

April 2, 2017

## “We Give Thanks to God for You”

### Focal Passage: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 (NASB)

**Cross References:** Romans 5:8-11; 15:18-19; 1 Cor. 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:1-2; 2 Peter 1:10

**Lesson Idea:** We should thank God for believers who set the right example and send forth the gospel; we should strive to be that kind of Christian.

#### BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Mar 26 Ruth 1-4	Mar 27 1 Samuel 1-3
Mar 28 1 Samuel 4-8	Mar 29 1 Samuel 9-12
Mar 30 1 Samuel 13-14	Mar 31 1 Samuel 15-17
Apr 1 1 Samuel 18-20	Apr 2 1 Samuel 21-24

**Background:** David Guzik shares concerning v 1:

**Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy:** Paul was an amazing man and apostle of God, but he usually did not work all by himself. Whenever he could, Paul worked with a team. Here Paul mentioned the men he worked with.

Silvanus (also known as Silas) was a long and experienced companion of Paul. He traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey and was imprisoned and set free with Paul in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:19-24). When Paul first came to Thessalonica, Silas came with him (Acts 17:1-9). Therefore, the Thessalonians knew Silvanus well.

Timothy was a resident of Lystra, a city in the province of Galatia (Acts 16:1-3). He was the son of a Greek father (Acts 16:2) and a Jewish mother named Eunice (2 Timothy 2:5). From his youth he learned the Scriptures from his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 3:15). Timothy was a trusted companion and associate of Paul, and he accompanied Paul on many of his missionary journeys. Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonians on a previous occasion (1 Thessalonians 3:2).

“This letter is full of interest because it is certainly among the first of those which have been preserved for us from the pen of Paul. It was the first he wrote to European Christians, and in it the fundamental things of the Christian life are very clearly set forth.” (G. Campbell Morgan)

**To the church of the Thessalonians:** Paul himself founded the church in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). He was only in the city a short time because he was forced out by enemies of the gospel. Yet the church of the Thessalonians continued alive and active. Paul’s deep concern for this young church he was forced to suddenly leave prompted this letter.

**\*\* For additional background information on 1 Thessalonians, see the introduction from *Halley’s Bible Handbook* at the end of this lesson.**

### 1 Thessalonians 1

*1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.*  
*2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 constantly 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, 4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; 5 for 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. 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For 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. 9 For 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, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.*

#### DISCUSSION:

- v 1. Why does Paul include Silvanus and Timothy as co-authors of this letter? What do they say about the recipients? How does he describe the church? Why are “grace and peace” important to the church?
- v 2. Why were Paul and the others thankful for the church and how did they act on their appreciation? For whom are you praying? (see Philippians 1:3-6)

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

Hiebert on **God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:** “Paul’s construction, which unites the two under the government of the one preposition in (*en*), places the two names side by side on a basis of equality. It is a clear witness to his conviction concerning the deity of Jesus Christ.” . . .

**Making mention of you in our prayers:** When Paul prayed for people and churches, it wasn’t necessarily a long time of intercession. He often simply made mention of a church or a person in prayer (Romans 1:9, Ephesians 1:16, Philemon 1:4).

- v 3. Define the phrases Paul uses about the church:
  - *work of faith*
  - *labor of love*
  - *steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ*

- ✓ How do these things describe Faith? and your life?

**NOTE: from Guzik:**

**Your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ:** Despite the problems, Paul was so grateful to God for the Thessalonians because there was an undeniable work of the Holy Spirit and a marvelous change in their lives. The three great Christian virtues were evident among them: faith, love, and hope.

“Here for the first time, chronologically, in Paul’s writings we have this famous triad: faith, love, hope. But Paul’s stress is not on these virtues alone, but rather upon what they produce.” (Hiebert)

- Therefore, their *faith produced work* - as is the nature of true faith.
- Their *love produced labor*. There are two different ancient Greek words for work: *ergon* and *kopos*. *Ergon* “may be pleasant and stimulating,” but *kopos (used here)* “implies toil that is strenuous and sweat-producing.” (Hiebert)
- Their *hope produced patience*, which is the long-suffering endurance needed to not only survive hard times, but to triumph through them.

- v 3-4. How special is it to know that our Lord is in the presence of our God and Father and that He has chosen to save us? (see 2 Peter 1:10)
- v 5. Even though Paul said their gospel didn’t come in word only, why is it important that the Gospel does come by word? What also came with the Gospel? How are these aspects still present today? (see Romans 15:18-19; 1 Corinthians 2:1-3)
- What did Paul say about their reputation while they were with the Thessalonians? Why is it important for Christian witnesses to maintain a good reputation?
- v 6. Who is it okay to “imitate” in the Christian walk? Why? How can Christians have joy in the midst of tribulation?
- v 7. Why should believers strive to be examples for others? How does this relate to the discipleship process? (see 1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:1-2)

**NOTE: from Guzik:**

**And you became followers of us and of the Lord:** They stopped following other things, but followed after Paul and the Lord. Paul says that it was a good thing for the Thessalonians to follow him, and he wasn’t shy about saying “follow me” because he knew where he was going.

This shows that Paul’s message included an element of personal discipleship. There was a sense in which Paul personally led these Thessalonian Christians in their

spiritual life. They could see his life and were invited to learn from his example.

Paul repeated this theme several times: *Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.* (Philippians 3:17) *Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.* (1 Corinthians 11:1)

- v 8. How does the Word of the Lord “sound forth” from a church? How well is the Word of the Lord going forth from us? How well is it going forth from you?

**NOTE: from Guzik:**

**From you the word of the Lord has sounded forth:** This was part of the good example that the Thessalonian Christians provided. *Sounded forth* means “a loud ringing sound, as of a trumpet blast.” The good work the Lord did among the Thessalonians became known all over the region, and everyone talked about the changes.

In a cosmopolitan trading city like Thessalonica, the good news could sound forth in every place to all the earth.

**Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything:** Paul said, “You Thessalonian Christians are sounding forth the word of the Lord so effectively that you are putting me out of business! We do not need to say anything!” (*This pleased him much.*)

Paul pairs two ideas. *The word of the Lord sounded forth, and their faith toward God has gone out.* Those two aspects are essential if a church will spread the gospel. First, they need a message to spread, and that message first needs to impact their own lives. Second, they need the faith to go out, so that their faith toward God goes out to all the world.

“The mere preaching of the Gospel has done much to convince and convert sinners; but the lives of the sincere followers of Christ, as illustrative of the truth of these doctrines, have done much more.” (Clarke)

- v 9-10. How does turning to God always involve turning from idols? Why is Christianity more than just believing things about God—why does it always involve *serving the living and true God*?
- v 10. For what should we as Christians be anticipating and why? How does Jesus rescue from “wrath?” (see Romans 5:8-11)

**APPLICATION:**

- ✓ How can your life of faith be worth following?
- ✓ How are you helping to sound forth the gospel?

- ✓ What needs to change in order for you to be the effective example and witness you need to be?

Lesson by Bro Stan

**Background Information from *Halley's Bible Handbook* (25<sup>th</sup> ed.)****1 Thessalonians****The Lord's Second Coming****KEY VERSES:**

*May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.*

—1 THESSALONIANS 3:12–13

*Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.*

—1 THESSALONIANS 5:16–22

**T**he first letter to the Thessalonian church is probably Paul's earliest surviving letter and is generally dated around 51 A.D. The letter was intended to encourage the Christian growth of new believers in the Thessalonian church and to settle questions they had, primarily about the Lord's second coming.

**The Church in Thessalonica**

Paul founded the church in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey in about A.D. 51 (Acts 17:1–9). Acts 17:2 gives the impression that Paul spent only three weeks there, but Philippians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; and 2 Thessalonians 3:8 seem to imply that he was there longer. It may be that he preached in the synagogue three Sabbaths in a row and then later in some other place. In any case, he wasn't there long enough to fully instruct the church.

The church likely included some Jews, since Paul began his ministry in the synagogue. However, 1:9–10 and Acts 17:4 suggest that church membership was predominantly gentile.

**Thessalonica**

The modern city of Saloniki in northern Greece, on the north end of the Gulf of Salonika. In Paul's day it was the largest city and chief harbor town of Macedonia, with a population of approximately 200,000. Thessalonica was located on a rich and well-watered plain, on the Egnatian Way, the great military highway from Rome to the east. It was within sight of Mount Olympus, the home of the gods in Greek mythology. It is still a prosperous city today.

The city attracted sufficient Jewish merchants of the Diaspora (dispersion) to account for the presence of a well-established synagogue (Acts 17:1). Prolific coinage suggests a high level of prosperity. Paul visited Thessalonica after Philippi and appears to have worked among a composite group that included the Jews of the synagogue and Greek proselytes.

**Why Paul Wrote This Letter**

Although he was there only a short time, Paul created a great stir in Thessalonica. His enemies accused him of turning "the world upside down" (Acts 17:6 KJV). A large number of Greeks and prominent women believed (Acts 17:4). It was talked about all over Greece (1 Thessalonians 1:8–9).

Driven out of Thessalonica, Paul went to Berea, about 50 miles to the west. But soon he was also driven from Berea, leaving Silas and Timothy there. When he got to Athens, 300 miles to the south, he was lonesome and sent word back to Berea for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all possible speed (Acts 17:14–15).

When they reached Athens, Paul, filled with anxiety about the young church in Thessalonica, immediately sent Timothy back. By the time Timothy returned from Thessalonica, Paul had gone from Athens to Corinth.

Timothy brought word that the Thessalonian Christians were enduring their persecutions courageously (1:6; 2:14; and Acts 17:5–14). But some Christians had died, and the others were puzzled as to how those who had died would benefit from the Lord's coming, a doctrine that Paul evidently had especially stressed in Thessalonica. Then Paul wrote this letter, mainly to tell them that those who had died would not be at any disadvantage when the Lord comes. He also instructed them regarding godly living (4:1–8) and urged them not to neglect their daily work (4:11–12).

