

Praises for a Healthy Church (Part 2)

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Preacher: Matt Pike

[0 : 00] Did I do this right? Good. Good morning, church family. Good morning, guests.! Those who are not regularly attending, thanks for coming.

! Glad to have you here. I am well prepared. I got size 14 font, a pair of Amazon readers, and I've got a whole bunch of Scott's pamphlets that are falling out of my Bibles. I changed my page, so I think he warned us of that.

But for those who were here for this previously, I taught in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, the first five verses.

We're going to continue in the next couple verses in chapter 1, 1 Thessalonians 6 through 10 this morning. The theme is praises for a healthy church, and it's not a very clever title, but this is the part two of that section.

So praises for a healthy church, part two. And coming in last time, those who are here last time, Greg had mentioned of all the things our church had been doing to take care of Jeff.

[1 : 01] So I'm sorry for Jeff's misery and his pain and his sadness, but man, I tell you what, what a great opportunity for a church to serve and to minister and love and to bring that stuff out.

Because last time, it wasn't planned. Greg was mentioning of all the things that the church had done to take care of Jeff and to serve him lovingly and graciously of their own volition all throughout the week. And it was just so great and so timely that he brought that up to here.

And coming in this morning, I was thinking about kind of reviewing this in my mind as we drove in here. And as I came in, I actually got here early, so that was a big bonus. But as I got here, there were people already here.

I thought I was early. There's people already here setting up signs. Coffee was already made. And the church has been cleaned all week. People are taking care of sound before anyone. Ben was here singing and practicing, doing things that no one asked them to do, and they just did on their own hearts.

And I just got to say, this sermon, hopefully people see it as not admonition for, we need to catch up and you need to get your life together. But man, what a great church. And I got to say, I am grateful.

[2 : 06] I am super grateful that God brought us to this church and that we are here. So, thank you for all those who serve. Thank you for this great church. And for those that are recently attending and guests, come back, because it's a great church.

That was the pre-sermon for the sermon. Let's pray real quick. Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the opportunity to be here, gathered together in your name, gathered together to worship, to sing praises to your name, to join together and encourage one another and use our gifts as a church family, to be what a church is called to be, to be that light into the world.

Pray, God, that we're energized this week to go out and be that light into the world, in our families, in our relationships, at our jobs, and everything we do, Lord. Pray, God, that the words coming out of my mouth would not be mine, but they would be yours.

Pray, God, that you bless these words to this church today. Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. All right, so it's been a few weeks since we're in 1 Thessalonians, attempting to try to stay somewhat steady.

We've had a lot of different preachers coming in. It's just been amazing. I'm staying in 1 Thessalonians, so as you guys do your reading on the side in your times, if you think of it, go back in 1 Thessalonians and you can kind of catch up.

[3 : 21] But I'll catch us up just a little bit this morning. I won't spend too much time, but we'll do a quick recap of verses 1 through 5. I remember last time I said I'll spend just a little bit more time on verses 4 and 5, because I spent quite a bit of time moving through the first part, and then I quickly

realized I had way too much material in those last two verses.

We'll spend a little bit of time there. But real fast, we're going to read through the first 10 verses, because the whole thing is one thought, so we want to get this in context. So starting in 1 Thessalonians 1, verse 1, going through verse 10.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the Church of the Thessalonians, and God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace. We always give thanks to God for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers, constantly keeping in mind your work of faith, labor of love, and perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of our God and Father.

Knowing, brothers and sisters, beloved by God, His choice of you. For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and the Holy Spirit and with full conviction, just as you know what kind of men we prove to be among you for your sakes.

You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word during great affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

[4 : 49] For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place the news of your faith toward God has gone out, so that we may have no need to say anything.

For they themselves report about us as to the kind of reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead.

That is Jesus who rescues us from the wrath to come. So the whole thought there, putting it in context, this is Paul being thankful and gracious for a healthy church.

He's seen the evidence of this healthy church, and he kind of takes in these two chunks almost.

This first few verses, he describes why he knows they're saved and why he knows they're a faithful church.

Remember, faith, hope, and love, that common trio Paul uses through Scripture there. And then he talks about their salvation at the end of those first three verses. He talks about, and I know God saved you because he kind of takes the same flow here.

[5 : 54] So we're going to work through that. Quick recap. Remember, Thessalonica sits at a major port and Roman crossroad in the province of Macedonia. That's modern-day Greece now for those.

This city enjoyed a favored status. Remember, during the Roman civil wars, they got lucky, I guess, and sided with the victor. So that allowed them a type of self-governance. They didn't have a whole lot of Roman rule there.

They were able to kind of make their own laws, do their own thing. Remember, liberty breeds prosperity, more or less. So they were allowed to be kind of free in how they chose to do life, which was good in some respects, not in others.

They also had a plurality of religions. So because of that freedom, there was not a whole lot of cap on what they could and couldn't do. So this included a decent-sized Jewish synagogue. Also, they worshiped Greco-Roman gods, was common, as well as some Egyptian gods and various cults.

Archaeology has brought some Egyptian artifacts and things from Greece and from that region. So things have found their way up there, which caused them to worship these other relics, stone and wood and nothingness, which we'll get into.

[7 : 04] This is Paul's second missionary journey. This is right after his encounter in Philippi. So he went through Philippi, was briefly ushered out of Philippi as the jailer came to know Christ.

The city administrators realized they had punished him. He was a Roman citizen. They got scared, shoot him out of the city. He moved up into Thessalonica because he had cast out a slave girl there and people were mad for disrupting the peace.

This is in Acts 16. So for further study, that came out of Acts 16. And then moving into Acts 17 is where you see Paul end up in Thessalonica. Remember, Paul starts out by addressing the church at Thessalonica.

That was the first part of this a few weeks ago and that's really important here. That was an important piece of the introduction that Paul used. The Greek word for that, it has use in the original Christian Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint.

So without getting too in-depth and spending a lot of time on that, the word has depth, it has meaning, it has an intensity to it that Paul means when he says, oh, the church at Thessalonica, he

doesn't mean, oh, that building over there with the people in it and they get together and sing some songs.

[8 : 12] He means the true and believing church at Thessalonica. He means, I believe this church is saved. I believe the people here are living to glorify Christ. This is a church. And that word has that depth, which is kind of the importance of this chapter.

And you see that's what he talks about as he moves through this chapter. They weren't just a group of people that claims to believe in God or once made a verbal profession of faith. He considers them believers in Christ.

And this is what he goes on to describe. In verse three, he mentions their work of faith, their labor of love, their steadfastness of hope. Remember, again, we mentioned previously, Paul uses this trifecta of faith, hope, and love commonly.

He uses these first three verses out of this chapter to express his thankfulness to God for what he sees as true faith, evidenced by their conduct and their behavior.

So moving into verse four, Paul says he knows of God's choice in them. How does he know that? Well, back up, verse three. So he sees their fruit enabled by the Holy Spirit through a transformed heart.

[9 : 19] That transformed heart with the Holy Spirit produces that fruit in us. And this is what Paul's saying he saw in them. And we'll touch on again later, but remember, Timothy went back here to report on them, on this church, as Paul was not here when Timothy came back.

Just as Paul and Timothy and Silas exhibited Christ-like behavior and proved themselves as followers of Christ while they were among the Thessalonians, Paul, confident in the Lord, knows this in his own life.

He knows how it looks in his own life. He knows they exhibited this behavior. He can see it. He knows the gospel. They know the gospel and they received it with the power of the Holy Spirit among them.

So he rounds out verse one through five by talking about his assurance of their salvation after giving thanks to God because he sees the evidence of their changed hearts. So you see he goes at one through three, talks about faith, hope, and love.

He talks about their steadfast hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. And then he talks about what he believes is their faith, verse four and five, knowing, brothers, his choice of you for our gospel to not come in you in word only, but also in power and the Holy Spirit with full conviction.

[10 : 33] So he talks about, so we're going to take these, the next five verses are kind of similar, but I'm going to do it a little backward. So stay with me a little bit. So the next five verses, I'm going to talk about nine and 10. At the back, I'm going to talk about their salvation first and then why Paul sees this that way.

So we're going to talk about their salvation, what Paul says about their salvation in nine and 10, then go back up in six, seven, and eight. However, when I was printing this out yesterday, I briefly looked through it thinking I was good and it looked a little off to me and I realized my printer was sliding different pages in different spots.

So if it is out of order, there you go. I think I got it though. But we are going to be purposely out of order just in scripture for a little bit. We'll get back in it. So since we ended on Paul highlighting that, again, we're going to the back and we're going to go back up and through.

Hopefully it'll make sense. We can all tie this together at the end. So the bottom line up front for the day, for those who are visiting and weren't here last time I preached, bottom line up front, I've been in the military a long time.

We have these long rambling briefs and PowerPoints and things like that. And most people fall asleep and don't remember them. So they give a little blurb up front, the bottom line up front, so people know what they're talking about.

[11 : 45] So by the time they get to the end, they're not completely lost. So if you get lost, you refer back to this. Because of God's plan for redemption in Jesus and choosing us to receive the Holy Spirit and be part of his kingdom, we must turn from our worldly lusts and follow the example set forth by godly leaders and Christ to spread the gospel and show the world God's love through our actions and how we live.

So jumping right into verse 9, after describing all the evidences of their genuine faith, which we'll get into, and the evangelism that went forth from them, which we're also going to get into, Paul says in

verse 9, That's verse 9.

They themselves. Meaning that all those in Macedonia and Achaia, when Timothy went back up there to find out how this church was doing, to encourage them, to get the word, find out what's going on, all those in that region, they themselves, they were the ones that had said this to Timothy. They'd either heard of or been influenced by the Thessalonians' behavior that was mentioned in verse 7. So because Paul's ministry was so effective, these believers had rapidly and aggressively spread the gospel to this entire region that Timothy heard about it when he went back there. They heard the gospel, they responded in faith, and they immediately began getting to work. The evidence was reported by others in the region far and wide.

[13 : 25] Remember Macedonia, Achaia is referring to the whole region encompassing modern day Greece. I'm not big on remembering geography, but for those who do, it's that whole kind of boot down there at the bottom that there's a little side piece down there.

But then if you look across, there's actually encompasses and the older maps encompasses a huge region. There's actually quite a big area there. So it's not just a small community of influence. This is a large region.

With a modern car, it takes about five to six hours to drive from Athens to Thessalonica, so south to north. That's just a straight shot right through.

That's not encompassing the region surrounding that. There weren't cars back then. Just throwing that out there. A little piece of history. You're welcome. So these believers got to work.

The route, that driving route is generally, it's still kind of the same route it's been for a couple thousand years, obviously with modern roads, but that's generally the route that it took, that they took. This is also encompassing the region surrounding it, so they got to work.

[14 : 30] They took seriously their service to Christ with their transformed hearts. The point is that Paul didn't have anything to say to these other believers in the region about their success in Thessalonica because they had already heard about the Thessalonians transformation, how they turned to God from idols.

So they turned to God from idols. This is repentance. They had truly regenerate hearts. Otherwise, this wouldn't have taken place. It says they turned to God from idols.

The majority of these new converts were pagans worshiping these images of foreign gods. Like I mentioned in the intros, the Egyptian gods, some of the cults that were there, Greek and Greco-Roman gods, some things like that.

You get it. Some of the things you've seen, some of the archaeologists, some little idols and things they carry around. People do it today. They carry around the little statues of things and different things that they're falsifying and putting in place of Christ.

Although our society, we don't necessarily worship Egyptian or Greek and Roman deities. It's not as common now in our society. You don't have statues of Zeus on your mantle or anything like that anymore.

[15 : 40] That's not really a thing. Don't be mistaken, we indeed are worshiping other gods. God of self, God of money, pride, power, lust.

You get it. We worship other gods. So coming to salvation nowadays is no different. You are turning from these gods in your life to worship a true and living God. True repentance demands that we put off our sinful desires and replace them with a devotion to Christ, without whom we wouldn't have a way to salvation anyway.

Paul says these other people are reporting to them about this radical transformation, these believers. So this isn't just Timothy going up there and saying, oh, hey, Paul, these guys are good. Like, they're doing great stuff. Their families are good. I mean, there's strong marriages. There's strong homes. There's influence in the region. No, this is Paul saying this. Other people away from them are saying this about them.

So this has already moved through several layers as it now is getting back to Paul. Other people, they themselves, these other people in the region, are reporting that these Thessalonian believers have transformed hearts.

[16 : 56] He says these other people are reporting to them about this radical transformation in them. And it wasn't some simple, remorseful response to worldly guilt or simply sorrow that comes from doing something in the world that considers unjust or maybe defies common plight society.

You know, he's cutting somebody off on 64. You know, should I feel guilty about that? You know, probably. You know, is it done with a sinful heart? Now, if I'm just cutting somebody off and I'm like, ah, I shouldn't have done that because, you know, that's just not really what we do in our world, not really what we do in society.

I did not hold a door open for that old lady. I just kind of feel bad because that wasn't the thing. Yeah, I probably should have just done that. That's not what they're talking about. They came to true repentance. They had a true, genuine repentance of sinful idol worship and sinful behavior. It says in 2 Corinthians 7.10, For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces repentance without regret, leading to salvation.

But the sorrow of the world produces death. That sorrow of the world is a trick and a trap. Right? Just feeling bad because it's, you know, against the law. Follow the laws. That's not what I'm saying.

[18:06] But just feeling bad because maybe it's, oh, it's against the law. You know, we live in a polite society, a society of laws and a legal system. Maybe I should, yeah, I should kind of feel bad. I shouldn't do that. That's not the thing. That's not, Paul is driving.

regarding their transformation because they hadn't simply been remorseful about their sin and just kind of limped along in their faith like, ah, I shouldn't have done that.

Okay, I'm all right. You know, I'll get on, get off my life, do my thing, whatever the case may be. I'm fine. They hadn't just simply been remorseful about it. They were remorseful about it and they made a change. They changed that behavior.

Feeling bad is great, but if you don't feel bad and then repent of that sin and change, well, there's, that's the issue. And that's what he's saying happened here. He's saying, he's saying it happened so effectively, they didn't even hear it from them.

They heard it from other people because it was so effective and known so well. He says, they turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.

[19:22] I emphasize that word. That word has meaning. It's important. That word for serve could also be rendered, probably more appropriately in this case, enslaved or to be a slave to.

Does anyone remember some of Paul's greetings in his other letters? I think I mentioned this in a previous sermon, how Paul talks about being a bondservant or a slave to Christ. a bondservant, one who chooses to be a slave, who chooses to have a master and serve that master.

They chose to be enslaved and to serve Christ. And they, they do. That's the point here. That's the point of this chapter is they do, they do what they say. Serving whom Paul calls a living and true God.

He says this to contrast the dead and lifeless idols that they were serving. If you look there, it says, because he immediately switches and he says, how you turned to God from idols to serve or to be a slave to a living and true God.

Idols are dead and lifeless and nothing, right? My want, my desire, what I think I need, the plethora of jet skis in my garage that I serve continuously, right?

[20:36] Those are dead. They're worthless. They're meaningless. And that's Paul's contrast. He says, look, I heard it from others that you turned from these dead, worthless things in their case or maybe in our case a concept, right?

Or money or a job or something else. They turn from these things to serve a living and true God, not a dead and false item.

They repented from worship of dead and lifeless things of the world to serve our living and true God. But what accompanies salvation, right? Moving further into this, our confident hope in Christ's return, which is kind of where he moves into this next verse.

So, knowing I've been saved, these other believers in the region had reported about Thessalonians knowing they were saved, their repentance and their patient waiting now for Christ's return.

You don't get a John Henry, I'm sorry, a Matthew Henry quote today. I replaced it with a John Calvin quote, so I apologize, you'll have to wait until next time. But John Calvin says this about it, for as it is only confident in the divine goodness that induces us to serve God, so it is only the expectation of final redemption that keeps us from giving way.

[21:51] These Thessalonian believers were confident and drove forward and didn't give way, they didn't give up, they kept moving forward knowing their confidence in Christ and knowing in Christ's return.

And brief segue, remember in the front where Paul lists faith, hope, and love, he kind of goes out of order a little bit, but what Paul emphasizes last when he's listing oftentimes in Greek, Mark can, he'll fill you in more after the service, but what he's listing last, he's emphasizing.

He's kind of saying, hey, I'm going to talk about this a little bit later, keep that in the back of your mind, that's why I put it right here. So remember, back up in verse 3, constantly bearing in mind their work of faith, their labor of love, and their steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. He lists that last because as he gets into chapter 3 and then chapter 4, he's talking about Christ's return, he's talking about eschatology and things to come. And that's why that is, and that's why he kind of foot stomps again at the bottom of this here and he's saying, hey, they were waiting on Christ's return and they were living their lives acting like Christ is going to return and I believe he's going to return, therefore, I'm going to act accordingly because I know he's coming back. And Paul touches on this again later and that's why it's kind of structured that way. Our hope in Christ's return and our redemption comes from the same place as our confidence in God's goodness that drives us to serve him.

[23 : 16] Paul hints briefly at this eschatological theme of Christ rescuing us from the wrath to come that he'll talk about later in this letter. Lord willing, we'll get into. The point is that he heard of their repentance and with that repentance a transformed heart that has the patient, hopeful waiting of our Lord's return to save us from the coming judgment.

Rest in that for a moment. Friends, if we have the same repentant heart that is transformed by God choosing to extend us his good grace, we too should have the same confidence in Christ's return. It should never leave our thoughts that he is coming back. It should be on the forefront of our minds framing all of our thoughts and deeds. I'm 100% guilty of this.

I don't, this doesn't capture my thoughts most of the day. As I get older and hopefully I continue to work out my salvation with fear and trembling and I obey Christ's commands and I read scripture and I get more and more resistant to the attacks of the devil and I push sin out of my life but I'll tell you I don't often sit there and think boy Christ is coming back what a great day today I'm just so excited.

What a conscious thought that doesn't enter my mind that probably should. I was a little convicted writing this when I was writing this I paused on this a little bit. I put rest in that for a moment because I needed to rest in that for a moment.

[24 : 44] Life is busy. We get distracted. We got a lot of things going on in the world. Pulling our attention every different direction. Kids, family, marriages, work, jobs, the news cycle.

My goodness. It's crazy. How about for a moment when we pause and think about that think about you know what turn off the news turn off your phone take a second think about Christ is coming back.

What do I need to be concerned with? Probably not what I was concerned with in that moment. here's some general application of this.

So when you feel persecuted beaten down by the world or just feeling the heaviness of the sinful world around us like I mentioned family, life, everything else maybe financial problems health cancer death remember that God provided a way of redemption for you through his son Jesus Christ.

You are special not in the silly self-centered way the world means this is not some build yourself up self-esteem class you are special because he chose you for his plan of redemption.

[26 : 02] In addition to him coming back let that sink in and put those together. he is coming back and he chose you for his plan of redemption and that's these Thessalonian believers.

He is so joyful and Paul is so confident that God chose them to receive salvation and he's so confident and so happy and joy filled that these Thessalonian believers know Christ is coming back. That is why Paul is so encouraged and so excited to send Timothy back to them. I'll talk about the timeline of this in a minute it'll kind of tie together. So being grateful for that is critical.

Being grateful for what we've been given in our gratitude being grateful for that for our salvation for Christ's return is huge.

If we keep that in the forefront of our minds that changes things because I'll tell you from my own life gratitude and grumpiness cannot occupy the same space. Try it.

[27 : 01] There's a little test. It doesn't work. Being genuinely thankful for something being genuinely thankful for my kids my wife my marriage my church being grateful for my church and that occupying my thoughts my mind thinking like man I've got a great church I am so glad that

somebody does the singing so I don't have to be up there doing this and you should be glad too.

Being content with what we have it's pretty hard to be grumpy about all the things that want to make me grumpy work life stuff whatever news cycle it's really hard for those to go together.

These Thessalonians knew that and they were living this out as all those throughout the region were witness to this. The evidence of this was heard far and wide at a rapid pace.

So 1 Thessalonians was written maybe as early as a few months up to a year after Paul had visited there with Timothy and Silvanus. Remember the size of this very populated region so some of the geography and the history is going to come together here to help us kind of see the context of this. Big region very populated major Roman road system major port system this is incredible when you consider there were no modern forms of information sharing. So written a couple months to a year after Paul was there so not long most people think a few months six months depending on what commentary you're reading or what historical perspective you look at and how they date it.

[28 : 32] So a few months to six months Paul is writing this letter because Timothy had already gone up there heard about all of this been a part of it encouraged the church and come back to Paul remember they didn't have cars so when they did this this had already happened before Timothy got up there.

It's incredible when you think about they didn't have email text message Facebook whatever social media platform you're using or whatever the case vehicles driving transportation think how quickly we can get out and reach and touch somebody oh hey man I was thinking about my buddy the other week he's in a hard way let me shoot him a text message let me tell him that God loves him Christ is coming back and his salvation is secure how quick was that evangelism boom across the world blink of an eye right not so much here this was done solely from word of mouth either by travelers passing through on the major network there or those Thessalonians traveling to spread the gospel so either people moving through the region or the Thessalonians pushing out probably a combination of both and this evidence of their devotion to the gospel now is what we see in verses 6 through 8 so we see now kind of 9 and 10 Paul talks about their salvation how they believe how they were patiently waiting on Christ's return and how they're acting accordingly and then normally he would flow it right the evidences first and then he says why but we're going to do the evidences now second so moving back up into verse 6 we can see some of these evidences of their transformed hearts we'll talk a little bit more about that evangelism as we go into that but we can see some of these evidences of their transformed heart

Paul says they became imitators of them and ultimately imitators of the Lord just like Paul tells us 1 Corinthians 11 1 be imitators of me just as I I also am of Christ it's not they're saying hey do what I do I'm cool man do the thing I do I got my stuff together I got my life together imitate my behavior no Paul is confidently saying imitate my behavior because I'm imitating Christ that's what you should imitate not me I don't have my stuff together me especially I don't have my stuff together imitate Christ but Paul is confidently saying he knows what that looks like they immediately started to behave like Paul the examples set forth for those new believers were critical in their rapid spiritual growth and maturity they had Paul Sylvanus and Timothy among them for that time modeling this Christ-like behavior there were no better earthly examples at the time they had the cream of the crop as church leadership goes and I do believe we have fantastic church leadership and I think that's one of the reasons I'm so grateful and thankful for this church and they experienced the same these Thessalonian believers

Paul says in verse 6 you also became imitators of us and of the Lord so he's saying you got what I was saying to you you knew that I was saying imitate me don't just imitate me as I Paul act but imitate me as I imitate the Lord and he repeats this again to make sure when he's writing this to them they know that and they know they're on the right track and they know they're doing what they should be doing what does this look like to imitate godly leaders in Christ-like behavior at least in a modern context right we see our leaders now we see Christian leaders maybe maybe a respected Christian mentor a friend a family member someone who's led you in the Lord or someone someone who you've modeled your life after maybe what do you look at what is that maybe we evaluate their immediate behavior what do they look like in that moment right what do they look like in that that blip of time you see them during the day maybe at work in life you hear from them talk them on the phone how are they acting in that moment are they consistently honoring Christ with their life in that moment you catch them at a bad time we evaluate their marriage what's the point of our marriage right that's the relationship that highlights

Christ's relationship with his church is how important it is that how about their children how do they conduct themselves at their vocation do they faithfully labor at what God has put before them that's a tough one we were talking about you were here for Wednesday nights talking about grumbling oh boy talk about work and grumbling I don't know about you but that'll get me Paul mentions many times throughout this letter how he worked to provide for himself never desiring to be a burden among those who he was with he faithfully worked with his hands served to provide for himself and those around him are these leaders different out in public than they are when you see them on Sundays how about on social media that's a big one are you a different person on social media than you are I was just recently listening to a podcast about one of my favorite podcasts Suzanne knows they get together and banter about all things reformed theology and they were talking about the theology of social media there's a recent

[33 : 53] I won't mention there's a recent pastor part of a big Christian ministry that I think this was late last year that got found he had multiple social media personas and he was online bashing other Christian leaders and bashing other people they didn't know for years he's a completely different person on social media had all these different accounts it's easy for us to be someone different through a text message through social media it's easy for me to go to work and act like the soldier I am and my mouth wants to be the soldier I am when I'm at work and not be a Christian that's easy because none of you see me it's easy to get online and do that and say the thing because well nobody's there to see it maybe no one here sees it does their life generally does our Christian leaders life generally reflect that Christ-like behavior now the responsibility isn't entirely on the leaders we can't pin them down you can have excellent leadership that confidently displays the love of Christ in their life which I think we do but that won't matter unless those in their charge choose to model that same behavior that takes effort you have to step forward and do that as well the Thessalonians had top-notch leadership to emulate and they did that's the point they did emulate that behavior the example was there for them

Paul's example is Paul mirrored Christ's image and they mirrored Paul's image as he served Christ it was there and they chose to do it they saw the behavior of those witnessed to them and quickly conformed to it verse 6 continues saying they received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit remember how Paul left Thessalonica if anyone's familiar with it in Acts 17 it tells us he was driven out by angry Jews who had rallied some men from the marketplace and set the city in an uproar saying they were disrupting everything the same group it says in Acts they dragged Jason presumably a man hosting Paul an early church leader there in Thessalonica and some of the brethren it says before the authorities they dragged these men before the authorities because they couldn't get to Paul at the time and then remember Paul was followed to Berea by the same Jews so Paul left went to Berea the same group of

Jews was not content just kicking him out they had to follow him all the way down there to go to Berea to cause him more trouble that's the environment they were in they were so intent on destroying Paul in the gospel throwing him out of the city just simply wasn't enough so how hostile do you think it was in Thessalonica for these new believers if that's what they did to get Paul and the gospel out of here remember there's still people living here these people had to believe and interact and go in society with that same hostility friends neighbors family all around them skipping ahead to chapter 2 verses 14 and 15 Paul talks about this a little bit later he says for you brothers and sisters became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen even as they did from the Jews who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and drove us out they are not pleasing to God but hostile to all people same problems same people it wasn't just they were mad and wanted Paul to leave they were hostile to the gospel they were hostile to Christ they wanted this church to die they were just as cruel to the New

Thessalonians as they were to Paul several commentaries point out that during this time period this is an early letter written maybe early AD 50s 50-51 there was not really any reported physical persecution yet so they weren't hanging people up in the marketplaces yet this wasn't Nero's persecution quite yet AD 60s leading into AD 70s but what it was was most like a verbal a lot of verbal persecution severe social ostracizing this should probably kind of speak a little more to us that how the Thessalonians persevered through this because this is probably more where we're at in America no one in America generally right barring maybe some crime or the occasional church or synagogue attack you hear in the news although horrible and condemn it in the harshest possible

terms no one is really physically persecuting Christians on a scale of such as Nero using them to light candles throwing them in a group of angry animals for sport that's not happening here which is it's usually where our minds go or at least my mind goes when I think oh persecution of Christians yeah I'm being persecuted not yet you're not we have it pretty good compared to many places in the world I've been around the world a lot of places Christians are not welcome in many places and there is legitimate death persecution in other places in the world that's not what's happening though socially morally legally that's more the challenge here and I think it's more relatable to us today too has anyone ever lost a relationship because of your faith someone doesn't want to talk to you anymore because you're hateful you're mean you don't you don't approve of! [39 : 11] the lifestyle the thing the choices the things that people do like hey man I'm not into that I'm going to stay away from that oh you're one of the you're hateful aren't you you're a hateful Christian how about suffered a business loss you have plenty of people in here who own businesses and run business anyone heard you're a Christian and been like nah sorry pal you're one of those I'm not I'm not getting around that how about those who won't talk to you because you wouldn't cave on a biblical issue maybe at work like sorry dude I'm not doing that okay pal you're out you're out of my group they think you're mean and unloving maybe legally as well nowadays I think we start to see that just a little bit how about family there's a good one because at times when this was written culturally families tend to be a lot more centralized than they are today you might have multiple generations living under the same roof or at least very close in the same region they stayed very maybe some would branch out but they were a lot closer than we are today with modern advances in travel communication right expanded housing opportunities it's a lot more common for a family to spread out around the country than it would be then you know for example my wife and I's family live on the west coast we're the only ones out here on the east coast but we can talk to them just like it was you know right just text messages email plane flight four hours five hours right

I'm over there no big deal but in this case they were all around each other most commonly all around each other and the entire families were usually within the same region so the new Thessalonian believers would be feeling the effects of this socially hostile environment in all areas of their lives their family socially in the market with their friends with their businesses or maybe less in your face than that physical persecution this type of environment can be daunting being on the outside of your family or social groups because your faith is tough think about Paul's audience with these tighter knit communities this would have been devastating right I see it in my own life with my family maybe maybe sanctification is leading you know my wife and I in one way and my family and I in one way and like hey we're not going to participate in that thing or we're not going to do that thing or you know I'm sorry friend that's you know that's a this is a sin issue or this is you know that's not biblical I can't do that the second you start touching things like that people get really upset and boy you can you can quickly ostracize yourself now imagine this on the entire scale of the community it says they received the word during great affliction the point is driving here they were under affliction maybe not physically but they were receiving the word under great affliction like Paul says but what's interesting is they thrived in this they didn't get depressed and sad and slink away they thrived in this rapidly growing in faith and spiritual maturity they were thriving so well spiritually that their behavior was known to the whole region and that's the point they thrived under this persecution it supercharged them thriving spiritually during persecution or trials is only possible because of God's good grace and the power of the Holy Spirit scripture has much to say on the topic

I won't I won't get off too much but I'll read a couple couple of verses here remember James 1 2 through 4 consider it all joy my brothers and sisters when you encounter various trials knowing that the destiny of your faith produces endurance and let endurance have its perfect result so that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing I have some other ones but I'll skip them in the interest of time this morning this thriving and persecution this this this this rapid advancement that they were under it leads that into verse 7 so verse 6 leads into verse 7 because it says remember verse 6 you also became imitators of us and of the Lord having received the word during great affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia that persecution had a point that trouble had a point there was a point to them that God intended and they rose to that occasion they didn't run from the persecution they were supercharged by that persecution

Paul says that Thessalonians know what kind of men they Paul, Timothy and Silvanus proved to be among them then they imitated Paul's behavior as I keep saying as he imitated Christ now they're proving to be examples to all believers in the region that word example was generally used for an impression or an image this is so that you became an example so that you became an impression an impression or you became the image bearer of what you should look like they were image bearers of Christ like behavior in that whole region this is incredible if you think about it and convicting we'll get back a little bit more to the geography and the timeline here can you remember back when we were first saved maybe some of you were saved young or maybe back when you were first theologically careful here conscious of your Christianity and you know what I am conscious of my Christianity I know I'm saved I need to serve God how quickly did it take for you to get to that moment to proclaiming your faith and being unashamed in the workplace unashamed in society unashamed with your family on the tough issues how quickly did you move into that these believers turned from their worldly lusts pleasures and lives to emulate Christ and set the example for those around them the rapid spiritual progression was spurred on by their affliction it says they received the word during great affliction with joy so that they became an example backing up in the verse a little bit so that

I had to look this up is a subordinating conjunction it's in the point of that is to introduce a purpose or an intention so it's intentional that that happens so you could also say in order that or for the purpose of so you could say receive the word of much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of you to be an example for all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia the purpose or intention of them being joyful in affliction was to be an example to other believers in the region their behavior caused others to take notice believers in the region were seeing the Thessalonians righteous behavior and knew what kind of persecution they were under which increased their Christ modeling image even more it grew it even more seeing wow those guys are under some hard stuff there in Thessalonica people are not treating them well they're under a hard way first they ran out Paul now they're driving these people into the dirt giving them a ton of problems and they're still thriving spiritually they're still proclaiming the name of Christ there in Thessalonica that's just incredible hey did you hear about this and so it spreads from there believers in the region were seeing the

[46 : 13] Thessalonians righteous behavior and knew what kind of persecution they were under which increased their Christ modeling image even more the Thessalonians were the examples to follow they were now the examples to follow that's what Paul is so excited about here so before we move into this last verse let's briefly catch up remember our thesis statement or bottom line up front for the day so because of God's plan for redemption in Christ and choosing us to receive the Holy Spirit and be part of his kingdom verses 4 and 5 we must turn from our worldly lusts verse 9 and follow the example set forth by godly leaders and Christ verses 6 and 7 to spread the gospel and show the world God's love through our actions and through how and and through how we live even in persecution which is 7 and now moving into verse 8 moving into verse 8 Paul says the word of the Lord sounded forth from them this is a unique term sounded forth it has the idea of reverberation or like ripples on a pond if you ever walked up to a nice you ever seen nice like perfectly still quiet pond not a movement on there and if you have children you know the first thing that happens is a rock or some object right out into the pond because it's irresistible maybe not just children

I do it too like I've got to destroy that perfect peaceful glass and what happens right the splash happens the explosion the rock hits and then that pond reverberates or ripples and you can see it spread through almost the entire body of water it goes out through the whole thing and that's that's kind of the image that Paul's the language that Paul's using here the thing happened in Thessalonica and it reverberated out through that whole region continues to ripple through that whole region the word of the Lord the gospel was spread out from Thessalonica throughout all of Greece and even beyond this is serious and aggressive evangelism imagine the kind of effort it takes to spread the gospel in this broad of a region and effectively as Paul says they did this is more than just mentioning Christ to a neighbor on occasion certainly that's a start and we should be doing that that should be part of our life think of the effort it takes us now to send missionaries overseas

Jeff could speak to this he's done several missionary trips overseas I'm sure people have heard from missionaries and we help fund them all the times think of the effort it takes in the fundraising

just to get a you know a family or a married couple overseas to serve in some context overseas that's a large effort that's a pretty heavy movement and that's like we talked about that's including our modern travel modern communication modern health modern medical treatments all this stuff we have bibles we can take physical bibles with us wherever we go and it's still a heavy task so imagine now the Thessalonians doing this on their own in that entire region in a matter of months this is a big movement financially logistically personally it takes a toll even with like I said modern methods of travel and communication we enjoy this is still a tough task remember back to the time frame this took place in Acts 17 2 tells us he spent three sabbaths teaching in Thessalonica most commentators agree he could have been there before that and some after that so it wasn't just three weeks probably it could have been several months he was there and in the area before he was finally driven out but that's still incredible how many years have missionaries spent in certain areas for very minimal gain for nothing you hear missionaries coming back depressed sad frustrated because they feel like they haven't done anything we don't know what they've done because God's plan is good and it's perfect and it's righteous and it will be completed how God wants it but it's discouraging you've heard some of these missionary stories they're very discouraged in some of these regions maybe they don't see the gains or they don't see the influence of this but in this case the Thessalonians influence was extensive and Paul's ministry so how many years a missionary spent right in areas for minimal gain but the Thessalonians the rapid spiritual maturity shows one

God's hand clearly at work through the Holy Spirit in that region and then two how effective Paul's teaching and ministry was it was super effective teaching and ministry go hand in hand as the Thessalonians were as we see by scripture here they were examples of this it goes hand in hand one cannot simply stand in front of others teach some scripture maybe even teach it well and do a good job at it and then go about a worldly life you can't come up here and talk and then go do something else and be somebody entirely different the Thessalonians knew this the Thessalonians couldn't say oh I believe Christ I follow him I recognize Christ's sacrifice on the cross I know he chose me I'm gonna go do this thing over here I got a whole nother life I got a whole nother life online I got a whole nother life at work and I was I'm always convicted most of these I write for me not for you so please take that as you may but thinking about this you teach one thing or you read your bible or you read your bible to your kids or you spend time with your wife talking about scripture and all these other things and then maybe you go off and you're a different person at work you're a different person in your mind how about your thought life thessalonians they took this seriously and they move forward rapidly with this transformation as christians our lives and how we minister to others validates our teaching and the thessalonians actions and them emulating paul's behavior validated their evangelism so they didn't simply go out and say hey y'all need to follow christ but people saw and heard of the persecution they were under they saw and heard of the things they were doing in their own lives and they said oh wow they're serious this message is serious because our lives could be an example of our teaching or our lives could invalidate our teaching if we instead partner with the world after paul was driven out of the area to berea and beyond remember that timothy was sent back here as paul was deeply concerned and had great love for the thessalonians between paul being driven out to berea and then eventually to farther on down to athlin's where he was waiting for timothy's return and report like i said probably only spanned a few months paul's ministry was so effective but also the thessalonians tenacity in getting after what is now their ministry continuing in verse 8 paul says the news of their faith toward god has gone out so they had been speaking of the gospel to others as it says the word of the lord sounded forth from them and now the news of their faith toward god has gone out so they had spoke the word of the lord they had preached the gospel they had spread they had spread this knowledge they had been evangelists out in the world but the news of their faith meaning they didn't say this somebody else saw this so the news of how they were acting the news of what they were doing accompanied what they were also saying so what they were saying and acting had reverberated throughout the region it was speech and action so they had been speaking the gospel to others as it says the word of the lord sounded forth from them now the news of their faith toward god had gone out this is the thessalonians teaching being validated by their ministry and their faithful living for christ at this point paul says he has no need to say anything about them because the proof of their faith has clearly gone forth so paul got this news he's like i'm so i'm overjoyed i'm so happy i'm going to write the letter to the thessalonians telling them of my joy and maybe as he goes on alleviating some of their concerns talking a little bit about eschatology or the things to come

talk about christ's return and encouraging them christ is coming back and loving on them and helping them but he doesn't have to say anything more about their behavior and and exhort them you know a lot of paul's

[54 : 44] letters are exhorting these churches they're exhorting these churches to hey imitate me as i imitate christ hey turn from idols and follow god hey right do this thing that you shouldn't stop doing the thing you shouldn't be doing doing the thing you should be doing he says i don't need to say anything because the proof of your proof of your faith has already gone forth in addition to your evangelism it's as if paul's saying let me tell you about those thessalonian church actually never mind i don't need to say anything you already know because everyone's heard it's something that's like ubiquitous like does everybody know that everyone knows that we the space shuttle went into space and we land on the moon conspiracies aside all right conspiracies aside everybody knows we sent something up and we went to the moon everybody knows that right it's it's you really probably couldn't talk to someone or they at least knew of the concept of shooting a space shuttle up and going to send something up and going to the moon everyone knows that this is the same this is what paul's saying everyone knows we know we know of your faith we heard of your faith we heard of your evangelism we heard what you were doing you were so effective in it we all know about it he's saying you have all seen and heard the evidence of their transformed hearts as we move to a close briefly recap what we talked about so picking up from last week this was written a while ago picking up from a few weeks ago paul says he knows of god choosing them for salvation because of the evidence of their lives shows the work of the holy spirit he confirms this again in verse 9 and 10 we can remember kind of skip back to the end of that talk about verse 9 and 10 he confirms again saying your salvation is clear we see the evidence of your salvation i believe you're saved you are part of christ's church we see as they begin to emulate their leaders how their faith was really jump-started by that persecution they were under at the time their joyful response to this was known far and wide as an example for other believers to follow a joyful response to persecution and hardship and difficulty can only come from a transformed life with the power of the holy spirit this church in short or in such a short time had spread the gospel throughout the region and had backed up that teaching by their lives and ministries is moving to set verse seven and eight there and the reason paul didn't have to say anything anything more as he wrote this letter to them was because the thessalonian ministry was so effective and complete everyone already knew it was a space shuttle it was a moon landing but what a perfect example that thessalonian church was for us and that's the point why is this all here for us why did god give us his word why did god give us his scripture for us to know there's answers yeah you need an answer it's here what a perfect example for us to follow how long did it take me before i became self-aware of my salvation before i knew my you know what i am saved i need to act accordingly it's probably years for me years maybe even maybe even a decade it's maybe if you want to put an s on there embarrassingly enough a couple months so friends in that moment when you think i can't do that i'm exhausted i can't live that way i can't preach the name of christ man you don't know what happened at my work i'm embarrassed that's hard you can do that you can do that it's been done before there's proof of it right here paul's told us about this thank goodness timothy went back there to get that report and god's plan is good and timothy came back to paul paul wrote this letter to the thessalonians it was preserved throughout record and we have it here today it's here there's an example for it we know this can happen don't wait decades how then should we conduct ourselves if god chose us chose us for salvation by turning from our worldly ways and rejecting a sinful lifestyle to serve the lord which we do by spreading the gospel not just in word but in deed also so the world sees god's love through us in what we say and how we act churches we go into the world this week let's keep this example of the keep the example of the thessalian church in our minds think how we can emulate their behavior in our everyday lives just remember it's been done before you can do it it's possible it is possible to turn from that thing that idol in your life you know what i am saved i am transformed i'm going to turn from that thing if you're not sure what i'm talking about though if you don't think that's a thing and you don't feel convicted like that speak with someone here speak with one of the elders here speak with some of the the men and women in this church and drive that question down let's pray dear lord thank you for this time together thank you for this attentive church thank you for this wonderful church body that we get to meet with and meet together and edify each other with our gifts thank you god for the opportunity to be here and to preach and teach freely in this country and to not be under persecution so heavily that we can't spread the gospel to our neighbors to our

friends to our family pray god as we move out you give us the courage give us the holy reverent
fear of you to serve you and not be fearful of the world because you're coming back we know you're
coming back we pray you place that on our hearts this week as we move out confidently in your
name we pray these things in jesus name amen