

# R U Ready? 1Thessalonians 1

## **1Thessalonians 1:1**

*(KJV) Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which isin God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*(NIV) Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you.*

*Paul, Silas, and Timothy—the T Team!* What we have here, folks, is a team effort, not a one-man show—as if Paul was the CEO of some corporation. Paul is a servant leader who esteems his fellow ministers Silas and Timothy better than himself (see Philippians 2:3). Paul understands his need for a team. In fact, the Bible teaches us principles of leadership that provide accountability, correction, wisdom, and balance. All of these things are essential for a bottom-up, servant leadership sold out for Jesus and His gospel, whose heart is for people and serving them faithfully. The one-man show—pastor at the front exercising his spiritual gifts while the congregation’s spiritual muscles atrophy—is at best shaky ground to build a church upon. In other words, if the CEO/pastor goes spiritually AWOL in his heart and personal walk with Jesus and begins bearing corrupt fruit, down comes the church! Leadership teams are not only safer but more effective than the CEO approach.

## **Titus 1:6-9**

*If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*

Paul is not describing here people that are flawless, but prescribing general character traits that are obviously forming in the person who is being called of God to lead. Servant leadership is a matter of the heart. God takes it most seriously when leaders are selfish. I will read to you the start and finish of this passage:

## **Ezekial 34:1-2**

*And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?*

## **Ezekial 34:10**

*Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.*

Enough said.

\*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Are you able to detect biblically when a leader strays from their primary post and calling? If you did witness this happening in your own church, how would you react? Or would you? Based on the scriptures from Ezekiel 34, how does God react when under shepherds abandon their post to pursue self-willed plans?

\*STUDY POINT: Write down ten extraordinary attributes of the Thessalonian church, based on 1 Thessalonians 1. What other New Testament churches received positive praise from Paul, and why?

Take note of Scripture references.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy wrote this letter as individual yet united members of the Body of Christ.

### **1Corinthians 12:27-30**

*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?*

While perhaps Paul held the pen, all three of these servants shared in the letter's content to the Thessalonians believers.

*...unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ:*

What is the church in 2023? Is it a multitude of hockey teams all competing against each other? Or is it about one global team praising only God and His Son and by the power of the Holy Ghost manifesting the power to redeem lives from sin in order to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus, thereby fulfilling the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20?

*Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Don't you love it when Paul blesses the congregation right off the top? He could stop right there! Grace and peace from your Father in heaven because of your salvation in Jesus. This is church, beloved!

### **1Thessalonians 1:2**

*(KJV) We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;*

*(NIV) We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers.*

When you pray, do you thank God for the people He has placed in your life? Even the crusty ones? I love Paul's humble, loving prayer here—which is a response to brother Timothy's report back from the Thessalonians church he visited. Indeed, all three of these men had concerns that the Thessalonians might not hold up under the intense pressure of persecution, politics and anti-Christian sentiment in their region. Paul and his team had planted this church, and Paul had to depart early, leaving many of the newer converts somewhat vulnerable to evil all around. So Paul, Silas, and Timothy are deeply thankful for the fact that the Thessalonians are thriving in their faith and their love for one another.

### **1Thessalonians 1:3**

*(KJV) Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;*

*(NIV) We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Again, the church should be evidence of not only God's existence but His saving power and ability to transforms hearts from self to service. The Thessalonians are bearing the fruit of the Spirit and therefore confirming the manifest presence of the Lord in them and around them. *Work of faith, labour of love, patience of hope!* Fruit, folks, fruit!

### **Galatians 5:22-23**

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

\*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: For a local church body to bear the kind of bountiful fruit that the Thessalonians did, virtually every person would need to be intimately connected to God (see John 15:1-8). Could this kind of unity and power even happen in the North American church of 2023? We pray it is already happening! What biblical qualities do you think should shine brightest for the modern church to make local, regional, national, or global impact for the gospel?

\*STUDY POINT: Conduct a personal Bible study of Acts 2:42-47. Take note of the qualities the early church modelled so well. Also comment on the ways perhaps we have strayed from these qualities as a contemporary church. Also, after you have compiled your notes, you will be in good stead to pray for the Christian church today.

And what motivated Paul, through all the opposition and pain he experienced?

### **Colossians 1:29**

*Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*

### **1Thessalonians 1:4**

*(KJV) Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.*

*(NIV) For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you,*

Election? Yes, election! God knows what is going to happen before it happens! Too much, really, for our small minds to comprehend. But here it is the best thing ever, because to be chosen of God means you are His child. Did He know you would choose Him? Yes. Gloriously, yes! He drew you by His Holy Spirit (John 6:44) and You exercised your free will to say yes to Jesus.

### **1Thessalonians 1:5**

*(KJV) For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.*

*(NIV) because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.*

Power! If there is no power in your church, pray that your people would invite the Holy Ghost in! Remember that there is a form of godliness denying the power of God (as in 2 Timothy 3:5). More than ever, the world needs to see power in our churches and in our lives—more evidence, along with His awesome creation (Psalm 19:1) of God's manifest life-changing power! I'm not talking about human-generated emotional hoopla, but genuine Biblical power to change hearts and lives. This is what Timothy saw in the Thessalonians and reported to Paul.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy had all first experienced Jesus and were forever changed men! Serving the Thessalonians, the congregation got to see God moving and working in these three men. Their character and behaviour told the salvation story before they even spoke it!

### **1Thessalonians 1:6**

*(KJV) And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:*

*(NIV) You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.*

The Thessalonians believers saw that the ones discipling them were trustworthy and real, and Spirit-filled with joy as their strength (see Nehemiah 8:10), and perseverance amidst severe persecution as further evidence of that strength. These believers then were inspired to emulate Paul, Silas, and Timothy. If you want to know what true discipleship looks like—here it is!

### **1Thessalonians 1:7**

*(KJV) So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.*

*(NIV) And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.*

Is your church so on fire for the Lord that everyone all around is inspired by your faith and love and power in the Holy Ghost? Hard question, right? Well, the Thessalonians church was on fire and igniting the faith of believers all over their region. Let's pray hard for revival in 2023!

### **1Thessalonians 1:8**

*(KJV) For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.*

*(NIV) The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it,*

Real movements of God do not require our human help. A slick paint-job will not ultimately redeem an old junker car—not after it constantly breaks down on the highway! This verse is an inspiring reminder that it's not too late for the global church to influence every corner of culture by being holy, real, and faithful to the Word of God. We won't need to market the Christian church if we are sold out to the Head of the Body, the Church—Jesus!

### **1Thessalonians 1:9**

*(KJV) For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;*

*(NIV) for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,*

We don't have to love nor serve the idols and gods of this world system (1 John 2:15-17). We just don't. In fact, our common testimony to the people in our sphere of influence who don't yet know God personally through Jesus Christ is that God irresistibly drew us away from these idols to serve Him alone (see Colossians 1:13). Hallelujah!

### **1Thessalonians 1:10**

*(KJV) And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*

*(NIV) and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.*

Are you ready? There is a wrath of God to come! In today's lesson, the Word of God has begun to show us the kind of church, the kind of people that Jesus is looking forward to greeting on that day when He returns. Those who are expectant are also excited to finally meet their Saviour in person. On the other hand, those who are spiritually negligent, doubting, or dreading His return?

Hmm...

~ Reverend Darren McClelland