

Faith That Sets an Example

1 Thess 1:2-10

SS Lesson for 11/10/2019

Devotional Scripture: Rom 1:7-12

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Key Verse: 2 Thess 1:7-8

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

EXAMPLE THROUGH A TRANSFORMED LIFESTYLE (1 THESS 1:2-6)

Transformed Lifestyle through a work of faith

The work of faith is to believe in Jesus (John 6:28-29)

The work of faith should be done with all my strength and abilities (1 Cor 15:58)

The work of faith expresses itself through love (Gal 5:6)

Genuine faith is accompanied by actions (James 2:17)

The work of faith results in being credited as righteousness (Rom 4:4-5)

Transformed Lifestyle through a labor of love

Labor of love because without love there is nothing (1 Cor 13:1-3)

Labor of love because God commands us to pursue it (1 Tim 6:11)

Labor of love because God knows our deeds (Rev 2:19)

Labor of love is the only thing that counts in the Kingdom of God (Gal 5:6)

Labor of love comes from a pure heart and good conscience (1 Tim 1:5)

Labor of love prompts us to do good works (Heb 10:24)

Labor of love means that we love God (1 John 4:21)

Transformed Lifestyle through the patience of hope

Hope that anchors the soul (Heb 6:18-20)

Hope that should be held unswervingly (Heb 10:23)

Hope in the glory of God (Rom 5:2)

Hope that will not disappoint (Rom 5:5)

Hope found in the Scriptures (Rom 15:4)

Hope that makes us bold (2 Cor 3:10-12)

Hope into which we are called (Eph 4:4)

Hope of eternal life (Titus 3:7)

EXAMPLE THROUGH A TRANSFORMED REPUTATION (1 THESS 1:7-9)

Transformed Reputation by being an example

An example of godly speech, life, love and purity (1 Tim 4:12)

An example of following Jesus (1 Cor 11:1)

An example of God's patience and grace (1 Tim 1:16)

An example by doing good (Titus 2:7-8)

An example of perseverance in trials and persecutions (2 Thess 1:4)

Transformed Reputation by being a witness

Witness through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8)

Witness by using God's word (Rom 10:17-18)

Witness to others through teaching (2 Tim 2:2)

Witness starting at home (Luke 8:39)

Witness about what God has done for us (Ps 66:16)

Transformed Reputation by turning from idolatry

Turning from idolatry by fleeing from it (1 Cor 10:14)

Turning from idolatry by putting to death what belongs to the earthly nature (Col 3:5)

Turning from idolatry by being separated from it (2 Cor 6:16-17)

Turning from idolatry by keeping oneself from idols (1 John 5:21)

Turning from idolatry by trusting in God instead (Ps 31:6)

EXAMPLE THROUGH A TRANSFORMED FUTURE (1 THESS 1:10)

A transformed future in heaven

A heaven where the former things will be gone (Isa 65:17-18)

A heaven that will endure (Isa 66:22-23)

A heaven that will be the home of the righteous (2 Peter 3:13)

- A heaven where better things stored up for us (Ps 31:19)
- A heaven where hope is stored (Col 1:5)
- A heaven where a living hope of the inheritance is waiting for us (1 Peter 1:3-4)
- A transformed future through resurrection*
 - A resurrection that is based on Scripture (1 Cor 15:3-4)
 - A resurrection through being united with Jesus (Rom 6:5)
 - A resurrection taught through preaching (1 Cor 15:12-14)
 - A resurrection symbolized through baptism (1 Peter 3:17-21)
- A transformed future of deliverance*
 - Deliverance through being hidden in God (Ps 32:7)
 - Deliverance through God's faithfulness (2 Cor 1:10)
 - Deliverance through a living hope (1 Peter 1:3)
 - Deliverance in a time that has been appointed by God (Dan 11:35)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM J. HAMPTON KEATHLEY

The Cause for Giving Thanks—Knowing (vss. 4-7)

The Confidence and Character of the Missionaries (vss. 4-5)

The Conduct and Character of the Thessalonians (vss. 6-7)

They received the message in faith (vs. 6b)

They became imitators of the missionaries and the Lord (vs. 6a)

They became an example for believers everywhere (vs. 7)

The Confirmation of Their Commendation (1:8-10)

Their Work of Faith Confirmed (vs. 8)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY

Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

“Plan the work, then work the plan.” This advice helps clarify the logistics needed to get a job done. Plans are futile if the workers fail to do the needed work. Working can be futile when there is no goal in sight. We often speak of our Christian works as labors of love. What if we said we loved the work and worked our love? What if we found better motivation and more energy to transform talk about acts of love into actions of service, deeply motivated by our love for others? When we do things motivated by our love for Christ and for others, we are not seeking to earn anything. We are working out the love in our hearts in tangible and helpful ways. We are loving the work and working our love. As Paul wrote, the things that really count are seen in “faith which worketh by love” (Galatians 5:6).

The historical background concerning Paul's time in Thessalonica comes primarily from Acts 17:1-9. Paul set out on his second journey of missionary work with companion, Silvanus (also known as Silas; see Lesson Context of lesson 13) and in AD 52 (Acts 15:40). Paul wanted to return to churches he had planted on the first missionary expedition. After that, he decided to press on into new territory with the gospel. Paul eventually came to the city of Thessalonica (Acts 17:1), about 100 miles west of Philippi. Situated on the Via Egnatia, Thessalonica served as a link between the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire. It was a center of commerce where both land and sea routes met. If Christianity could find a foothold in Thessalonica, the faith would be set to explode westward. Paul began his ministry in Thessalonica in the synagogue (Acts 17:2), though not to the exclusion of welcoming Gentiles (17:4). This caused Jews of Thessalonica to become jealous of Paul's success (17:5). A riotous mob formed. Christians were rounded up and jailed; only after posting bail were they allowed to return home (17:5-9). Paul and Silas left town under cover of darkness (17:10). Paul spent less than four weeks in Thessalonica (“three sabbath days”; see Acts 17:2). This short time for preaching and teaching combined with the agitation from Jewish opponents (17:11, 13) left the young Thessalonian congregation in a tenuous position. Would their faith hold? Would they continue to trust Paul and, more importantly, Christ? While Paul stayed in Corinth for about 18 months (Acts 18:11), such questions undoubtedly troubled him. So he sent Timothy (Timothy) to Thessalonica to minister to the believers there (1 Thessalonians 3:2). Timothy returned with a good report (3:6). Paul's two letters that are called 1 and 2 Thessalonians in our Bibles addressed doctrinal questions that arose in the congregation. The questions especially concerned the resurrection and the second coming of Jesus. These two letters were written within a few months of each other in AD 52. The greeting of 1 Thessalonians 1:1 lists Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

the trio who had begun the good work in this city just a few months earlier. Whenever Paul refers to “we” or “us,” he likely has at least these two other men in mind.

Key Verse: 2 Thess 1:7-8

7 So that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. 8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

1:1. Letters written in first-century Greco-Roman culture began with three statements which are found in the opening verse of 1 Thessalonians: the name(s) of the writer(s), the name(s) of the addressee(s), and a word of formal greeting. The Apostle **Paul** was the writer of this epistle. His name appears first and he spoke of himself in the singular elsewhere in the letter (e.g., 3:5). He was Saul of Tarsus whose Hebrew name means “asked for.” His Roman name, Paul, by which he was known more commonly, means “little.” **Silas and Timothy** joined Paul in sending 1 Thessalonians; that is, Paul wrote for them as well as for himself. Perhaps Silas served as Paul’s amanuensis, or secretary. Frequently in 1 Thessalonians Paul wrote “we” so he was either including these brethren in his thoughts (e.g., 1:2; 2:1; etc.) or using an editorial “we.” Silvanus is the Roman form of Silas which Paul used consistently in his writings, as did Peter (1 Peter 5:12). Luke called the same person Silas (Acts 15:22; etc.). Silas was Paul’s primary associate on the second missionary journey (Acts 15:40). Timothy, of course, was a young man Paul led to faith in Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 1:2), probably during Paul’s visit to Asia Minor on his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14). Timothy’s name (which means “honored by God” or “God-honorer”) was doubtless given in faith by his God-fearing mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5). His father may have been a pagan Greek when Timothy was born (Acts 16:1). This young man had recently returned to Paul from a trip to Thessalonica with news of conditions in that church (1 Thes. 3:1-2, 6). These three men were undoubtedly the best-known and most highly respected Christian missionaries by the believers in Thessalonica. The addressees are grouped together in the salutation as **the church of the Thessalonians**. A local church is a group of people called out by God from the mass of humanity to a life of separation to Him. The definite article before “Thessalonians” is not found in some ancient copies of 1 Thessalonians. If this is the correct wording, the text further emphasizes the distinction between those in the church and others in the city. The church is described as being **in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**. To Paul, the Lord Jesus Christ was as much God as the Father. He preached this in Thessalonica (Acts 17:3) and affirmed it again in this epistle. The description of God as Father connotes security, love, and strength. Paul balanced this picture with a reminder that God the Son is also Lord; He is the Sovereign who is to be obeyed. “Jesus” is the Lord’s human name, the Greek form of Joshua, “Savior.” “Christ” is the Greek translation of the “Messiah” of the Old Testament and means “Anointed One.” The shortened greeting customary in the Pauline Epistles appears here. **Grace** was the common Greek salutation meaning “greetings” or “rejoice.” In Greek **peace** is equivalent to the Hebrew *šālôm*

This first chapter deals primarily with the subject of salvation. Several aspects of the Thessalonians’ salvation elicited Paul’s thanksgiving to God in these verses. In these two verses Paul expressed his gratitude to God and set forth in a brief statement why he was thankful for the Thessalonians.

1:2. Paul, Silas, and Timothy rejoiced together in what God had done in their converts’ lives. They continually and frequently gave thanks; the Thessalonians were a constant source of joy to them. Whenever these missionaries prayed for the Thessalonians, they gave thanks to **God** for them. Rather than being a source of grief these Christians evoked gratitude. In this they served as models for all Christians.

1:3. Three characteristics of these believers stood out in Paul’s mind. First, they had performed an important **work produced by** (lit., “of”) **faith** in Christ. Verse 9 mentions that they had turned to the true God from idols. Faith in Christ had produced true repentance. Second, they performed **labor** (*kopou*, “toil”) **prompted by** (lit., “of”) **love** for Christ. This consisted in their serving the living and true God (v. 9) in the midst of persecution (v. 6). Third, they had **endurance** (*hypomonēs*, lit., “a bearing up patiently under a heavy load”; cf. 2 Thes. 1:4) **inspired by** (lit., “of”) **hope in Christ**. Specifically they were waiting for God’s Son from heaven (1 Thes. 1:10). These three cardinal virtues that should mark every Christian—faith, love, and hope—stood out in the Thessalonian believers’ lives (cf. 1 Cor. 13:13). Each of these virtues found its object in Jesus Christ, and each produced praiseworthy behavior. The Thessalonians had exercised saving faith in Christ in the past when they had believed the gospel, they were loving Christ in

the present, and they were hoping for His return in the future. Their lives were certainly focused on Jesus Christ. No wonder Paul and his companions gave thanks for them.

1:4. The Thessalonians' response to the preaching of the gospel in their midst constituted indisputable proof of their salvation. Paul rehearsed their response in this verse as he expanded on the idea he had just introduced. Characteristically Paul addressed his fellow Christians as **brothers**. He used this term (*adelphoi*) 15 times in this one brief epistle (1:4; 2:1, 9, 17; 3:7; 4:1, 10, 13; 5:1, 4, 12, 14, 25-27), and 7 times in 2 Thessalonians (1:3; 2:1, 13, 15; 3:1, 6, 13). He did not claim superiority over them but recognized the equality of all the redeemed in the sight of their heavenly Father, as he taught elsewhere (e.g., 1 Cor. 12:14-27) and as the Lord taught (Matt. 23:9; etc.). Paul had come a long way from being a proud Pharisee to the place where he could consider Gentiles his equals before God. He reminded his readers that they were beloved by God. Even Paul's incidental statements throb with the warm realization of God's presence (1 Thes. 1:3) and love. The proof of God's love for the Thessalonians was His choice of them unto salvation. From the word translated **chosen** (*eklogēn*) comes the English "election." That God has chosen to bless some individuals with eternal life is clearly taught in many places in both the Old and New Testaments (e.g., Deut. 4:37; 7:6-7; Isa. 44:1-2; Rom. 9; Eph. 1:4-6, 11; Col. 3:12; 2 Thes. 2:13). Equally clear is the fact that God holds each individual personally responsible for his decision to trust or not to trust in Jesus Christ (cf. John 3; Rom. 5). The difficulty in putting divine election and human responsibility together is understanding how both can be true. *That* both are true is taught in the Bible. *How* both can be true is apparently incomprehensible to finite human minds; no one has ever been able to explain this antinomy satisfactorily. This task transcends human mental powers, much as seeing angels transcends human visual powers and hearing very high-pitched sounds transcends human auditory powers. The Thessalonians' response to the gospel message proved that God had chosen them for salvation.

1:5. The response of his converts was a supernatural work of God, not a natural response to a clearly delivered sermon. When Paul preached to them, he did not just share human opinion and philosophy (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-5). Rather, his message was marked by the **power** of God (cf. Rom. 1:16). **The Holy Spirit** brought it home to their hearts with **deep conviction** (John 16:8). Paul's message was marked by his own certainty that this message would change their lives as it had radically changed his. Not only did Paul and his traveling companions preach a convincing message, but they also lived lives consistent with that message when they were in Thessalonica. The Thessalonians were fully aware of their teachers' manner of life and that their motive was to benefit the Thessalonians. The message Paul preached—the **gospel** of the grace of God—had entered into the minds and hearts of these Macedonians and they had been saved. From their belief beautiful lives had blossomed.

1:6. The outstanding fruit of faith in the gospel was the Thessalonians' change of behavior. They **became imitators** of their spiritual parents, the missionaries. This is normal Christian experience. But they also went on to imitate **the Lord**. This too is natural, and the order is true to life as well. A new Christian first looks to other believers as his pattern, but then as he matures he realizes that Jesus Christ is his best "model" (cf. 1 Peter 2:21). Despite **severe suffering** the Thessalonians **welcomed the message**. The Jews among them must have felt the hatred of their unbelieving brothers in the flesh who, as has been pointed out, were especially antagonistic to the gospel in that city. The Gentile converts must have had to swim against the swift current of paganism that flowed like a torrent through the conduit of commercial Thessalonica. And the city's chief men's wives, who had become Christians, had to go home to unbelieving husbands who would not have appreciated their newly sensitized consciences. Yet **in spite of** trials without, the Thessalonian believers possessed **joy** within, the joy of sins forgiven. It is interesting that Christians who have tribulations in their daily walks often seem to have greater joy in the Lord than those who live in more comfortable spiritual climates. A Christian's joy should be determined not by his circumstances but by his relationship with Christ. This was true of the Thessalonians. The source of their joy was the indwelling **Holy Spirit**.

1:7. The testimony of these Christians did not burn brightly merely at home; it also shone abroad to other people in other parts of **Macedonia**, reaching even to **Achaia**, the neighboring province to the south. Having become imitators of the missionaries and their Lord (v. 6) they in turn became the object of imitation by other believers. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians he pointed to these Macedonians as a **model** (*typon*; cf. 2 Thes. 3:9) of sacrificial giving (2 Cor. 8:1-8). He wrote that they had given money to help other believers even though they themselves were poor. One of the most revealing evidences of a Christian's true spirituality is the way he manages his money. In this revealing test the Thessalonians emerged as gold tried in the fire.

1:8. This verse explains how the Thessalonians became examples to other Christians. Having received the gospel (v. 5) they passed it on to others. The word *exēchētai*, translated **rang out**, could be rendered “reverberated.” Paul saw the Thessalonians as amplifiers or relay stations that not only received the gospel message but sent it farther on its way with increased power and scope. Paul’s preaching in Thessalonica had the effect of speaking into a public address microphone; his words were received and repeated by many different “speakers” in many remote places where his unaided voice could not have reached. Apparently it was not through an organized evangelistic campaign that their witness went forth, though Paul’s preaching in Thessalonica and elsewhere illustrates this approach. But it was through the personal lives and testimonies of these transformed individuals that neighbors heard about their **faith in God**. As they went the gospel was heard **everywhere**, so an apostolic missionary campaign was not needed.

1:9. Other people were telling Paul what had happened after he had preached the gospel in Thessalonica. The events of his visit had become well known in that part of the world, not because Paul had spread the word, but because of the outspoken Thessalonian believers’ witness. Their boldness should challenge every true child of God. These believers had **turned to God**, the only true God, **from idols**. This strongly suggests that many of those believers had been pagan Gentiles. The Jews, of course, abhorred idolatry. Someone has observed that humans have the freedom to choose who their master will be, but they do not have the freedom to choose **no** master. The Thessalonians had chosen to **serve the living and true God** rather than God’s creatures or satanic powers (cf. Rom. 1:18-23). The fact that God is a living Person was precious to the Jews and to Paul; this is the characteristic by which God is most often distinguished from so-called gods in the Old Testament. He is the only living God; all other gods are not alive and therefore not worthy objects of worship.

1:10. Not only had the Thessalonians turned to God in repentance and begun to serve Him, but they were also awaiting the return of **His Son from heaven**. Paul may have had in mind the “heavens” (pl.) through which Jesus Christ passed when He ascended from the earth (Acts 1:9-11), rather than the seat of His heavenly rule at the right hand of the Father in “heaven” (sing., Rev. 4:2-11). If so, he said that the Thessalonians were looking for Jesus’ coming through the clouds, literally, “out of the heavens.” But it was not the clouds, or the signs of His coming, or His deliverance which interested these believers; it was the person of **Jesus**, the Son of the living God. He was the object of their hope, the focus of their attention. May Jesus Himself, rather than anything that will accompany Him or characterize His return, always fill the hopes of His saints! This reference to “Jesus,” His human name, is a strong claim to Jesus of Nazareth’s deity. He is further described as the Son of God, the One risen from the dead by the living God. The fact of the Resurrection is indisputable proof (cf. 1 Cor. 15:14-19) of the deity of Jesus. The return of Jesus is a source of hope for Christians for several reasons, but the reason which Paul mentioned here was Jesus’ deliverance of the saints **from the coming wrath** of God. The wrath of God will be poured out on unrighteous people because of their failure to trust in Christ (John 3:36; Rom. 1:18). This happens at many times and in many ways, the great white throne judgment being the most awful occasion (Rev. 20:11-15). But the “time of trouble for Jacob” (Jer. 30:4-7), also called “the Great Tribulation” (Rev. 7:14), will be a period in history during which God’s wrath will be poured out on the earth as never before (cf. Rev. 6-19). Was Paul thinking of a specific time in which God’s wrath would be poured out (1 Thes. 1:10), or was he referring to the outpouring of God’s wrath on unbelievers in a more general sense? Paul, the Thessalonian believers, and Christians today will escape all aspects of God’s wrath, general and specific, including the Tribulation period. The clear implication of this verse is that Paul hoped in the Lord’s imminent return. Otherwise Paul would have told his readers to prepare for the Tribulation. In the phrase “from the coming wrath” the word translated “from” means that Christians are kept from it, not taken out of it. The same verb (**rescues**) and preposition (**from**) are used in 2 Corinthians 1:10 where Paul said he was delivered from a deadly peril. Obviously this does not mean Paul died and was resurrected. Christians will be kept away from God’s wrath, not just kept safe through it (cf. Rev. 3:10).

This chapter, like every chapter in this epistle, closes with a reference to the return of Jesus Christ (1 Thes. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18, 5:23).

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

(Note: Lesson major points and cross-references copied from previous lesson dated 06/06/2010)

Example Through a Transformed Lifestyle (1 Thess 1:2-6)

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, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.

5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

6 And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,

Transformed Lifestyle through a work of faith

The work of faith is to believe in Jesus (John 6:28-29)

28 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" 29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

The work of faith should be done with all my strength and abilities (1 Cor 15:58)

58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

The work of faith expresses itself through love (Gal 5:6)

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Genuine faith is accompanied by actions (James 2:17)

17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

The work of faith results in being credited as righteousness (Rom 4:4-5)

4 Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. 5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Transformed Lifestyle through a labor of love

Labor of love because without love there is nothing (1 Cor 13:1-3)

13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Labor of love because God commands us to pursue it (1 Tim 6:11)

11 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

Labor of love because God knows our deeds (Rev 2:19)

19 I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

Labor of love is the only thing that counts in the Kingdom of God (Gal 5:6)

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Labor of love comes from a pure heart and good conscience (1 Tim 1:5)

5 The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Labor of love prompts us to do good works (Heb 10:24)

24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Labor of love means that we love God (1 John 4:21)

21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Transformed Lifestyle through the patience of hope

Hope that anchors the soul (Heb 6:18-20)

18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. 19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Hope that should be held unswervingly (Heb 10:23)

23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Hope in the glory of God (Rom 5:2)

2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Hope that will not disappoint (Rom 5:5)

5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Hope found in the Scriptures (Rom 15:4)

4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Hope that makes us bold (2 Cor 3:10-12)

10 For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. 11 And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts! 12 Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.

Hope into which we are called (Eph 4:4)

4 There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—

Hope of eternal life (Titus 3:7)

7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Example Through a Transformed Reputation (1 Thess 1:7-9)

7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.

9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

Transformed Reputation by being an example

An example of godly speech, life, love and purity (1 Tim 4:12)

12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

An example of following Jesus (1 Cor 11:1)

1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

An example of God's patience and grace (1 Tim 1:16)

16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

An example by doing good (Titus 2:7-8)

7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

An example of perseverance in trials and persecutions (2 Thess 1:4)

4 Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

Transformed Reputation by being a witness

Witness through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8)

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Witness by using God's word (Rom 10:17-18)

17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. 18 But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

Witness to others through teaching (2 Tim 2:2)

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

Witness starting at home (Luke 8:39)

39 "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

Witness about what God has done for us (Ps 66:16)

16 Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.

Transformed Reputation by turning from idolatry

Turning from idolatry by fleeing from it (1 Cor 10:14)

14 Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.

Turning from idolatry by putting to death what belongs to the earthly nature (Col 3:5)

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Turning from idolatry by being separated from it (2 Cor 6:16-17)

16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." 17 "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."

Turning from idolatry by keeping oneself from idols (1 John 5:21)

21 Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

Turning from idolatry by trusting in God instead (Ps 31:6)

6 I hate those who cling to worthless idols; I trust in the Lord.

Example Through a Transformed Future (1 Thess 1:10)

10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

A transformed future in heaven

A heaven where the former things will be gone (Isa 65:17-18)

17 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.

A heaven that will endure (Isa 66:22-23)

22 "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the Lord, "so will your name and descendants endure. 23 From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the Lord.

A heaven that will be the home of the righteous (2 Peter 3:13)

13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

A heaven where better things stored up for us (Ps 31:19)

19 How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.

A heaven where hope is stored (Col 1:5)

5 the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel

A heaven where a living hope of the inheritance is waiting for us (1 Peter 1:3-4)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you,

A transformed future through resurrection

A resurrection that is based on Scripture (1 Cor 15:3-4)

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

A resurrection through being united with Jesus (Rom 6:5)

5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

A resurrection taught through preaching (1 Cor 15:12-14)

12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

A resurrection symbolized through baptism (1 Peter 3:17-21)

17 It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. 18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, 19 through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison 20 who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

A transformed future of deliverance

Deliverance through being hidden in God (Ps 32:7)

7 You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

Deliverance through God's faithfulness (2 Cor 1:10)

10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

Deliverance through a living hope (1 Peter 1:3)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Deliverance in a time that has been appointed by God (Dan 11:35)

35 Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from J. Hampton Keathley

The Cause for Giving Thanks—Knowing (vss. 4-7)

As mentioned previously, the participle *knowing* introduces the next section which really extends from verse 4 through verse 10 and points the reader to the cause for the thanksgiving of Paul and his associates. Though the primary focus is on verse 4, the reason for the Apostle's conviction of their election as brethren beloved by God is expressed first in verse 5 and again in verses 6ff. The first reason is seen in the character of the ministry of the missionaries, and second in the response and character of the Thessalonians as detailed in verses 6-7. Then verses 8-10 simply amplify and confirm the statements of verses 6-7.

The Confidence and Character of the Missionaries (vss. 4-5)

Paul begins by addressing them as “brethren” (or brothers and sisters).¹⁷ This was an affectionate term which highlighted their new spiritual relationship as members of the family of God, as those who had been born into the family of God by the Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ (John 1:11-13; 3:3-6; Tit. 3:5).

This relationship is then intensified by further describing them as “beloved by God.” “Beloved” is a perfect passive participle of the verb *agapao*, “to love.” The perfect focuses on the abiding results, the fixed condition of being the grace recipients (the passive voice) of God’s love. The participle may be adverbial, pointing to the cause of the election, “since you are loved of God,” or better, it is attributive adding a further description of their new relationship with God. Perhaps Paul intended a blending of both ideas. Paul normally used the verbal adjective, *agapetos*, “beloved,” but the use of the participle lays greater stress on the “active exercise of God’s love as already consummated and resulting in a fixed status of being loved (perfect tense).”¹⁸ Though persecuted by a hostile world, they were still the recipients of God’s fatherly love and care.

The missionaries were thankful for the Thessalonian believers because they were confident of their salvation as those selected or chosen of God. “Chosen” is the Greek *ekloge*, “selection, election, choosing.” With this word, we are confronted with the doctrine of election, a doctrine that has different effects on various people. It makes some people angry, confuses many, and even seems to frighten others. Why? Because in this doctrine man’s finite mind meets head on with the infinite mind of God and a truth that really falls into the category of an antinomy. An antinomy occurs when we have what appears to be a contradiction between principles or conclusions that are equally necessary and true.

That God has chosen to bless some individuals with eternal life is clearly taught in many places in both the Old and New Testaments (e.g., Deut. 4:37; 7:6-7; Isa. 44:1-2; Rom. 9; Eph. 1:4-6, 11; Col. 3:12; 2 Thes. 2:13). Equally clear is the fact that God holds each individual personally responsible for his decision to trust or not to trust in Jesus Christ (cf. John 3; Rom. 5). The difficulty in putting divine election and human responsibility together is understanding how both can be true. *That* both are true is taught in the Bible. *How* both can be true is apparently incomprehensible to finite human minds; no one has ever been able to explain this antinomy satisfactorily. This task transcends human mental powers, much as seeing angels transcends human visual powers and hearing very high-pitched sounds transcends human auditory powers.¹⁹

Having affirmed their conviction of his readers’ selection as the beloved of God, without elaboration on the doctrine of election, the Apostle quickly begins to set forth the reasons for this conclusion. As Thomas points out, “Paul cannot leave unproved so direct a statement regarding election. So vv. 5-10 give two grounds for the knowledge just asserted. The former of these relates to the experience of the missionaries themselves (v. 5),”²⁰ and the other reason relates to the changed lives of the Thessalonians themselves (vss. 6-10).

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.

It is significant that one of the reasons Paul was so confident of their salvation was the way the gospel had come to the Thessalonians during the missionaries’ stay in that city. Four characteristics are given which describe this coming of the gospel: one is negative, “not in word only,” and three are positive, “but in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.” In our day of Madison Avenue techniques and manipulation and pressure, may we grasp this as a cleansing breath of fresh air.

Paul concludes verse 5 with reference to their manner of life as the missionaries who brought the gospel message. Note the last clause, “just as you know what kind of men ...” This does two things:

(1) It restricts the four characteristics to the missionaries. Some have claimed the words “with power” and “with full assurance” refer to the recipients and the effects manifested in these new believers, but the words, “just as you know what kind of men ... ,” restricts it to the missionaries.

(2) It shows the focus is primarily on the gospel, the message, because it is the message which is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). The lives of preachers and teachers of the Word are important as chapter 2 makes so very clear, but above all, what we do with the gospel and how we handle it is an issue of utmost importance.

So what are the four characteristics which describe how the gospel came to Thessalonica?

The first one is the negative, “not in words only.” Of course, the gospel message did come with words since words are basic to intelligent communication of God’s truth. The gospel is a message, the witness to the work of God in the person and work of Christ for which the right words are crucial. However, this message was not merely in words. Men’s words can be very eloquent, persuasive, and entertaining and move people emotionally and intellectually, but such can’t save them and bring them into the family of God (see 1 Cor. 2:1ff.).

Next, the words, “but also,” point us to the three positive elements. “But” is *alla*, a strong conjunction of contrast. Further, each of the three positive characteristics have the preposition “in” (*en*), which makes them each distinct issues, though of course related.

First, in contrast to mere words, the gospel came “with power.” But to what does this refer? Some would like to relate this to miraculous works as authenticating signs, but normally, the plural, “powers,” would be used if that were meant (see Matt. 13:54; 14:2; 1 Cor. 12:10; Gal. 3:5; Heb. 2:4; 6:5). Others would relate it to the inward power in the messengers as a result of the filling of the Spirit, but this important characteristic is brought out by the next prepositional phrase, “with or by the Spirit.” Rather, could it not refer simply to the inherent power of the gospel as the “Word of God which is alive and powerful” (Heb. 4:12)? It is not just a message of words, but a message which is living, active, powerful and able to bring men into a saving relationship with the living God for one simple reason: It is God’s Word and it is truth. It is the true revelation of God’s activity in Jesus Christ. See also the Apostle’s comment in chapter 2:13.

“And in the Holy Spirit” takes us to the second of the positive elements that gave these missionaries their assurance. Paul and his associates knew they were indwelt by the Spirit as their helper or enabler for ministry (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7f; Acts 1:8). The Spirit of God, as the third person of the Trinity, is called “the Spirit of Truth” because of His role in taking the truth of the Word and revealing it to men (see John 14:17; 15:26; 16:8-13; 1 John 4:6; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 2:6-16). Because of the blindness and hardness of men’s heart, they are powerless to even desire, much less grasp the life-giving truth of the gospel (cf. Rom. 3:11), but by the pre-salvation ministry of the Spirit who led the missionaries (see Acts 16:6-10), who prepares hearts (Acts 16:14), and who convicts and draws men to God (Rom. 2:4; John 12:32; 16:8f.), some hear, grasp, and believe the gospel and experience its saving power (see also 2 Thess. 2:13).

Third, the words “and with full conviction” point us to the faith and confidence of the missionaries. It was not in their looks, in their beaming personalities, in their eloquence, oratorical skill, nor in their methodology. They preached with conviction knowing and resting in the fact they were preaching the powerful, life-giving truth of God fortified by the powerful ministry of the Spirit of God who worked both in the missionaries and in their hearers.

With the words, “just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake,” we see the perfect balance needed in effective ministry. The message, of course, is all important, but so is the life of the messenger. As Paul does in several places (1:5, 9; 2:1, 10), he appealed to his readers’ first-hand knowledge of the missionaries. As Paul and his companions had preach a Spirit-empowered message, so they had also lived unselfish lives that were fully consistent with that message while they were in Thessalonica. What an important lesson for all of us. If we are not careful, our lives speak so loudly no one wants to listen to what we say.

The Conduct and Character of the Thessalonians (vss. 6-7)

1:6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, when you received the message with joy that comes from the Holy Spirit, despite great affliction. **1:7** As a result you became examples to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

With verse 6 we are introduced to the second evidence of their election, the effects of the gospel as it changed the lives of the Thessalonians. A number of results were evident. (1) They “received the message with joy from the Holy Spirit” and were saved. (2) They did so “despite great affliction.” (3) They then became “imitators” of Paul and also the Lord. (4) They developed spiritually to a point of becoming “examples to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.” (5) And their testimony was such that they developed a witness “in every place,” a hyperbole for the broad impact of their testimony in the surrounding regions.

They received the message in faith (vs. 6b)

Though the Apostle mentions becoming imitators first, chronologically the first evidence of their election had to be their reception of the message. “Receive” is *dechomai*, which means “to readily receive information and to regard it as true—to receive readily, to accept, to believe.”²¹ They readily received and believed the message, literally, “the word,” not the written Word of the New Testament, which was not yet in existence, but the gospel message which undoubtedly included the fundamentals of doctrine so vital to Christian growth and maturity. “Received” is an aorist participle which describes the conditions that led to their changed lives. Because the participle is in the aorist tense, it may just look at the initial reception of the message, but the aorist may also look at many acts pulled together as one historical fact. Thus, the participle may take into account all the teaching they received from the missionary team while they were at Thessalonica. The context favors this because of the mention of their afflictions which more than likely occurred after the missionaries were forced to leave. As Bruce points out:

Nothing is said in Acts 17:1-9 about persecution directed against the Thessalonian converts in general; it is against the missionaries and secondarily against their hosts (“Jason and some of the brethren”) that the rabble is stirred up by disapproving Jews. It might be expected that, when the missionaries got away safely, resentment against them would be turned against their followers; according to 2:14, it was at the hands of their compatriots that they met with persecution. Thus they shared the lot not only of the missionaries but of the Lord himself. As Paul might have put it, they experienced “the fellowship of his sufferings” (cf. Phil 3:10).²²

They became imitators of the missionaries and the Lord (vs. 6a)

The teaching and example of the missionaries (though only for a few weeks) and the afflictions they faced plus the ever present ministry of the Spirit were the tools God used to produce spiritual growth and changed lives. Our word *imitate* may lead to the wrong impression. Christian imitation has nothing to do with outward conformity where someone merely copies the actions, mannerisms, or speech of another. The Greek word is *mimetes* from *mimeomai*, “to imitate, emulate, use as a model.” The main idea here is to follow someone as an ideal model or example, but, as the New Testament context makes clear, this is not merely a matter of external conformity, but change from the inside out through receiving and following the spiritual truths of the faith as seen in the life of the model.

The biblical plan and order of modeling and following is as follows:

- (1) With Christ and the Heavenly Father as their own personal model (John 15:13; 1 Pet. 2:21; Eph. 5:1), mature Christian leaders need to recognize they have a vital responsibility to model the reality and character of Christ to those they teach and minister to (1 Tim. 4:12; Tit. 2:7; 1 Pet. 5:3).
- (2) They may even encourage others to imitate or follow their example as long as they take heed to their own walk (1 Tim. 4:12-16) and are sure they are seeking to follow the example of the Savior themselves (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 2 Thess. 3:9).
- (3) The ultimate goal of the leader must always be to help others to become imitators of Christ Himself. At first, disciples became imitators of their spiritual parents or teachers, the normal and natural pattern for spiritual growth, but teacher and student alike must recognize that the ultimate goal is to become like the Savior who is our perfect model and objective (1 Pet. 2:21). Since Paul’s objective was to be like Christ, he could encourage his disciples to imitate his walk, but always with the goal in mind of imitating the character of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1).
- (4) The basic order or process is: (a) Leaders are to imitate Christ (1 Cor. 11:1) that they might be models for others (1 Pet. 5:3); (b) new converts and the flock as a whole are to imitate their leaders, assuming of course their leaders are following Christ (Heb. 13:7); (c) other churches are to recognize their responsibility to be a model of godliness or Christ-likeness as the Thessalonians were to the believers in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. 1:7); (d) all are to become imitators of God who is revealed to us in Christ (Eph. 5:1).

Following the example of others has nothing to do with imitating the style or charismatic personalities of certain Christian leaders. What we are to model for others and imitate in others is Christian character as illustrated in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) or in Paul’s attitude and behavior as it pertained to some of the doubtful issues like eating meat offered to idols. Paul’s pattern was that of love, putting the needs of others above himself as Christ did for us. It is really this Paul had in mind contextually in 1 Corinthians 11:1 when he said, “Be imitators of me as I am of Christ” (for the immediate context see 1 Cor. 10:31). The same principle is seen in the context of 2 Thessalonians 3:9 as it pertained to working to support oneself and one’s family (see 3:6-15).

The Thessalonians became imitators of Paul and the Savior, and of the churches in Judea by the experience of Christ’s character in the midst of suffering and persecution (see John 15:18-21; 16:33; Acts 14:22; 1 Thess. 2:14; 3:4; 2 Tim. 3:12). We must not forget that while all suffering is painful, it, along with the ministry of the Word and the Spirit, are tools God uses to promote genuine spiritual growth and Christ-like change.

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Romans 5:3-5 NASB).

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:2-4).

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11).

They became an example for believers everywhere (vs. 7)

“As a result you became examples to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.” The only church Paul ever calls an example or model is the Thessalonian church. Though not perfect, it gives us a pattern for what churches ought to be both in spiritual growth and ministry. The pattern is developed through the principle of Christian imitation mentioned in verse 6. Verse 7 flows out of the statement of verse 6 as evident in the words, “As a result” (hoste, points here to an actual result, “so that”) you became examples ...

The Confirmation of Their Commendation (1:8-10)

1:8 For from you the message of the Lord has echoed forth not just in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place reports of your faith in God have spread, so that we do not need to say anything. **1:9** For people everywhere report how you welcomed us and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God **1:10** and to wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath.

In keeping with Paul’s words of commendation in verse 3, verses 8-10 confirm the Thessalonians’ “work of faith and labor of love and endurance of hope.” Verse 8 looks at their *past work of faith* with the words, “your faith toward God.” Verse 9 focuses on their *present labor of love*, as those who had “turned to God from idols,” and began serving the living and true God. Then, with verse 10 and the words, “to wait for His Son from heaven,” Paul confirms their *prospective endurance of hope*.

Their Work of Faith Confirmed (vs. 8)

Verse 7 tells us the Thessalonian church became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. But how did they do this? Paul explains in verses 8-10. Verse 8 explains *how* they became an example: The word of the Lord effectively echoed forth throughout the region as an expression and product of their faith. Verses 9-10 explain *why* they became an example. Because they had received the ministry and teaching of the missionaries, they turned to God from idols and this resulted in a dynamic effect—they began to serve God and wait up for His Son from heaven.

One of the logical, natural, and necessary products of imitating the character of the missionaries and the Savior was to become a witness to others of the saving grace of God. Before looking at the details of their witness as examples, we can summarize their witness in three distinct developments:

1. Their witness echoed throughout the surrounding regions.
2. The report declared the drastic change of life (turning to God from idols they began to serve ...).
3. They had a new hope and focus for life; they were living in the light of the return of Christ, a hope which gave them endurance and courage.

The first characteristic concerned how their witness had spread. The message of the Lord (literally, “the word of the Lord”) echoed forth from this church. “Of the Lord” can mean either, “from the Lord as the source and authority” or “about the Lord as the content of the witness.” Both are in fact true and this may be one of those intended divine ambiguities.

The term “sounded forth” or “echoed” is the Greek *execheo*, “to cause to resound, sound or ring forth.” It seems that the Apostle saw the Thessalonians as amplifiers who first received the gospel message but then sent it reverberating on its way with increased power and scope much like an echo in the mountains.

But how did they accomplish this? Does this suggest they immediately became missions oriented and sought to take the gospel to others through missionary activity? Or was this simply the product of others hearing and telling about the changed lives of these believers who lived in the midst of this pagan city? Or does it include both? Commentators perceive this differently. In point of fact, we are not told exactly how their witness spread so we can only guess.

Apparently it was not through an organized evangelistic campaign that their witness went forth, though Paul’s preaching in Thessalonica and elsewhere illustrates this approach. But it was through the personal lives and testimonies of these transformed individuals that neighbors heard about their **faith in God**. As they went the gospel was heard **everywhere**, so an apostolic missionary campaign was not needed.²³

After receiving the gospel, the Thessalonians took it to others. It was Paul’s mission strategy to plant churches in the population centers and to let these churches take the good news to the surrounding districts. From Thessalonica the word of the Lord “rang out” (the Greek word *exechetai* denotes a loud ringing sound—giving us our word *echo*). That message was still being heard when Paul wrote. In fact it had gone beyond the border

of Greece. Could it be that Aquila and Priscilla had heard about the witness of the Thessalonians in Rome and told Paul about it?²⁴

The meaning is, that their conversion and its circumstances were so noted, that they carried the gospel through the province as if by the ringing peal of a trumpet. The rumour of what had happened at Thessalonica sped its way through Greece, and carried with it the gospel—sounded abroad loudly, fully, distinctly, the blessed message.²⁵

(Adapted from URL: <https://bible.org/seriespage/3-commendation-and-thanksgiving-1-thess-12-10>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Is it possible to make the gospel too simple? Some preachers and churches seem to think so. They preach a highly refined version of the Christian message in which their followers must maintain correct views about many obscure doctrines, must adhere to certain social standards, and so forth. Could it really be so simple that Paul could express the essentials in a couple of verses? Our gospel message must be centered on Jesus and His work. While there are many important aspects to the Christian life that call for study and practice, the core of the gospel need not be cluttered. Paul's message for the Thessalonians was that Jesus Christ came and died for their sins, that He was raised from the dead, and that He will come again. This simple yet powerful message was enough for hardened pagans in ancient Thessalonica to turn from their idols and embrace faith in Christ. Their hearts were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Their transformation was so radical that their reputation spread over two Roman provinces. Their testimony is worthy of our attention. Though this congregation experienced severe trials, the people refused to let their faith fade into the background. Instead, they stepped up their loving works so much that Paul touted them as already being an example to others. We sometimes distance faith from works in our teaching, not wanting to mislead Christians into thinking they can earn their salvation. However, the two are sometimes paired in the New Testament (see 2 Thessalonians 1:11; Revelation 2:19). What can be missing is the connecting factor: love. May we believe as the Thessalonians believed and then act on our faith as they did: full of the Holy Spirit and love.

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

The Church in Thessalonica - Ever thought of a fellow brother or sister in Christ and smiled inside with a heart of thanksgiving? This is how Paul thought of the believers in Thessalonica. He started the church there under terrible circumstances. His enemies ran him out of town. He'd only been able to work with the new congregation for three weeks. Yet the church was progressing along nicely.

The Work of the Holy Spirit - Paul constantly prayed for the newly established churches. He thanked God for the Thessalonica congregation as he witnessed the work of the Holy Spirit in its members. They longed to be like Jesus. Their faith had increased. He admired their love for each other and their hope and patience while facing difficult situations. Paul reminded them of God's choosing each one as His own. He called them beloved by Jehovah, a title in the past given to God's special leaders like Moses. The Father honored these Gentile converts with the same address.

The Holy Spirit's Work - Paul observed the Gospel's effect on the lives of these believers. Their faith extended beyond an intellectual exercise. The power of God was at work and the Holy Spirit moved freely. God's Spirit comforted the Thessalonian church, and they followed His direction and guidance. The congregation allowed the Scriptures to permeate their being, and they followed the example of Paul and his companions. They listened to Paul and closely adhered to his teachings, regardless of the rough external pressures. In some churches, Paul had to endure constant whining and complaining, but not this one. They rejoiced and stood out as excellent examples of what it meant to walk closely with the Lord. Those in the surrounding areas heard about their faith, resulting in unbelievers coming to know Jesus Christ as their Savior. At one time, this group of believers served false gods—but not anymore.

Set a Godly Example - A Christian who sets an example of a changed life will turn heads. One young woman's friend confessed, "I started investigating Christianity because I saw such a change in you. I wasn't happy with my life and I wanted something different, but I didn't know where to look or how to change. Then I saw the change in you." Sometimes believers forget the unsaved world is watching those of us who claim to be Christ's followers