

LEANING IN AND LOOKING AHEAD

I Thessalonians 1:1-10

Acts 17:1-10

1Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." 4And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. 5But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. 6When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; 7and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." 8They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. 9And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them. 10The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. **Acts 17:1-10 NASB**

Paul is writing a letter (**I Thessalonians 1**) to the new church in Thessalonica...these believers were only months old in the Lord. Paul and Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy were the first messengers of the Gospel in this city. It is good to read Paul's letter with this in mind.

1Paul and Silvanus and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. 2We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers; 3constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, 4knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you; 5for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. 9For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come. **I Thessalonians 1:1-10 NASB**

- Greetings to the Thessalonian church from the apostolic team that brought the gospel to them. (Paul, Silas, and Timothy) **I Thessalonians 1:1-2**
 - The church 'of' the Thessalonians 'in' God the Father and the Lord Jesus.

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- A perfect picture of the two elements that are always present: the organized and organic...both are required but the balance of these two is tricky.
- "...the church assembled in Thessalonica" **Knox**
- "...the church in union with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (See **Colossians 3:3** and **Acts 17:28**)
- Paul's greeting is a classic one...grace and peace.
 - Grace is that love of God that touches us regardless of who we may be or what we may have done. It is the reason for our redemption and our relationship to God.
 - Peace is that wonderful sense of well-being that flows from the new life of grace in Jesus.
- Paul and his team consistently 'make mention' of the Thessalonians in prayer.
 - You can do this! You can make mention of people by name at the throne of grace.
 - Speaking to God on behalf of others...mentioning their name in His presence 'counts' with God.
- When they pray for the church they have three things in mind....Recalling unceasingly before our God and Father your work energized by faith and service, motivated by love and unwavering hope in [the return of] our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah). **I Thessalonians 1:3 Amplified Bible**
 - Work energized by faith (see **I John 5:4-5**). Faith is rooted in the past and empowered in the present by love. (See **II Corinthians 5:14-16**, **John 13:34-35**, **Hebrews 10:24-25**, **I Peter 1:22**, **Ephesians 4:32**)
 - Unwavering hope.
 - We hope for His coming and in His 'coming through' for us.
 - Hope is the 'helmet'. (**I Thessalonians 5:8**) that guards your thoughts so your heart does not get poisoned, stolen, or 'stopped'.
 - Knox calls hope...'unwearied love' and Goodspeed says...'unwavering expectancy.'
 - The 'helmet' is 'sonscreen' for the 'toxic rays' of the enemy's lies.

⁴knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you; ⁵for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. **I Thessalonians 1:4-8 NASB**

- Paul 'reminds' them that they have truly been chosen by God. (**I Thessalonians 1:4-6**)
 - We are....'marked out by God's purposes...' **I Thessalonians 1:4 NT in Basic**
 - He chose us because He loves us and He loves us because...He is love. **John Stott**

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- God's grace in choosing us and empowering us to choose Him is demonstrated by what happened to the Thessalonians when Paul's team came to them. **I Thessalonians 1:5**
 - The word for power here is the same as **Mark 5:30** where Jesus felt the power go forth from Himself as the woman with the issue of blood touched the hem of His robe. It is the word for miracle.
 - ..."our preaching did not depend on mere argument." **Conybeare**
 - These words from the preachers outline and sermon Bible says it well: Paul preached in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance. Preaching in 'power' (dunamis) means preaching in the power and energy of God Himself. This is what is so often missed and misunderstood. The gospel is not mere words nor just sharing an idea. Words and ideas are, of course, involved, but the gospel is more, much more. The gospel is the power of God at work in the human heart. The gospel is the power of God operating, working, stirring, convicting, and energizing a person to believe and accept the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - See **I Corinthians 2:1-5** and **I Corinthians 4:19-20**
 - "The Word of God is the Spirit's sword. The Spirit without the Word is weaponless; the Word without the Spirit is powerless." **John Stott**
 - With full conviction (**I Thessalonians 4:5**)
 - Fullness of certainty, fullness of assurance, or fully convinced. This is true of the speakers and the hearers and is the opposite of 'in word only'.
- One more 'proof' of God's choice of these believers and their choice of Him is the discipleship that was taking place. ("Imitators of us") **I Thessalonians 1:6-7**
 - See **Ephesians 5:1**
 - They received the gospel with great joy in much tribulation. (v6)
 - They became an example, a pattern for all believers in other areas. (v7)
 - They learned about the gospel of the Kingdom and began to live it out and give it away.
- A widely resounding testimony from these people. (**I Thessalonians 1:8-10**)
 - The Word of the Lord.
 - The Word of their testimony.
 - ⁸For not only has the Word concerning *and* from the Lord resounded forth from you unmistakably in Macedonia and Achaia, but everywhere the report has gone forth of your faith in God [of your leaning of your whole personality on Him in complete trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness]. So we [find that we] never need to tell people anything [further about it]. **I Thessalonians 1:8 Amplified Bible**
 - ..."the story of your belief in God has gone everywhere..." **Goodspeed**
 - Part of their 'story' was turning their back on the enemy and giving their hearts to the true and living God.
 - See **Psalms 106:37-38** and **Deuteronomy 32:15-18**
 - v8..."The Word of the Lord has 'sounded forth' from you...'sounded forth' only appears once in the Bible and it is here in v8.
 - Sounded forth means to resound, ring out.

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- ...”For from you these has been caused to sound forth in a loud, unmistakable proclamation the word of the Lord, the echo of which still rolls on with a great sound...”
Wuest

9For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come. **I Thessalonians 1:9-10 NASB**

- They turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.
- Idols – images or false gods.
- Idols – anything that takes the place of God – my opinions, false teachings, religious novelties, ungodly desires and practices.
- Idols- things that are not immortal or eternal and are not true.
- They were ‘leaning into life and looking ahead.’
- And [how you] look forward to *and* await the coming of His Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead-Jesus, Who personally rescues *and* delivers us out of *and* from the wrath [bring punishment] which is coming [upon the impenitent] *and* draws us to Himself [investing us with all the privileges and rewards of the new life in Christ, the Messiah]. **I Thessalonians 1:10 Amplified Bible**
- They had an eye on His return and our rescue from the wrath go come.

4who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5to whom *be* the glory forevermore. Amen. **Galatians 1:4-5 NASB**

- We also have Jesus who rescues us from this present evil age.
- Rescue means to deliver, take out or set free.

9“The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. Yet God was with him, 10and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and all his household. **Acts 7:9-10 NASB**

- The Thessalonians were ‘leaning in’ to God’s purposes by their energized faith and empowered love, looking ahead with envisioned hope.