

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

What Every Church Should Be 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 Part 2

We have begun our study of 1 Thessalonians. As we looked at this particular epistle last week we discovered that this little fellowship of believers was a source of tremendous joy for the apostle and for his companions. In fact this particular church I believe is a model of what every church should hopefully become.

Let us go back to **V. 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.....”**. Remember that Paul, Silas and Timothy had been driven out from the city of Thessalonica only a few weeks after establishing the church there. Leaving no one behind to help train them or establish them in their faith (**Acts 16:1-9**). After fleeing Thessalonica they went to Berea. After a successful ministry in Berea Paul left Timothy and Silas there to assist the church while he pressed on alone to Athens and finally ended up at Corinth (**Acts 16:10- Acts 17:1**).

Nearly a year had passed and Paul was deeply concerned about the Thessalonian church. As a result of this concern it appears that Paul must have directed Timothy who had been at Berea to visit Thessalonica on his way back to him at Corinth. When Timothy reports back to Paul about the wonderful and vibrant condition of the church Paul sits down and writes this epistle beginning with this greeting immediately followed by a statement of thanksgiving in **V. 2, “We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers.”**

Why was he so filled with thanksgiving? Verse four gives us an answer to that question, **“knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you.”** Or as the King Verse translates this verse, **“knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”** This is hopefully how every church that names the name of Christ should be. What a great thing it would be when we meet on Saturday nights or Sunday mornings to know as Paul knew that everyone that came to fellowship with us at those meeting times were the chosen of God or the Elect. This is not necessarily the way it is but this is the way it should be.

The question that we want to ask this morning/evening is “How did Paul know beyond a reasonable doubt that the whole of the church of the Thessalonians were chosen of god or elect? How could he have such great confidence that the church as a whole were truly born again? OR ANOTHER WAY OF ASKING THIS QUESTION WOULD BE “WHAT IDENTIFIES A SAVED PERSON? PAUL GIVES US THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IN V.3. Let us read **“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.”** How did Paul know that the Church of Thessalonica was composed of saved people. Put very simply their changed lives. The person who claims to be one of God’s elect, but whose life has not changed, is only fooling himself. **THOSE WHOM GOD CHOOSES, HE CHANGES.** This does not mean they are perfect, but they are possessors of a new life that cannot be hidden.

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What specific changes did Paul have in mind? **“constantly bearing in mind your work of faith.....”**

A FAITH THAT WORKS

In order to be saved we must come to Jesus and by faith and receive Him as our Savior and Lord. If we do not do this, we will not be saved. And just “saying” that He is our Savior and Lord is not sufficient. We must have in fact by faith come to Him as such and this new reality should make a difference in the way we live. And this visible change in the way we live our lives because of our new relationship with Jesus is the work of faith.

And if we cannot see this change, this work of faith then it certainly raises doubt whether or not we are one of the chosen ones of God. It raises doubt whether we are one of the elect. It raises doubt concerning whether we are in fact saved.

In **Matt. 10** Jesus made this very clear. Beginning in **V. 21** he tells His disciples **“Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. (22) Many will say to Me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” (23) And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”**

A faith that works means that we will live a life that produces what is representative of that faith we which or others should be able to see. . If we in fact say that we say that Jesus is our Savior and Lord this reality should be able to be seen. For some people this new reality in their lives is very easily seen because their lives were so morally corrupt before they came to Christ, the changes that accompanied that profession are profound. But how about those who have always been what the world would call good people. How would their faith be worked out in such a way that it could be seen?

Let us consider Paul’s life for a moment. Could someone looking at his life see a positive change in behavior? And the answer would have to be yes! Was the change seen in him changing from a licentious and immoral lifestyle to a moral lifestyle? No! Then how do we see the change in his life a more righteous lifestyle?

What had he been doing before he exercised faith in Christ? He had been an enemy of the Gospel of Christ and a persecutor of the church. Now what was Paul? He was bold and courageous proclaimer of the good news of the Gospel and seeking to plant and establish churches wherever he went. His life had changed. The works of his life had changed.

Someone may say but I thought we are not saved by works. We are not saying that. What we are saying is that people who have been saved or who put their faith in Jesus will be marked out by works.

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Even though Paul in this passage infers that the works that he saw in the Thessalonians lives assured him of their salvation he did not say that the works saved them. No one is more clear than Paul in saying that works do not save

Romans 3:20 “Because by the works of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight

No one is more clear or adamant that salvation is by grace through faith alone

Eph. 2:8,9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”

But we must also see that no one is more clear or adamant that saving faith always produces works. Where you have saving faith it produces works. This is why we read a statement like we do in **Romans 2:6 “Who will render to every man according to his deeds”**. God gives eternal life to people who do good. Did we earn eternal life through good works? Of course not!! But those who have eternal life will be characterized by what? Good works.

This is what James meant in he wrote in **James 2:14-17 “What use it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? (15) If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, “go in peace, be warmed and be filled, “ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? (17) Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself”**

This is very basic and very important. You cannot see the new birth, you cannot see faith, you cannot see regeneration. You cannot hear God declaring someone righteous, then how can you know that someone is saved? How can we know if we are saved? By seeing the fruit of faith which is good works. How can you tell the counterfeit faith from the real genuine faith? By the righteous behavior produced by those who have authentic faith.

The reason why this standard can be so confidently applied to our lives is because a life of good works is not dependent upon us but rather on the Lord accomplishing His purposes in our lives. **Eph. 2:8-10 “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; (9) not as a result of works, that no one would boast. (10) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which god prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”**

As you look at your life can you see A WORK OF FAITH. For those who became Christians later in life this change may be much more easily seen than for those who accepted Christ as young children. But if you do have a memory of what life was like before you accepted Him as your Lord and Lord by faith can you see that your life has changed? Can others, when they look at what you were like before becoming a Christian, see the change in your life.

I didn't become a Christian so that I could remain the same and I am because of passages such as this I am encouraged knowing that change is not simply in this life to be my hope but expectation..... May God never give us a spirit of contentment with the way we are.

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We need to have high and lofty expectation of what we can become in Christ. Not because of who we are but because of who the Lord is and knowing that HE DESIRES THAT WE LIVE CHANGED LIVES.

What identifies a saved person? A work of faith What else identifies a true believer.

A LOVE THAT LABORS

Let us again look at **V. 3 “constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love.....”**. This labor of love I believe is speaking about the Thessalonians love for their brother and sisters in Christ. Their love for those who make up the true church. The reason why I believe this is because of what Paul shares with the Thessalonians in **Thess. 4:9 “Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; (10) for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia.”** Paul is impressed with the way this fellowship loves the brethren.

There is absolutely no way for a person to believe that they are one of God’s chosen, one of the elect, unless they are characterized by love for the brethren. Let us consider **I John 4:7 “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God..... (20) If someone says, “I love God,” hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. (21) And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.”**

As Paul looked at these Thessalonians he not only saw love. He saw their **“labor”** of love. The word labor emphasizes the magnitude of the effort. The Thessalonians expressions of love were exemplary.

How were they doing this? One of the areas that we know about is in the area of giving. **“Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, (2) that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. (3) For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints.”**

Paul had no problem seeing the love of Thessalonians for fellow believers. He saw the great magnitude of the love for the brethren, their labor of love and he rejoiced. Certainly one of the most dramatic changes that we will see a person’s life we they are born again is their relationship with the church.

I really do enjoy getting together with believers. I really do enjoy talking about how good he has been to me. I enjoy praying with them, studying with them, and worshiping with them. I enjoy going camping with them. Playing games with them.

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I fear for those professing Christians who think everything is fine with them even though they may not enjoy nor seek our Christian fellowship. Who think they can worship God just fine under a tree somewhere with the annoyance of other Christians. May God have mercy on their souls.

What identifies someone who is saved, A LIFE CHARACTERIZED BY A WORK OF FAITH AND A LIFE CHARACTERIZED BY A LABOR OF LOVE.

A HOPE THAT PERSEVERES

Let us read read **V. 3** once again **“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....”** Christians do not bail out. They have a hope of future glory. We are looking upward and to that future day of blessing. **Titus 2:11 “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, (12) instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age (13) looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.”** There is nothing in this world that can cause us to lose our faith. We may be knocked down but we will not be knocked out.

The Scriptures are clear. It is only those who endure to the end that will be saved (**Mt. 10:22**). Oh then someone can say that endurance is necessary for us to be saved. NO THIS IS NOT WHAT IT IS SAYING AT ALL IT IS TELLING US THAT THOSE WHO ARE TRULY BORN AGAIN WILL IN FACT ENDURE TO THE END. IT IS A MARK OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CHOSEN OR ELECTED TO SALVATION. HOW DOES THE LORD KEEP US PERSEVERING. IT IS BY FIXING A FUTURE HOPE UPON US. Look at **John 3:2,3 “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. (3) And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”** This is why Paul says what he says in **Romans 5:1,2 “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have a peace with God through our Lord Jesus , (2) through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.”** Hope is not optional equipment for the believer. It is standard equipment. And if hope is not seen then there is no reason that a particular person is a chosen one, an elect one a saved one.

But how did Paul see their hope manifested? How was it made visible? Hope is made visible through endurance. These Thessalonians were continuing on keeping on in the midst of tribulation.

CONCLUSION

Paul is saying the only way I know that you are Christian is by these three things. The faith that he gives works, the love that he gives labors, and the hope that He gives endures.

If we have some faith that we have tried to generate on our own it will not work. If we have some love that we have tried to generate on our own it will not work. If we have some hope that we have generated on our own it will not work.

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Listen to **Prov. 4:18** “**But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day.**” What a statement! The path of the righteous does not go from light to darkness. But rather from dim light to full light. It expands. It shines brighter and brighter as the work of faith increases, the labor of love increases, and the hope that perseveres increases.

How do we now we are are elect? How do we know if we are chosen? How do we know if we saved? We know this if we can look at our lives and see a faith that works. A love that labors. And a hope that endures.