

1st Thessalonians Ch 1 Vs1-3

“The Typical Christian”

This short epistle that lies before us, having been written somewhere around/between 50-52 A.D. is Paul the apostle's 1st epistle, and quite possibly the oldest book in the NT. Now originally the city of Thessalonica was known as “Therma” because it was full of hot springs. and It was a happening metropolitan of a city in that day with a population of about 200,000 people, and a lot of people would go there sort of as a vacation spot in order to kick back and take life easy in these natural hot tubs, these hot springs. But in 316 B.C. a man by the name of Casander who was one of the 4 generals who divided up the empire of Alexander the Great took Macedonia (of which the city of Therma was located in) and renamed it Thessalonica after his wife who was Alexander the Great's ½ sister. and This is one of the few cities (in Greece) that Paul addressed, that has survived still to this day with a population *now* of around 300,000 known today as Thessaloniki.

But Paul had a tendency to hit these larger cities on his missionary journeys (not because he considered them to be more important in the respect of spiritual value) but because he knew that if he got a good grip in these larger cities that the ripple effect would reach out into their surrounding suburbs. In order to have a 1st hand look at how the church in Thessalonica came into to being, lets turn 1st this morning before we get into this particular letter to the book of Acts ch 17.

Now by this time Paul is well into his 2nd missionary journey, you recall that his 1st journey included Barnabas and John Mark (who would later write the gospel of Mark). But there became a bit of a contingency regarding John Mark because he'd bailed out for some reason on the 1st trip and so Paul didn't want to take him on the 2nd one. and The contention became so sharp that they finally decided to part ways, Barnabas taking Mark, and Paul chose a man by the name of Silas and took him.

When they got to Derbe and Lystra they picked up Timothy along the way (who as you know became Paul's young protégé, Paul often referring to him as his own son and how he had no one as like minded in the ministry with him as was Timothy). and We read in ch 16 of the book of Acts about how they'd tried to go this way and that way and there was no way that seemed to be allowable by the Spirit for them to go until Paul had a vision regarding a man in Macedonia pleading with him to come to Macedonia and help them there. and Being as that was the only way they hadn't sought to go yet it made good sense and so that's the way they went (now at some point in there Luke joined in on the team and some wonder if Luke wasn't the man they saw). But when they got there they made there way to the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, which was a Roman colony by the name of Philippi. There weren't any synagogues there. On the Sabbath they went down to the River and met with a group of women (one of which was Lydia) and as the Lord opened her heart she and her household were baptized and she constrained the team to stay with her. (This will all come around in a moment)

While Paul was in that city he delivered a demon possessed slave girl who was being used to make a lot of money as a fortune teller and when she was no longer profitable, her owners took it out on Paul, and so he wound up getting beaten, thrown into prison (along with Silas) and there they sat in the dungeon in Philippi.

Well as you know as they were singing praises about midnight, there was a great earthquake, God miraculously opened all the prison doors and rather than escaping Paul led the jailor to Christ.

After finding out that they were Romans the magistrates were pretty shaken up and afraid because it was against Roman law to do the things that had happened to them to Roman citizens. and They wanted Paul and Silas to leave quietly and Paul said (look at vs 37 of ch 16 [read through ch17]). Now this brings us up to speed with our current text and so we read in ch 17.

Vs1-4

So for 3 straight weeks Paul “reasoned”, or that word means to “say thoroughly” in other words Paul was very thorough, or “painstakingly meticulous” concerning his exposition and presentation, or illustration of the Scriptures, and notice what it was that he was demonstrating to them from the scriptures. Vs 3 reveals it, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the message of Paul the apostle (no matter where he went) was always the same, Jesus Christ and him crucified followed up by the verifiable fact of the resurrection to hang their hope on. He told the Corinthian believers in 1 Cor 2:2 *“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”* He was “determined” not to know anything else among them, he didn’t seek to wow them with his smooth articulation, or his intellectual prowess, but rather he preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified to the Galatians he said, *“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?”* (Gal 3:1) He made it clear to them, he was painstakingly meticulous regarding the necessity of the cross and to the Philippian church he wrote that he suffered the loss of all things, and counted them all as rubbish, *“that I may know Him (that is Christ) and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”* Phil 3:10-11

You see Paul had one message, and it was always the same, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ Him being delivered up for our transgressions, and raised for our justification, and when Paul was in Thessalonica with this message, revival broke out. Notice that of those persuaded a “great multitude” of them were devout Greeks and not a few of them were that cities key leaders wives, or “leading women”.

Vs5-15

So there you have the birth of the church in Thessalonica, and you can read on there and find that from Berea Paul went on down to Athens and from there on into Corinth.

And it's while he was in Corinth that he wrote this letter (having dispatched Timothy from Athens) to find out how the church was doing there in Thessalonica. Because even though he was hitting it hard and heavy while he was there, the fact seems to be that he was in that city for about 3 weeks and not much more, and so you can imagine having been there and having had to leave in such a short time, things having been so vibrant while you were there, how you would be concerned for these brand new baby Christians. Because in 3 weeks he taught them doctrine, established leaders and the whole bit, and so there's natural concern as to their spiritual well being, but Timothy (as we'll see in Ch 3) came to Paul with a great report, the church was flourishing despite the persecution, was remarkably resilient, and just doing overall good.

Now obviously they had a few questions about some things (what new believer wouldn't). So Paul sits down and pens this letter to encourage them in their faith and to resolve whatever questions they may've had, or misunderstandings they may've encountered since his departure. This letter covers topics of Salvation by grace; faith and works; sanctification; the Holy Spirit and the gift of prophecy; the Rapture, the Great Tribulation, and the second coming of Christ. The letter divides into 2 halves, the 1st 3 ch's being personal, the last 2 being practical. and The purpose of the letter is 3 fold, #1 to *confirm* these young believes in these basic truth's of the gospel, #2 to *condition* them unto holy living, and #3 to *comfort* their hearts regarding the return of Jesus Christ So to *confirm*, to *condition*, and to *comfort*.

Ch 1 breaks down to outline 3 basic facts about these believers, the 1st 4 vs showing us that they were an "elect" people, Vs 5-7 show us a people of "example," and Vs 8-10 show us a people of "enthusiasm." So with all that, lets begin 1st Thessalonians Ch 1

Vs1-3

Paul, Silvanus (which is the Roman name for Silas) and Timothy, the 3 primary missionaries there to Thessalonica, and by Paul attaching their names it does a couple of things, obviously it states the fact that they're all in agreement concerning the things that are written. and Then also it shows Paul as a team player, and we talked about this at the end of Colossians, there are no Lone Rangers in the ministry, accountability is essential to any ministry. and Paul didn't consider himself to be a spiritual elitist, to the contrary he considered himself to be the least of *all* the apostles. He told the Corinthians, "*I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*" 1 Cor 15:9-10 and So we see in Paul the fact that he was a team player. and He's writing here to the church "of" the Thessalonians "in" God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Notice that, they're *at* Thessalonica, but they're *in* God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and Let me just tell you that it's not nearly as important where you're *at*, what matters is whether or not you're *in* Christ.

You might be Calvary Chapel *of* Joplin, but you're *in* Christ. and When it's all said and done that's what's going to matter, it doesn't matter what you do outside of Christ, that won't count

for anything eternal whatsoever, nor will it gain you access into everlasting life. But if you're in Christ, you'll be gathered to the right hand of Jesus to hear those words, *“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”* Matt 25:34

and He says here (read last ½ Grace...)

Notice the repetition of the phrase that links together God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, in effect placing them on an equal plane; you see if Jesus wasn't God, then to consistently tie their names together like this would be blasphemy. and Some might say then why doesn't he also include the Holy Spirit, and the answer is really quite simple. You have to bear in mind that the writings of Paul are inspired *by* the Holy Spirit, and Jesus said that, *“when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”* (John 16:13-14)

So Jesus was saying that the Holy Spirit wouldn't speak of Himself, but that He would testify of Christ, and that's exactly what's happening here, so it's sufficient that in the writings inspired by the Holy Spirit that He testifies of the equality of the 1st 2 persons of the Godhead, the Father and the Son while not drawing attention, or glory to Himself. However Paul does mention the Holy Spirit in vs 5 so that even in this 1st ch we see the trinity at work and on display here once again in the scriptures.

The greeting is “Grace” grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and We've spent significant time in the recent past discussing the relevance of this phrase, so this morning we'll just brush over it lightly. These are the Siamese twins so to speak of the NT, always coupled together in the writings of Paul and always in this order, the Greek greeting of Charis, along with the Hebrew shalom. Grace referring to that divine favor, getting that which you don't deserve, we deserve hell, but in God's grace He gives us heaven through the cross of Christ. and As you know it's imperative that they always be found in this order because until you've experienced the grace of God, you'll never experience the peace of God, but true peace only comes from God, and it's only received through God's grace.

Vs2

Paul was a man who prayed with out ceasing, and as you read his various epistles you realize that he was a man with an extensive prayer list, but one very real aspect of his prayers was that of thanksgiving. You find that he's all the time exhorting those to whom he's writing to be thankful, thanksgiving should earmark the believer's life, but Paul practiced what he preached, he offered thanks to God. How often our prayers are self-centered and selfish, we want, this and we want that, and maybe by the end of our prayers we'll intercede a bit for this person or that one.

But not so with the apostle, his prayer life revolved primarily around others, and when he got around to himself, never do you find him asking for, or seeking *material* gain through his prayers. He was always asking for boldness, or more opportunities to share the gospel.

But what I love about these Thessalonian believers is that they were a people that rather than being a source of *grief* for the apostle, they evoked *gratitude* in him. He thanked God for them, and I thank God for you, I'm thankful that God has granted to me that I should tend to a body of believers that are so genuinely in love with him. Now I'm not saying that there's never rough spots or bumpy areas, welcome to the ministry, but you guys evoke gratitude in my heart, not grief.

Believe there are some Pastors of whom the body they minister to seems to be a constant source of grief. They're always backbiting, or acting out in immaturity, never seeming to catch the vision and it's just one problem after the next, but I praise God that that's not the case here, it's a joy to serve a people as loving as you. God has blessed me indeed, now, on a bit more of a personal level I encourage you to let this challenge you, are you (as an individual, am I as an individual) a peacemaker or a troublemaker, one who unites, or divides, one that evokes gratitude in people, or am I a source of grief?

As the psalmist said, "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.*" Ps 139:23-24 We do well to let that be a consistent aspect of our prayer lives, I want to be a joy to you, not a burden, and such was the case with these believers in the life of the apostle Paul, they were a joy to Him, He thanked God for them, and what was it that He was thankful for regarding them?

Vs 3-4

These are the 3 characteristics that stood out in Paul's mind when he thought of the Thessalonians, their #1 work of Faith, #2 their labor of love, and #3 their patience of hope. Faith, hope, and love, and these are the 3 things that should typify every believer, these should be the qualities, or the characteristics, the attributes of the typical Christian. They're what we might consider the 3 "graces" of the Christian life, and if you've read this ch over the week, or while we were reading it earlier maybe you noticed how he points out the practicalities of how these things evidenced themselves in their lives, this vs correlates very tightly with vs 9-10. Their work of faith, notice in vs 9 "how you turned to God from idols." Their labor of love, "to serve the living and true God." and Their patience of hope, "to wait for His Son from heaven." and These things are demonstrated exactly the same way in our own lives, now the phrase "work of faith" seems almost to be a contradiction in terms. The bible says very plainly in Eph 2:8-9 "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*" But here Paul refers to it as the "work of faith".

We also know that James said, "*Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*" So what's going on here? Do we have a discrepancy? No, what we do have

is harmony, the scriptures not contradicting one another but rather complementing and supplementing one another.

In other words there's no work that's going to save you, you're saved by grace through faith, but faith that saves will be demonstrated, or "worked out" in your life by how you lead it. Their faith was demonstrated in their turning to God from idols. But that wasn't what saved them, what saved them was believing in Jesus Christ Jesus said very clearly what the work of faith was when He said in John 6:29 *"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."* The point being that we can't come to God on the basis of our works, the things that we do, we come to Him on the basis of faith, and that faith, true saving faith will manifest itself in the way that we live our life upon believing in Jesus Christ and If your faith doesn't impact your actions, then you don't have true faith. John said, *"He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."* 1 John 2:4

Peter and the boys had been out fishing all night, they'd toiled, and labored tossing the nets and dragging them in only to come up empty handed. They pull up on the beach and begin to wash out their nets, along comes Jesus teaching the multitudes and as they begin to press in on Him He steps in the Peters boat and begins to teach them, and, *"When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; (now that was nothing less than pure fact, we've fished all night, we know this lake like the back of our hands, we're professional fishermen, we've hit all the sweet spots and we've come up dry every time, but notice what he adds here) nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."* He heard the word of God; he believed the word of God and He acted upon it, that's a work of faith, acting upon God's word. So that when Jesus said, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

If you will respond to that by placing your faith in Christ, that's the work of faith, believing upon Him whom God has sent, and then your life will just continue to exemplify that belief through love integrity, honesty, blamelessness, purity, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control and things of such nature.
2^{ndly} The Labor of love, and this word "labor" means to "toil (or labor) to the point of exhaustion" and really only love can bring that type of labor.

Moms seem to exemplify this type of love a lot as they go around the house laboring to the point of exhaustion when their children are little and they're always needing picked up after and followed around and they just wear you out. But it's a labor of love, you look at their little faces and the days all over. You don't say, "Oh, I'm so tired, couldn't really care less about that dirty little face." and just toss them in bed. Instead you can't help but just go in and get the warm wash cloth and wash their face and kiss their cheek even though you're exhausted over the work that you've done all day long.

But that's the labor of love, it's not really labor when it's motivated by love, and such was the testimony of these believers, their love for God was such that the consideration for their own weariness in their labors wasn't even a factor. There's a difference in being weary *in* the word and being weary *of* the work, it's good when out of such love for God we just grow so weary *in* the work, but the love of Christ constrains us to keep pressing on (and it's such a joy) but how tragic it is the day we become weary *of* the work.

The day we become weary *of* the work is really the day we need to cease doing the work, because love is really the only motive that God will accept in our labor for Him. That was the problem of the church in Ephesus in the book of Revelation, Jesus acknowledged their labors, but it was without love, and so though He acknowledged it, He didn't accept it. and He exhorted them to return to that 1st love relationship with Him, because even though I sell all I have to give to the poor, or give my body to be burned, if I have not love it profits me nothing. and Finally the patience of hope, waiting upon the Lord to return, the patience of hope is such a difficult lesson, the hope isn't so much the hard part as is the patience of it. The occupying until He returns, we spoke briefly a couple of weeks ago about the parable that Jesus taught of how He needed to go away, but that they were to be busy about His affairs until He returned (You remember there in Luke 19) we're not to sell everything we have and go wait in a field somewhere for the return of Christ. No, the "patience" of hope stays occupied, or busy about the matters of the Lord until He returns. If you can receive it, staying *busy* is the "patience" of hope. You're busy about Kingdom business while you patiently await the hope, (remember the biblical meaning of hope) the confident expectation, and guaranteed certainty of the Lord's return.

The life of the typical Christian should be just these very things, may we as believers, by the grace of God, be models to one another and the believers around us, of the work of faith, the labor of love, and the patience of hope.

If you're here this morning and you've never done the work of God, you've never believed on Jesus Christ whom He sent, you've never known the joy of the love of God motivating your life, and you're presently without hope being without God in the world. I'm going to invite you to enter into all 3 today by simply opening up your heart and accepting Jesus Christ into your life, John tells us that He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

Will you place your faith in the name of Jesus Christ today for the forgiveness of your sin?