

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Second Coming Letters of Paul – Part 3

First Thessalonians

I. Exposition of Chapter One (Continued).

A. **Verse 7** – “So that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.” – In verse 6 we saw that the believers had become “followers” or “imitators” of the apostles and the Lord, in this verse, Paul commends them for being “examples” to others. The word “examples” means; “a model of behavior as an example to be imitated or to be avoided”¹ Paul was an example to the Thessalonian Christians, and then, they in turn, became examples to others. This is how it’s supposed to happen. This is amazing when you consider they had only been followers of Jesus for a short time. It’s a powerful principle that, as believers, we need others who will show us how to follow Jesus Christ, not just tell us to follow Him. Concerning the word “examples”, Leon Morris writes: **“The word *typos*, translated a model, meant originally the mark of a stroke or blow (the ‘mark’ of John 20:25), then a figure formed by a blow, an impression left by a seal or die, an image generally (Acts 7:43), and so it came to mean a pattern (Heb. 8:5), which is its meaning here. This is high praise, for in the first place Paul calls no other church a pattern, and in the second he thinks of the Thessalonians as an example, not only to the heathen, but also to Christians throughout Greece.”**²

B. **Verse 8** – “For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.” – This good news that the Thessalonians had received was too good to keep to themselves! “...from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth...” – The phrase “...word of the Lord...” is referencing the gospel message. It also shows that the Lord Jesus is the Author of the message. The words “sounded forth” are powerful. Dr. Warren Wiersbe writes: **“The verb *sounded out* actually means to ‘sound as a trumpet.’ But the Thessalonians were not ‘tooting their own horns’ as did the Pharisees (Matt. 6:1–4). They were trumpeting forth the Good News of salvation, and their message had a clear and certain sound to it (1 Cor. 14:8). Wherever Paul went, the people told him about the faith of the Thessalonian believers.”**³

1. **“Your faith toward God has gone out...”** – Not only did they need to take the message of the Gospel after it had dramatically changed their lives, but they also needed faith to go forth with that message. We should all be using our faith to believe that we’ll have more and more opportunities to share the Gospel with others and we’ll also have the courage to speak. The Complete Biblical Library states: **“Not only was their witness effective in Macedonia and Achaia, but their location on the Egnatian Way, a major Roman trade route, brought them in contact with travelers from all over the Roman Empire. The believers took advantage of their opportunities and won many to Christ. The report of the extraordinary faith they expressed to God was spreading in all directions.”**⁴

C. **Verse 9** – “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,”

1. The “they” is referring to those who came to Christ as a result of the Thessalonian’s testimonies. Apparently, they would share how they came to Christ through the preaching of Paul and Silas (**Acts 17:1-10**) and told how they were convinced to turn to God and from their idolatry.
2. The word “turned” means; “to turn around.” It’s referring to repentance. It’s been said that the two words of the Gospel are “repent” and “believe.” Today we have a lot of preaching about believing but not much being said about the need for true, genuine repentance.

“Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.’” Mark 1:14-15

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,” – Acts 17:30

¹Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 591.

²Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Volume 13: 1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984.)

³Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 161.

⁴*The Complete Biblical Library: Acts – Revelation, Volume 2*, (Empowered Life, Tulsa, OK, 2016.), 839.

“These believers had turned to God, the only true God, from idols. This strongly suggests that many of those believers had been pagan Gentiles. The Jews, of course, abhorred idolatry. Someone has observed that humans have the freedom to choose who their master will be, but they do not have the freedom to choose no master. The Thessalonians had chosen to serve the living and true God rather than God’s creatures or satanic powers (cf. Rom. 1:18–23).”⁵

3. **“...to serve...,”** – The word “serve” means: **“to be a slave or servant; is often used metaphorically to describe the sole commitment of one person to another”⁶** Before accepting Jesus as Lord, all people are **“slaves to sin” (Romans 6:16-17, 20)**, but Jesus Christ sets us free (**John 8:35-36**). Now we’re called to be **“slaves to righteousness” (Romans 6:18-19)**. Paul refers to himself as being a **“bondslave” of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Philippians 1:1)**.

4. **“...the living and true God...”** – This phrase is in contrast to the fact that the idols were dead and false gods. There is only One God Who is Alive and Genuine! Dr. Thomas Constable writes: **“Paul’s description of God as living does not simply mean that He is alive; it means that He is also active. He is the true (genuine, Gr. *alethinos*) God as opposed to false, unreal gods.”⁷**

D. Verse 10 – “...and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

1. After turning to God, they are doing two things, first serving Him and, secondly, waiting for Jesus to come again. This is the first reference to the second coming of Christ in this letter. The Bible teaches very clearly that Jesus Christ is coming again! Every chapter letter ends with this subject (**cf. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13–18; 5:23**).

2. **“...to wait for His Son from heaven...”** – The word “wait” means; **“to remain in a place and/or state, with expectancy concerning a future event”⁸** The Thessalonians were expecting the return of Christ! Jesus is currently seated at the Father’s right hand. This is an expression of authority. (**cf. Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33-34; 5:31; 7:55-56; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; I Peter 3:22.**) He is actively working through His church with signs and wonders (**Mark 16:20**) and, as the Head of the Church, He is ever providing strength, guidance and authority to the Church. (**Ephesians 3:16; Romans 8:14-17; Ephesians 1:15-23**). The Bible also teaches that Jesus is our **“Advocate with the Father” if we sin (I John 2:1-2)**.

3. **“...whom He raised from the dead...”** – Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, there is no Gospel. Paul states in **I Corinthians 15:14: “And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.”** The two enemies of humanity are sin and death. Jesus conquered sin on the cross and conquered death in His resurrection!

4. **“...Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”** – The **“wrath”** spoken of here is usually a reference to God’s future judgment on sin. There are various views as to when this takes place but the Bible speaks repeatedly of the believer’s deliverance from God’s wrath in the future. The reason for this is that Jesus bore our judgment on the cross as our substitute. Dr. Bob Utley writes:

“For some, Jesus’ Second Coming is their great hope, but for others it will be their eternal loss. The believers will experience the persecution and pressure of Jews and pagans, but they will never experience the wrath of God (cf. 5:9). The wrath of God is coming on all those who reject Christ (cf. 1 Thess. 2:16; Matt. 25; Rom. 1–2).”⁹

⁵Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 692–693.

⁶*Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, William D. Mounce, Gen. ed. (Zondervan Publishers, Grand Rapids, 2006.) 633.

⁷Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Thessalonians* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2022), 17.

⁸Louw and Nida, 728–729.

⁹Robert James Utley, *Paul’s First Letters: Galatians and I & II Thessalonians*, vol. Volume 11, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1997), 82.