul commended them for what he saw. What was it about them that impressed Paul so much that he said it was worthy to be remembered and not forgotten?

Their Work Of Faith

“And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.” - Phil. 4:3.

The Thessalonians were not complacent as Christians. They were a working and energetic congregation. For them, Christianity was life and they were not ashamed to work at convincing others they also could have eternal life in Christ. They were driven by their conviction of faith and seriousness of the work that needed to be done.

This motivation was seen in both the congregation and the individual. They worked in harmony with each other so that their light could be seen by all around them. It would be this united work in spreading the gospel that they would find eternal life. Their faith motivated them and kept them working to ensure their names were written in the book of life.

A Labor Of Love

“You are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” - Lk. 10:27

The work that we do must be satisfying. When we choose a career, it is important to find work that we enjoy and makes us happy to see perfection with the end result. It is more enjoyable when we work together with others and share in the excitement of the finished product.

Hard work is always a labor of love; if we love doing it. The Thessalonians loved and appreciated the blessings they had in Christ and faced many obstacles to make them known. From ridicule to persecution, they held to the work of their faith without wavering *“having received the word in much affliction.”* (vs. 6). So why would these people endure hardship with affliction and continue to publicly preach Christ? – Their love for God and for their neighbor!

Patience Of Hope

“By your patience, possess your souls.” - Lk. 21:19

When we think of patience we often think of trying to remain calm and not be rash. The patience that Paul encourages them to have is defined as steadfastness and endurance. He knew that when Christians have to endure everything from ridicule to persecution, they will tend to lose their faith and question the rationale of their decision to be Christians.

We must have a convincing faith, and that comes from the assurance in the truth of the gospel. We must also have faith in its revealed promises that God freely gives to the steadfast, faithful believer. Paul said; *“For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” - Heb. 6:10*

Examples To All Who Believe In Macedonia And Achaia

“...do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Heb. 6:12

It cannot be overemphasized the power that influencing examples have on people. Paul reminded the Thessalonians that they had *“become followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction” (1 Thess 1:6)* What a commendation! To be recognized as a faithful follower not only of the apostle but of the Lord himself!

The Thessalonians saw the life of Christ in Paul and followed his example. They then became *well known examples* of what a follower of Christ should be to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia . In fact, Paul made sure their example was known to the whole world!

So often many say they are Christians but their lives tell a different story. As we are seen, so we are. We should not be hypocritical in our claims, but we should be living examples of Christ. We should be people that other Christians look to as a pattern for their lives.

Looking Forward To The Return Of Christ

*“You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.”
Jms. 5:8*

Paul's influence and teaching had made a dramatic change in the lives of the Thessalonians. They had turned from idolatry and was serving the living God (1 Thess. 1:9). They had abandoned the pleasures that idolatrous worship gave them and embraced the joys of serving the living God. They had abandoned those things that were destructive to both body and soul and turned to the pleasures of God that bring honor, dignity and a life that gives us true peace.

People have always designed ways to give into their desires and pleasures, and idolatrous religions served that purpose. It gave people the freedom to do anything they liked with the approval of their many gods. Even today, as in Paul's time, many would rather serve themselves than repent of their sins. Why be persecuted as Christians when you can be happy as pagans? (2 Thess. 1:4; 3:13) How short sighted these people are.

The Thessalonians knew that their steadfastness as Christians had its rewards. Honor and dignity in this world, and the glorious promises of Christ after death. They were steadfast in their faith and militant in trying to convince others (1 Thess. 1:8). They knew the Lord would return but did not know when (1 Thess. 5:2). Convinced of this, they endeavored to remain steadfast and unmovable as they patiently waited for the coming of the Lord.

What a wonderful example they are to us all! Like them, let us turn from corruption and darkness and into the light and everlasting life. Let us place our faith in the promises of God and find true happiness in both this world and the world to come and steadfastly wait for the return of the Lord.

“He who calls you is faithful, who will also do it.” - 1 Thess. 5:24
