

AUTHENTIC:

REAL FAITH
IN REAL LIFE

1 Thessalonians – Lesson 3



Paul's reaction to the news of the Thessalonians' steadfast devotion to the faith was a prayer of thankfulness to God. It is *God* who has caused the gospel to pierce their hearts. It is *God* who has brought conviction and courage so that they have been able to be faithful even during persecution. It is *God* who will bring them safely into His kingdom and

Examine the text:

Paul thanks God for the impact of the gospel

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20
 - a. The gospel is much more than merely historical information to be heard and filed away. What do you learn about the origin and the authority of the gospel from 1 Thessalonians 2:13?
 - b. Read Romans 1:16. What is the purpose of the gospel?
 - c. How has the experience of the Thessalonians—living as believers in a Gentile pagan culture—been similar to the experiences of the churches in Judea? (2:14) How have they responded to the opposition they have experienced?
 - d. When a community or a culture opposes and hinders the teaching of the gospel, how does God view this antagonism, and what is God's response? (2:15-16)

Note: In the Bible, the concept of "the wrath of God" refers to God's settled, uncompromising opposition to evil.

- e. Paul was forced to flee from Thessalonica after a very short time of ministry with the church there. Why had he not returned to see them and to continue his ministry among them? (2:17-18)

- f. How does Paul describe his strong concern and affection for this community of believers? (2:19-20)

Explore the concepts:

2. Consider Paul's steadfast determination to proclaim the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus. Over the course of Paul's life, he traveled over 10,000 miles—on foot, on horseback, or by ship. How would you explain Paul's unwavering determination to establish Christianity throughout the known world? Why is it still crucially important that the message of salvation be made known by God's people?
(See Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:6-8 along with 1 Thessalonians 2:19)

3. Often our reluctance to share the gospel stems from one of three reasons:
 - we fear rejection, or
 - we lack confidence in our ability to present the gospel well, or
 - we may even fail to appreciate the urgency of Jesus' command.

If you were encouraging a friend to be willing to share the gospel with her friends and neighbors, how would you counter each of these three reasons for her reluctance?

4. In this heartfelt letter to the believers in Thessalonica, Paul rejoices at their enduring, steadfast faith. Notice that Paul does not thank *them* for being faithful, and he does not take any credit *himself* for the success of his ministry there. Revisit 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, 1:5a, and 2:13. What is Paul's belief about where the ultimate credit should be given for the growth of this new church in Thessalonica? How does this encourage you as you pray for those who are dear to you?

Exalt the Savior

Can a person really change? We've seen the account of the dramatic change in the lives of the Gentile believers in Thessalonica, but we wonder...how does that apply to us today? The challenges we face are not the challenges of persecution, but the challenges of temptation and distraction.

Can a person really change? Can a life marred by foolish choices be turned around? Is there hope for those who feel their lives are chained to futility? The answer of the gospel is YES! ...wholeheartedly, Yes!

Consider the lyrics of *Death was Arrested* by North Point InsideOut:

*Alone in my sorrow and dead in my sin
Lost without hope with no place to begin.
Your love made a way to let mercy come in
When death was arrested and my life began.*

...

*Released from my chains, I'm a prisoner no more
My shame was a ransom He faithfully bore.
He cancelled my debt and he called me His friend
When death was arrested and my life began.*

Apart from Christ, we fail in our struggle against sin. We succumb to temptation. We fail to attain the righteous life we aspire to live. But in Christ's victory over sin and death, He obtained that victory for us as well. Through faith in Christ, we live

with the promise and the power of a changed life.

According to the wisdom of heaven, there is transformative power in what Jesus has done. When we choose to trust in Jesus for salvation—when we choose to identify ourselves with Him—then His Spirit permeates our soul.

His light pierces our darkness. His goodness penetrates our hearts. His future becomes our future.

From the first moment of faith, Jesus' wisdom begins to shape our thinking.

- Our lives are changed
- Our priorities are adjusted
- Our joy becomes rooted in our relationship with Him.

Have you come to experience the glory of the life, death, resurrection, and reign of Jesus? Have you responded to the promise of eternal life? Do not let this moment pass without making the decision that will change your life. Pray and ask God to forgive your sins as you make the choice to trust in Jesus and to follow Him.

In John Stott's excellent little book *Basic Christianity*, he offers a prayer that expresses a decision to follow Christ. If this is the desire of your heart, you may find it helpful to echo this prayer back to God.

"Lord Jesus Christ, I acknowledge that I have gone my own way. I have sinned in thought, word and deed. I am sorry for my sins. I turn from them in repentance. I believe that you died for me, bearing my sins in your own body. I thank you for your great love. Now I open the door. Come in, Lord Jesus. Come in as my Savior, and cleanse me. Come in as my Lord, and take control of me. And I will serve as you give me strength, all my life. Amen."

Stott, John R. W. *Basic Christianity* (n. 129). Erdmans Publishing Co - Kindle Edition.

The Gospel brings the power of God for authentic life change