

## 1 Thessalonians 1:5b-10 Answers First Imitate, Then Exemplify

### Review:

**Who wrote this letter to the church in Thessalonica?** Paul wrote it.

**About when was it written?** It was written around A.D. 50 and may have been the first of Paul's New Testament letters.

**In what modern country is Thessalonica located?** It is in Greece.

**What circumstances caused Paul to write this letter?** Paul, Silvanus and Timothy left down suddenly due to rioting caused by jealous, unbelieving Jews from the synagogue. Paul later sent Timothy to encourage the church and bring back a situation report. After receiving Timothy's report, Paul wrote this letter to the persecuted new church in Thessalonica. (Paul was in Corinth, Greece, when he wrote this.)

**Paul's Method of Evangelism:** Go into a city, preach the Gospel so boldly that the enemies of the Gospel riot, be beaten or imprisoned (optional), then leave town in a hurry due to violent opposition. Church planter Muralee Kanagalingam of Sri Lanka uses this method even today.

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**\*\*\*\*What convinced Paul that the Thessalonians had been chosen by God (1:2-10)?** As we studied last lesson, Paul said he knew the Thessalonians were among the chosen because the word of the Gospel impacted them **1)** in power and **2)** with the full conviction of the Spirit, (1:5). Further, **3)** they received it with joy despite much affliction (1:6) and **4)** they became examples throughout the area (1:7-10).

### The Messengers

**1. Whereas 1:5a describes the message, 1:5b describes the messengers. What did Paul mean when he wrote, "you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake" (1:5)? See ahead to 2:5-12.** The missionaries were men of honesty and integrity who clearly were not in it for the money. They paid their own way through secular employment. This was in contrast to religious charlatans, numerous in every age, who are really only after your money.

**Motive:** Paul was quite willing to work a secular job to finance his mission work. He did not ask for money from those to whom he was ministering. However, when money was sent to him from a church in which he had previously ministered, he gladly accepted it and quit his secular job to devote full time to ministry. In being bi-vocational, Paul was the exception. Forgoing support and working a secular job was his voluntary decision. In 1 Corinthians 9 he made it clear that those who preach the Gospel have the right to make their living from the Gospel. Since money and ministry and motives are so often a volatile mix, it might be wise to adopt Paul's approach in some situations. Although it is perfectly scriptural for an evangelist to be fully supported, perhaps he

should not accept donations from those to whom he is currently ministering. Instead, his support should come from the outside, from those in his past who love him, trust him and appreciate what God is doing through him.

### The Imitators

**2. In what sense had the Thessalonians become imitators of the missionaries and of the Lord (1:6)?** See *1 Corinthians 11:2*. Imitators is from *mimétai* (basis for mimic). They imitated them in the sense that they had received the Gospel with joy despite much persecution. To imitate Paul and the Lord means you will continue on in joyful faith despite being afflicted for your faith.

**Pattern:** The Thessalonians followed Paul as Paul followed Jesus (1:6).

ESV **1 Corinthians 11:2** Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

#### Application:

**Are you consciously seeking to imitate Paul's example, as seen in the Scriptures?**

**Are you imitating Jesus' example to the extent that you would encourage others to follow you as you follow Christ?**

**Would you feel confident telling someone else this?** If not, something needs to change!

**3. What affliction had the Thessalonian believers experienced (1:6)?** See *Acts 17:1-9, 13, 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16, 2 Thessalonians 1:4-6*. Upon arrival in Thessalonica, Paul, Silvanus and Timothy presented the Gospel in the synagogue for three Sabbaths. Many believed. Those who rejected the Gospel became jealous and stirred up a riot by inciting local rabble. They then went to the governing authorities and falsely accused the missionaries of treason against Caesar. The brothers immediately sent the apostles away, both for the safety of the apostles and to let things cool off a bit. However, even with the missionaries gone, the persecution of the new believers in Thessalonica continued (2Th 1:4-6).

In 2 Thessalonians 1:4, Paul wrote of:

ESV **2 Thessalonians 1:4-6** . . . your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering - since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you . . .

**4. For mature believers only: What can we learn about God's sovereignty and suffering from the situation in Thessalonica (1:6)?** Consider *Philippians 1:29* and *1 Peter 4:19*. The fact is that sometimes God allows His people to suffer and undergo affliction. The Lord Jesus Himself suffered affliction at the hands of unbelievers. The apostles regularly experienced affliction directly because of their evangelistic efforts. The new church in Thessalonica experienced affliction because of their faith. We must have realistic expectations and not lose heart if/when it happens to us. Suffering is sometimes part of God's plan. Right now believers in places like North Korea, Iran and Sudan are being persecuted.

ESV **Philippians 1:29-30** . . . it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

ESV **1 Peter 4:19** . . . let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

### **Prayer & Persecution:**

ESV **1 Timothy 2:1-2** . . . I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

ESV **Luke 23:33-34** . . . when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

**5. According to 1:6, along with affliction came the joy of the Holy Spirit. How is it possible to have joy in the midst of affliction (1:6)?** *See Matthew 5:10-12, James 1:2-3.* Joy in the midst of affliction is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. Happiness is based on happenstance. Joy is independent of circumstances. We are to consider that we are in good company (the prophets before us were also persecuted). We have great reward in heaven and we know that the testing of our faith produces steadfastness.

ESV **Matthew 5:10-12** Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

ESV **James 1:2-3** Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

### **An Example**

**6. Based on 1:7-10, what impact did the faith and joy of the Thessalonians have on others?** *(Reread aloud).* They became an example of bold, joyful faith to all believers through the provinces of Greece and beyond. Will Rogers said if you can get the other fellow to blow your horn, he'll blow it twice as loud. Everyone, it seemed, was talking about the faith and joy of the Thessalonians. Talk of their joyful faith sounded throughout Macedonia and Achaia.

**Geography:** Macedonia (1:7) is the province immediately surrounding Thessalonica. Achaia (1:7) was the province immediately south, where Athens and Corinth were located (and from whence Paul was writing).

**Word Study:** “Example: (1:7) is from *tupos* (basis for type, typewriter); originally it referred to the mark or impression left by a blow, then it came to mean an image, then a mould, then example (Hendriksen, p. 53). Jesus will make an impression on your life if you are born again and you will be an example of Christ-likeness to the world around you.

**Word Study:** “Sounded” (1:8) is from *execheomai*, basis for echo. Their faith echoed throughout Greece. The *ex* at the beginning means out. It sounded out.

**Application:** It has been said that every Christian is already a witness. The only question is what type of witness you are (good or bad). The Thessalonians first became imitators of Paul and Jesus, then they became examples to the whole region. It seems that one cannot be a good example (1:7) without first being a good imitator (1:6). **What kind of example are you?**

### The Report

**What does 1:9-10 reveal the content of the report what was going round?** It was reported all throughout Greece how the Thessalonians had received the apostles and their teachings about Jesus.

**7. What does 1:9-10 reveal about the marks of true conversion** Based on 1:9-10, when a person is truly converted by the Spirit, some of the evidence is **1)** he turns from a false god (idols) to serve the true and living God, **2)** he believes in and looks forward to the return of Jesus from heaven, **3)** he believes that the Father raised Jesus from the dead and **4)** that Jesus delivers us from the wrath of God.

#### 1) Turn to God from Idols

**8. How does turning from idols to serve the true God illustrate the meaning of repentance (1:9)?** In general English usage, to repent is to feel or show that you are sorry for something bad or wrong that you did and that you want to do what is right. One Greek word for repentance is *metanoia*; *meta* means change and *noia* means thinking; thus, a change of thinking. It is a change of thinking about sin, self, salvation and the Savior. It is a change of thinking that leads to a change of belief, a change in worship and a change of action. Mount Olympus, mythological home of the gods, is only 50 miles away from Thessalonica. The Thessalonian believers had undergone a religious revolution (Hendriksen, p. 56).

It has been said that “repent” is the first word of the Gospel”:

ESV **Matthew 3:1-2** . . . John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

You can't turn to God without turning away from something else (sin, self, unbelief, false worship, etc.). Repentance and faith are opposite sides of the same coin. A change of thinking (repentance) and being persuaded that something is true (faith) are similar ideas and both lead to a change of action.

## 2) Wait for His Son from Heaven

**9. What does it mean to wait for His Son from heaven (1:10)?** See *Titus 2:11-14, Hebrews 9:28, Acts 1:11*. Jesus and the apostles clearly taught the return of Jesus. This is our blessed hope. It gives us perspective and steadfastness in the world.

ESV **Titus 2:11-14** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God\* and Savior Jesus Christ . . .

\*Notice the clear statement of the deity of Christ.

The New Testament clearly teaches that Jesus would “come again” (Jn 14:3). However, it is important to realize there are two different types of the “coming” of Jesus:

- 1) The lesser is the coming of Jesus in judgment, but not in person. The judgment coming of Jesus occurred in A.D. 70 at the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus used the Roman army to carry out His judgment. However, Jesus did not appear in person, in bodily form, in the A.D. 70 judgment coming.
- 2) The greater is the coming of Jesus in judgment and in person, in bodily form. This is what theologians mean by the “Second Coming”. It is a yet future event. The New Testament itself never refers to the personal coming of Jesus as the “second coming”. Instead, it was said that He will “appear” a second time; it is His Second Appearing.

ESV **Hebrews 9:28** . . . Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

It is clear that the Second Appearing of Jesus will involve his personal return:

ESV **Acts 1:11** "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

## 3) Raised from the Dead

**10. Why is it impossible to be a Christian and not believe that God raised Jesus from the dead (1:10)?** See *Romans 4:24-25, 10:9*. A heathen inscription found in Thessalonica read, “after death no reviving; after the grave no meeting again” (Thru The Bible Radio, *1 Thessalonians*, p. 174). An essential part of the belief system that we are saved by faith by believing is that God raised Jesus from the dead and that it was a bodily resurrection.

ESV **Romans 4:24-25** It (righteousness) will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

ESV **Romans 10:9** . . . if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord (Jehovah) and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

#### 4) The Wrath to Come

**11. From what wrath to come does Jesus deliver us (1:10)?** See *Romans 2:5, 8, Ephesians 5:6, Colossians 3:5-6, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10, Revelation 20:11-15*. The wrath of God will be poured on for sin on all who reject Jesus as the payment for their sins. Wrath is from *orgé* and in humans means anger or indignation. With reference to God it is the divine reaction to evil: judgment or punishment, God's final reckoning with evil (BAGD, p. 579).

**ESV Romans 2:5** . . . because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

**ESV Romans 2:8** . . . for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

**ESV Ephesians 5:6** Let no one deceive you with empty words . . . the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

**ESV Colossians 3:5-6** Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

**ESV 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10** God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you . . . when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

**ESV Hebrews 10:26** . . . if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

**ESV Hebrews 10:31** It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

**ESV Revelation 20:11** Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

### **So What?**

**What in the lives of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy would our church do well to imitate (1:6)?**

**What had the church in Thessalonica done that pleased to Paul?**

**12. What does this chapter teach us about evangelism and affliction?**

**13. What are some of the evidences of true conversion?**

\*\*\*\* = ask this question before reading the text aloud. This is put people's minds in gear and them something to look for as the text is read. It causes focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the ESV.

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12/15/13