

1Thessalonians, Chapter One, Lesson Three

SERVING GOD 1Thessalonians 1:6-10

STIMULATE

** At the conclusion of our last study in this marvelous epistle, we saw the importance of maintaining an "attitude of gratitude". We need to be faithful to share with others some of the things for which we are grateful, that they may be able to join in offering praise to God for His faithfulness.

MOTIVATE

** Is it important for Christians to set a good example for others to follow?

Absolutely! (cf. Philippians 3:17)

** What are some areas of life in which we can be a good example?

Thankfulness (of course - gratitude)

Hard Work

Obedying the law

Good citizenship

Being a good neighbor

Trustworthiness

Rejoicing in everything

Faith in Jesus Christ

** In the passage before us today, Paul is going to show us the potential scope of the example our lives can be as we live in submission to the Word of God. When others see us "**Serving God**" in a truly Biblical sense, they too are drawn into this holy pattern of life. cf (Hebrews 10:24)

Let's see together how the Thessalonians learned to use their lives by "**Serving God**" and at the same time, be reminded of the need for our own lives to be involved in this holy pursuit. Please turn in your Bibles to 1Thessalonians 1:6-10.

Read passage (V.6-8) (V.9-10)

Opening Prayer

Serving God

INVESTIGATE

V. 6 ** As the apostle Paul concluded our study last week, he made reference to himself, Silas and Timothy in regard to "what kind of men" they had proven to be. He begins our passage for today by shifting his focus to a different group of people, who are they?

The Thessalonians, themselves.

V. 1 - Thessalonians

V. 2 - (thankful for) all of you

- V. 3 - your work of faith
- V. 4 - His choice of you
- V. 5 - come to you in word only
- V. 5 - among you for your sake

Paul's focus is completely upon the work of God in the lives of the Thessalonians, each and every one on them. As he pens this epistle of love and encouragement, he wants them all to follow his good example.

** Here in verse six, what is the first thing he says about the Thessalonian believers?

They "became imitators" of Paul, Silas and Timothy.

** What does that say about the life of Paul and his companions?

These were godly men that lived out exemplary lives!
cf. 1Corinthians 4:16, 11:1, 2Thessalonians 3:7-8, Ephesians 4:28

** Who else did the Thessalonians pattern their lives after?

The Lord! Paul's instruction regarding Christ had provided a pattern for which the Thessalonians could set the course of their individual lives.

** What is the significance about the order of those to be imitated?

The Thessalonians could only see the life of Paul, Silas and Timothy - so that was their pattern. Paul patterned his life after Jesus whom he personally knew and Jesus patterned His life after the Father's will. cf. John 4:34, Ephesians 5:1-2

** This next thought is foundational to everything we are as Christians. What prompted the Thessalonians to imitate Paul and Christ?

"...having received the word..." dechomai means to "receive a guest".
cf. Luke 10:8 and Hebrews 11:31

** So, how does that word apply to the Word of God?

By the grace of God, they welcomed God's word as an honored guest! If you do the same, it is only because God Himself has prepared your heart to "receive" His glorious truth.
cf. Acts 13:48 and 1Corinthians 1:18

** Do you think that the Thessalonians were having a party while they received God's word?

No - it was "...in much tribulation..." The heat was on!
cf. Acts 17:5, 13 with 1Thessalonians 2:14

** So, did all of that persecution dim the hopes of the Thessalonians?

Not at all! They endured it with "the joy of the Holy Spirit". Peter prepares us for this kind of response to persecution in 1Peter 4:12-13, let's look at it together. cf. Hebrews 12:1-2

V. 7 ** So Jesus Christ imitated God the Father, Paul, Silas and Timothy imitated Jesus, the Thessalonians imitated Paul and company - is that it? Does it end there?

No - it continues throughout all of Macedonia and Achaia. (See your maps) The nation we now call Greece was completely changed by these godly Christians who were faithful in imitating the pattern set before them by Jesus Christ!

V. 8 ** Wow, that is a broad scope of influence, does it end there?

No - it went on to "...every place your faith toward God has gone forth..."

** At the beginning of verse eight, what unusual phrase does Paul use to describe the exemplary lifestyle of the Thessalonians?

"...the word of the Lord..." Their lives were so consistent that they had become a living word (or testimonial) of what Christ had become in them.

** What impact did that have on Paul's missionary message?

"...so that we have no need to say anything..."

These were famous Christians - to God be the glory! It would be wonderful if our lives could be so faithful, so consistent in their representation of the gospel and the righteousness of Christ, that all you would need to say is, "These people are Christians" and everyone would understand how powerful God's saving truth is because of its transforming power in our lives. cf. 1Peter 1:23

V. 9 ** Who are the reporters of verse nine?

The people in Macedonia and Achaia and everywhere!

** About what are they reporting?

The reception that the Thessalonians had given to Paul, Silas and Timothy, as well as their response to the preaching of the word of God.

** Let's take the time to look together at the three fold response which the Thessalonians had to the truth of God's word.

1. They turned to God from idols - "repentance" cf. Romans 2:4 and 2Timothy 2:24-25

2. They serve the living and true God - "faith" cf. Hebrews 9:14 and Ephesians 4:11-12

V.10

3. To wait for His Son from heaven. The glorious return of Jesus Christ. As Christians, we are most effective when we live each day in the light, or knowledge of His imminent return.
cf. 1Thessalonians 2:19, 3:13, 4:16 and 5:23

** What are the four phrases used here by Paul to describe God's Son?

1. He is coming "from heaven".
2. He has been "raised from the dead".
3. His name is "Jesus".
4. He alone "delivers us from the wrath to come". cf. 1Thessalonians 5:9

** For Christians, God's wrath was poured out on Christ at the cross of Calvary - so what is the wrath to come?

Matthew 3:7 - "Pharisees and Sadducees"

Roman 2:5 - Men are "storing up wrath"

Jude 6 - Angels (demons) "judgment"

2Thessalonians 1:6-9 - "eternal destruction"

Revelation 20:11-15 - "thrown into the lake of fire" cf. V.10 - "tormented day and night forever"

There is an awesome, terrible and most fearful wrath to come, but Jesus delivers us from it! Is it any wonder that we exclaim, "Praise the Lord"?

EXTRICATE

** As we look back over today's text, how many sets of examples can we find?

Christ imitated His Father, by doing His will.

Paul and company imitated Jesus Christ.

Thessalonians imitated Paul and company.

Macedonia and Achaia imitated the Thessalonians.

Everyplace else picked up the pattern from their reputation which "sounded forth".

DELINEATE

** Based upon the pattern seen here in Thessalonica, what is the proper threefold response to hearing the word of God, the gospel?

1. Repent - "turn from idols". (V.9)
2. Live your life by "**Serving God**". (V.9)
3. Live in the light of His glorious return. (V.10)

EVALUATE

** How am I serving my beloved Savior today? Am I giving Him all that I can or do I find myself spending time on the more mundane things of this world?

Like the Thessalonians, we should become known by those around us as people who spend their lives joyously "**Serving God**".

ACTIVATE

** Will you ask the Lord to make of you all that He wants you to be? To make you into a more faithful servant of the King of Kings!

Closing prayer