



Radical Word Bible Study Podcast

1 Thessalonians

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Opening Comments

- Welcome to episode 1 of the Radical Word Bible Study Podcast.
- Before we get into our study for today, I would like to explain a few things.
- This podcast is primarily about studying the Bible.
- Our format will be verse-by-verse expository study.
- **Expository: intended to explain or describe something.**
- I believe the Bible; God's Word has the power to transform our lives for the good.
- But that is only possible if we understand it and have an idea of how to apply it to our lives. **Hebrews 4:12**

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

- Unless I state otherwise, all Scriptures I reference will be in the New King James Version.
- If you are using another version, that's okay.
- When I display a Scripture, it will be using Logos Bible software.
- If you have questions, ask them in the chat and we will do our best to answer them in the chat.
- Asking questions is one of the keys to good Bible study.
- If you watch this later, ask your questions in the comments, and we will do our best to respond as soon as we can.
- The Radical Word studio is a work in progress.
- If you have any suggestions on how we can make improvements, do not hesitate to let me know.
- I have been asked why I chose to call it the Radical Word Bible Study Podcast.
- I believe the Word of God is radical.

Radical: (especially of change or action) relating to or affecting the fundamental nature of something; far-reaching or thorough.

- When Jesus walked on the earth, He called people to a life that was so different than the accepted norms that people struggled to accept Him.
- In Romans, Paul called Christ-followers to a radical transformation.

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

- God is calling us to be different, to be radical.
- Not radicalized, just different from the rest of the world.
- And the transformation we are striving for has a destination. **Romans 8:29**

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

- Jesus lived a radical life, and He called His followers to follow His example.
- It is my hope that this study will help you to do that.
- Radical Word is also the name of the one-year devotional that I wrote.
- It includes 365 devotionals to go along with your daily Bible reading.
- You can pick them up on Amazon.
- We will take a short break in the middle of the study.
- Let's open with a word of prayer and then we will get into our first study.
- **Pray**

Teaching

- Turn to **Acts 17**
- We are going to be studying verse-by-verse through Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.
- But first a little background.
- Paul visited Thessalonica on his second missionary journey.
- **Acts 17:1-9**
- Paul appears to have only been there for three Sabbaths, three Saturdays, though it is possible that he was there longer.
- He was then run out of town by the religious Jews.

- A church was born out of that visit in about 51 AD.
- However long Paul was there, he was not able to tell them everything Paul felt they needed to know.
- That was one of his reasons for writing.
- Paul would later end up in Athens and once Silas and Timothy joined him there, he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to find out how they were doing.
- Timothy came back with word that they were patiently enduring persecution because of their faith in Christ.
- Timothy expressed a concern they had.
- Some people who had put their faith in Christ had died and they were concerned that they had missed out on the promise of Christ's return.
- Paul will address that concern directly in chapter four.
- Thessalonica, modern-day Salonica, is located on the northernmost point of the Aegean Sea in Greece.
- It was situated on a major Roman road and so had a strong Roman influence.
- It was a prosperous city and therefore was very liberal in its political and religious views.
- There was a significant Jewish population, but the city was primarily Greek and Roman.
- One of the sad truths about the early church is that there was a seemingly constant influence from false teachers, or people who were confused about doctrine.
- One of the reasons we study the Bible like we will in this study is because those influences persist after two thousand years.
- We must always be on our guard against false teachers who are out for some personal gain or from people who have been deceived by the devil.

The better you know the truth the more obvious is the lie!

- The truth is what God says is truth. **Psalm 119:160**

The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.

- One of the keys to growing in faith is to believe that every word of God's Word is true.

- If you don't trust that all of it is true, how can you trust that any of it is true?
- Every word of the Bible is true.
- That includes the stuff you don't understand or like.
- One of the lies that was circulating at the time Paul wrote this is that the Second Coming had already happened.
- That is why the Thessalonians were worried about their loved ones who died.
- They didn't know what that meant for them.
- One of the signs of false doctrine or false teachers is the fruit they produce.
- Because of the false doctrine that the Second Coming had already happened there was chaos and confusion.
- God is not a God of chaos and confusion.
- The truth when taught properly will bear fruit of comfort or conviction.
- Turn to **1 Thessalonians 1**
- Paul is writing to comfort the Christ-followers in Thessalonica.
- Paul opens this letter in a familiar way.
- **1 Thessalonians 1:1**
- Paul does not reference his apostolic status in this introduction.
- It could be this meant there was no resistance to his authority in the Thessalonian church.
- Paul introduces himself with Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy.
- Both men were important in Paul's missionary work.
- Paul introduces himself as being equal with Silvanus and Timothy.
- This reminds us that the church is not meant to be a hierarchical system.
- We are all equals in Christ. **Galatians 3:28**
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
- There are different roles in the church, some of which should be given a measure of respect, but no one is better or higher than anyone else, and no one is lower or less than anyone else.
- Paul addresses the letter to the 'church' of the Thessalonians.

- The Greek word we translate as church is *ekklēsia*.
- It was a common word used to describe any group of people called out for a specific reason.
- In and of itself, it does not mean church.
- The local bowling league might be called an *ekklēsia*.
- What makes the translation ‘church’ appropriate is the phrase, ‘...in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...’
- There are lots of organizations out there that call themselves churches that are not.
- Unless they have God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, they are no more a church than the local bowling league.
- Paul uses a common greeting in his letters.
- Grace is the unmerited favor of God.
- God chose to show you kindness and His goodness.
- It is unmerited in that there is nothing in you that merited God showing you kindness or love.
- Every reason why God gives you His grace is found in Him alone.
- In addition to grace, Paul reminds them of the peace of God.
- Peace is an expression of God’s grace.
- Peace is often defined as the absence of conflict.
- Paul is writing to a church experiencing great persecution, so they are absolutely not free of conflict.
- The peace Paul is referring to is peace with God.
- Before Christ, we were enemies of God.
- You may not have been actively antagonistic toward God, but if you were not one of His children through faith in Christ, then you were His enemy.
- Placing our faith in Christ and His work on the cross washes away our sin and makes us children of God rather than enemies. **Ephesians 2:14-18**

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

- Enmity: the state or feeling of being actively opposed or hostile to someone or something.
- Paul opens the letter reminding them of the grace and peace we have through faith.
- Paul then expresses his heart for the people of Thessalonica.
- **1 Thessalonians 1:2**
- You can't help but feel Paul's love for the people of this young church.
- Even though Paul was called to take the gospel places where His name had not been heard, he still had the heart of a pastor.
- I have been the pastor of CCFV for over twenty years
- I love the people of the church.
- Every time I go away, I want to get back to them as soon as possible.
- One of the ways you know someone loves you is they are praying for you.
- And they are praying for the things they know about you.

• **1 Thessalonians 1:3**

- The Thessalonians were true Christ-followers, which Paul said is proven by the fruit of their lives.
- Let's pause for a moment as look at a term I will use frequently – Christ-follower.
- What I am about to say may be controversial to some.
- You should probably get used to that, I will say what I believe is true and right, and not everyone is going to agree with me.
- If you disagree with something I say, let me know.
- If you can, you let me know why you disagree, and what verses you use to back up your position.
- I'll make this statement and then explain it.

All Christ-followers are Christians, but not all Christians are Christ-followers.

- Paul said something in Romans to the Jews who thought they were okay with God simply because they were Jews. **Romans 2:28-29**

For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but *he is a Jew who is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is*

that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

- There are people who claim to be Christians who are making little or no effort to be like Christ.
- There are even more people who claim to be Christian based on some criteria other than the ones the Scriptures lay out.
- A Christ-follower is committed to being like Christ.
- They are doing it imperfectly, just like all the rest of us are, but they have set their heart on being like Christ.
- A study like this one is best suited for Christ-followers or for those who want to be a Christ-follower.
- A significant portion of the church today are like the Laodicean church in Revelation – Jesus is going to spew them out of His mouth.
- And that includes a lot of pastors and ministry leaders.
- One trait is common to most of them, a casual or non-existent relationship with the Word of God.
- Don't get me wrong, I am not saying that we have it all together and are somehow better than them.
- But I am saying that if you don't love God's Word, you don't really love God!
- Okay, back to our text.
- If you are a true believer in Christ, it will show up in your life.
- Paul lists three traits that should be evident in every believer's life: faith, love, and hope.
- Paul used these same three traits to tell the church in Corinth a similar thing. **1 Corinthians 13:13**

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

- To abide is to keep on doing, or continue in.
- As Christ-followers, we don't just do those things at church, they should be the character of our lives.
- But Paul doesn't just say faith, love, and hope.
- When Paul prays with the others with him, he remembers their works of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope.
- The first one – Work of Faith.
- Faith is not just a mystical thing inside you.

- True faith does something. **James 2:17**

Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

- There is no such thing as private faith.
- The only way your faith can be proven as real is if other people can see it at work.
- And if it is not working, it is dead, worthless, and meaningless.
- Paul says in Ephesians works of faith were hard-wired into us when God made us. **Ephesians 2:10**

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

- We were made in the image of God. God is always working.
- As image-bearers of God, we should be doing the good works God made us for and appointed us to do.
- Where faith comes in is discovering what the good works God made you for and then believing God will get them done through you.
- Works of faith are the good works God does through you by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- There is a supernatural component to the good works of faith.
- This is one of the things that scares some people away from doing works of faith.
- They don't believe the Holy Spirit will show up and do something supernatural or they are afraid that He will, and they are afraid of what He might do through them.
- Or some are afraid of how others might react to them doing works of faith.
- All those reasons are signs of faithlessness and spiritual weakness.
- The Bible says repeatedly, do not be afraid, God is with you.
- Christ-followers know the Holy Spirit is dwelling in them and are seeking to cooperate with Him in their lives to see God's will done on this earth.
- That's exciting to me.
- True Christ-followers are actively involved in Holy Spirit empowered works of faith.
- The second characteristic that Paul calls out is Labor of Love.
- Google defines a labor of love as...

Labor of love: a piece of hard work that you do because you enjoy it and not because you will receive money or praise for it, or because you need to do it.

- That is a secular, worldly definition.
- Paul uses the Greek word agapes which describes an others-focused kind of love.
- Christian love is love that seeks the best interest of others even if it is at our own expense.
- Christian love seeks no reward or benefit.
- Christian love operates outside of feelings and sometimes despite feelings.
- God doesn't command us to feel love toward others; He commands us to acts of love to others.
- Paul talked about the motivation for this kind of love **Philippians 2:3**
Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

- A better definition of agape love is...

Agape love: unconditionally acting in the best interest of the other person.

- I don't know about you, but that is a convicting definition.
- I don't believe that I always love like this – I need to be better.
- And Paul calls this kind of love a labor = toil or work to weariness or exhaustion.
- Just like faith, real Christian love is manifested through our actions.
- We can say we love someone, but that is meaningless unless they see our love in what we do for them.
- That means we are doing it even when there is no benefit for us.
- That means loving even when no one cares or responds or appreciates.
- That also means loving them the right way – God's way.
- We can't love people they want to be loved.
- My children, when they were young, wanted me to express my love to them by giving them sweets and never making them do chores.
- But I knew that I wouldn't actually be loving them if I did that.
- We see a modern illustration of this in our culture.
- There are people who are deluded into believing they are a gender other than the one God gave them.
- They want us to agree with their delusion and acknowledge their self-identification.

- The problem is that it is not true, we don't get to tell God He made a mistake and then make everyone around us agree with our delusion.
 - True agape love cannot be expressed in a lie.
 - Paul spoke about that in his letter to the **Ephesians 4:14-15**
...we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ...
 - Even though Paul had not been around these new believers for very long they appear to have embraced the faith with great fervor.
 - They were doing the work of faith, letting the Holy Spirit move in them.
 - They were committed to laboring at love.
 - The third thing Paul mentions is Patience of Hope.
 - When Timothy reported to Paul the state of the believers in Thessalonica, he was informed about the persecution they were enduring.
 - Here in the US, we rarely encounter any real persecution.
 - There are places around the world where it is illegal and dangerous to confess faith in Christ Jesus.
 - Christians are being killed every day and churches are being burned regularly.
 - Don't forget to pray for the persecuted church around the world.
 - And praise God that He has chosen to protect you from the wicked attacks of the Enemy.
 - The Thessalonians were being patient in the face of persecution and hardship.
- Patient: bearing provocation, annoyance, misfortune, delay, hardship, pain, etc., with fortitude and calm and without complaint, anger, or the like.**
- Just going through something doesn't mean you are being patient.
 - It is how you go through it.
 - There is another word that is used in the Bible that gives us a better idea of how we are to do this. **2 Peter 3:9**
The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.
 - God is longsuffering regarding people's sin.

- He puts up with it and He continues to love and pour out His grace while He waits for them to repent.
- One of the ways I express patience is in the phrase, ‘It is what it is!’
- If a circumstance comes into my life that I have no control over, I accept it as reality.
- I control what I can, my emotions, attitudes, and behaviors.
- I don’t always do that perfectly, but by faith I am getting better at it.
- In this life we will go through difficult circumstances – Jesus said so
John 16:33

In the world you will have tribulation...

- The Thessalonians were in the midst of serious tribulations and Paul commended them for their patience in those hard times.
- He also commented on the character of their patience – patience of hope.
- Hope is what allowed them to be patient in their tribulations.
- If your hope is in this world, you have nothing to hope in.
- But if your hope is in Christ. **John 16:33**

In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

- Nothing this world can throw at you is bigger than Jesus.
- Jesus endured great suffering on our behalf.
- He trusted in His Father in Heaven.
- He knew the Father’s love and care would carry Him through the darkest of times and it did.
- Jesus is now the source of our hope
- If we put our hope in Him, we can endure until He does something.

Romans 5:5

Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

- As our faith grows so does our confidence that God’s love and promises can keep us through the darkest days of our lives.
- Paul commended this young church for works of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope.
- And if we want to be people that knows the smile of God, we should be striving for this same description.

- Paul will end this chapter by saying that they are known as people who are waiting for Jesus to come back.
- People have been waiting for Jesus to come since the day He ascended back to heaven.
- When is He coming back.
- The best answer I can give you is soon.
- As Christ-followers, we live in the hope that Jesus could return at any moment, but we also accept that He might not return in our lifetimes.
- How then should we live?
- We should be doing works of faith, labors of love, and being patient in hope.
- Jesus is coming soon, and this should fill us with great hope.
- No matter whether the circumstances of my life are great or terrible, I can choose to live this day doing works of faith.
- Whether your life is amazing or filled with discouragement, you can choose to do labors of love.
- Whether your life is blessed beyond words, or it is another day of pain and suffering, you can choose to endure one more day in the blessed hope of Jesus.
- And all of this is only possible ‘in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father’.
- Faith, love, and hope are all choices we make today.
- Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, only today matters.
- Only today can you choose to live a life that brings a smile to the face of God.
- And one of the things I have learned is that when I know that God is smiling down upon my life, I smile, I know joy and peace, even when things in my life are not joyous or peaceful.
- All Christians will someday end up in heaven.
- And the Bible teaches that we ought to be getting ready for that.
- We call the process on getting ready for heaven – sanctification.
- This is the process God uses to shape us into the image of Christ.
- If you are a Christian, you should always be getting ready for heaven.
- Jesus promised to come and get us. **John 14:1-3**

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

- But Jesus is not coming back for everyone. **John 14:6**

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

- Only those who have accepted what Jesus did for them on the cross are going to heaven.
 - Paul had taught this to the church in Thessalonica.
 - But they were confused why it hadn't happened yet.
 - This letter is to encourage them and instruct them in what they should do while they wait.
 - In the next verse we will look at a doctrine that there is a fair amount of disagreement about.
 - I'm not going to get into all the nuances of this disagreement.
 - I taught a message recently out of the book of Romans that lays out my views on it.
 - I will post a link in the description for this study.
 - If you disagree with my view, that's okay, just don't be disagreeable.
 - **1 Thessalonians 1:4**
 - Paul spent a fairly short period of time with this young church.
 - But he gets a report that they are doing very well, and Paul is thankful.
 - As a parent I understand this – blesses me and I am thankful when I hear that my children are doing well.
 - One of the things that Paul is thankful for is 'your election by God'.
 - 'election' = 'chosen' – God chose you for heaven.
 - If you are a Christian, it is because God chose you. **John 15:16**
- You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.
- The proof that God chose them is their work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope.
 - There was evidence of God's choice.
 - Saying: If you were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough proof to convict you?
 - If we truly are Christians, there should be some evidence.

- God expects that evidence because it serves a purpose for Him.
- **1 Thessalonians 1:5**
- Paul and his friends brought the gospel to Thessalonica.
- Not just the words, but through their lives.
- The gospel is not just what we say to tell people about our hope in Christ.
- If your life doesn't look like the things you say, people will not be convinced.
- Why would someone believe the Word of God has the power to transform their life if your life is not being changed by the Word?
- One of the common complaints of unbelievers about the church is that it is full of hypocrites – people who say one thing and then do the opposite.
- First, that is patently not true.
- Of course, there are hypocrites in every church, and that is a good thing.
- Where else will they learn how to not be a hypocrite.
- Most Christ-followers are trying to be better.
- They aren't perfect because there is no such thing as a perfect human.
- At least not based on God's definition of perfection, which is the only one that matters.
- One of the greatest proofs of your election by God is your life changing to be more like Christ's every day.
- The Thessalonians could see the truth of what Paul and his companions were saying in the way they lived their lives.
- One of the downsides of social media is the whole world can see how you live your life.
- Christ-followers should be so careful about the things they are posting on social media.
- Every time you post or comment on a post, you should ask yourself if it is likely to draw people to Christ or push them away from Him.
- Social media can be a powerful tool for the gospel, but it is also a powerful tool for the enemy of our soul. Be careful.

- Those memes that you think are funny, make not make you look like Christ.
- It might be best just to be amused and moved on without liking, sharing, or commenting.
- That reminds me, don't forget to subscribe, like, share, and comment on this video.
- It will help us get more views.
- We want as many people as possible to benefit from the work God is doing here.
- Not only did Paul and his companion's life prove the truth of their message, but the Holy Spirit also confirmed it as well.
- ... but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit...
- The Holy Spirit proved that the message they shared was true through powerful displays.
- It doesn't tell us what those displays were, but Paul had worked miracles lots of times in the Bible. **Acts 19:11-12**

Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹²so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.

- God is supernatural.
- That means He operates in the natural world in ways that are not natural.
- The resurrection of Christ is one of the greatest of those supernatural events.
- Every time someone is saved, a supernatural event has taken place.

Colossians 1:13-14

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

- Only God's supernatural power could accomplish that.
- The gospel came in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and 'in much assurance' = they were absolutely convinced.
- Assurance is an expression of your faith.
- The better we know God's Word, the more confident we become when we share God's Word with others.
- This is not about being arrogant in the way we present what we know.

- The world will always try to convince you that your faith is not real.
- The world doesn't know what real faith is, just ignore them and live like your faith is real, because it is.
- Paul concludes this verse with 'you know what kind of men we were'.
- The example of Paul's life proved that the words he spoke were true.
- Nothing harms the spread of the gospel more than Christians saying one thing and then living like it is not true.
- Saying you trust God with your whole life is great, but if you freak out when things don't go the way you want says the very opposite thing.
- The Thessalonians responded to the gospel in a way that all pastors wish all people would.
- **1 Thessalonians 1:6-7**
- The church saw the way Paul lived and then they decided to follow his example.
- We all should examine our lives – are our lives worth following.
- As people look at your life, can they say that you are following Jesus?
- Paul lived that way – could boldly challenge people. **1 Corinthians 11:1**

Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.

- Paul wasn't being arrogant.
 - He wasn't saying that he was doing it perfectly.
 - Most humans learn by seeing and following an example.
 - Being a Christ-follower is not natural.
 - We have the Holy Spirit living in us and we have the Word of God to instruct us.
 - Maybe it is just me but sometimes I need help with some of the nuances of the spiritual life of following Christ. **Philippians 4:6-7**
- Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**
- I might not be at peace and not understand why until someone helps me see that my response to some circumstance of life is anxiety.
 - Many Christ-followers are missing the breakthrough they are longing for because they won't humble themselves and ask for help.
 - Is your life worthy of imitation?

- If the people around you imitate your life, will they become more like Jesus, or will they just be more like you?
- Parents need to pay particular attention to this.
- Do you want your children to grow up to be like you or like Jesus?
- Your actions will have more impact on them than your words.
- The Thessalonian church ‘received the word’.
- That means more than just hearing it – means they accepted it as truth and applied it to their lives.
- Remember, the Word of God is true.
- Paul and his companions came to the people of Thessalonica and told them they were speaking on behalf of God.
- Anyone can say that, but Paul and his companions proved it with the example of their lives and the power of the Holy Spirit working in them and through them.
- I believe God is still speaking to people through ministers, pastors, and preachers.
- Every time we sit down to listen to someone speak from God’s Word, we should expect to hear from God, the Holy Spirit.
- We should be willing to accept what they say as truth.
- Notice that I said we should be willing to accept it as truth.
- We must be discerning.
- There are still false teachers seeking to prey upon the weak and undiscerning.
- Paul then commended them because it wasn’t easy for them to accept what Paul was saying.
- It came at a price ‘in much affliction’.
- Thessalonica is a Greek city but was part of the Roman Empire.
- That meant that they practiced ‘Emperor Worship’.
- Caesar had declared himself to be a god – demanded worship.
- To decline would mean persecution – maybe even death.
- A true witness of Christ is a good example when it is easy and when it is hard.
- True Christ-followers must be willing to accept, believe, and obey God’s Word even if it sets them up against the world around them.

- Out God is able to keep us through whatever might come just as He did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is the fiery furnace.
- And even though it was hard, they had the ‘joy of the Holy Spirit’.
- When God is real in our lives and hearts there is a mysterious thing that happens.
- The affliction, trials, and tribulations of this life don’t affect us like they used to.
- I know that God chose me, I know I am going to heaven, I know Jesus is coming to get me someday.
- And the more convinced I am of those things, the less the difficult things of life take my joy away.
- It doesn’t mean I am happy about the tribulations or enjoy suffering, I’m just focused on what comes after those things pass.
- My hope is not in this world, it is in God, it is in heaven.
- And if I live like I believe that, people notice – ‘you became examples’.
- Others can see how to live the same way
- **1 Thessalonians 1:8**
- Sometimes the things of this life are hard.
- Things were hard for the Christians in Thessalonica.
- But they had ‘faith toward God’ – they believed God and their lives proved it, even showing real joy in the midst of the difficulties.
- When life gets hard, it is okay to say that it is hard, but then faith will say that God is still in heaven and still loves you and is with you.
- And no matter how low my troubles might bring me, praising God always lifts me up.
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- **July 3, 2025**
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- The reputation of the church of the Thessalonians was getting around.
- **1 Thessalonians 1:9-10**

- The people around Thessalonica saw three things that impressed them and the believers in Thessalonica.
- First **Turned to God from Idols.**
- The church in Thessalonica was surrounded by idol worship.
- To get along in that culture you had to go along with the idol worship.
- It was woven into every facet of the culture.
- People could see that these people were different than the world around them - they had changed.
- The gospel of God has the power to change lives. **Romans 8:29**
For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.
- When your life starts to change people notice.
- As modern westerners we don't relate to idols the way people of Paul's time did.
- Temples, priests, and icons were everywhere.
- People often had little shrines in their homes to their gods.
- They believed these gods were real and they trusted in them for help in their lives.
- There are still places in the world where idol worship is common.
- Places like Indonesia, especially Bali, idols are everywhere and people make regular daily offerings to them.
- Those gods are false and can do nothing for them.
- Not only that, but you also become like what you worship. 1

Corinthians 10:19-20

What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? ²⁰ Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.

- We worship the One True God and so are striving to be more like Him as manifested in His Son Christ Jesus.
- It is not enough just to turn away from false gods or idols.
- You must also turn to something.
- Often people turn away from one sin and ultimately move toward another one.
- When we turn away from something that has had a strong influence in our lives we must turn to God, we replace that idol with the Living God.

- The second thing the Thessalonians did was turn to **Serve the Living and True God.**
- People could see that the Thessalonians were committed to serving God.
- One of the changes that people will notice is life becomes less and less about you.
- And more and more about others – pleasing God, serving Him.
- One of my desires is that when it comes my time to leave this world that I will be remembered as a man who loved God, His Word, and His people.
- What does it mean to serve God?
- It is about getting to know Him and determining to do those things that He commands and that bring Him glory.
- Jesus is our example of this – God the Son. **Mark 10:45**
For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.
- The Thessalonians served God in a way that showed they believed in a true and living God.
- Every person is going to approach this differently.
- That is because He made us for the good works He prepared for us to do.
- The good works I do are different than the good works He has prepared for you.
- It is not hard to figure out what those good works are but it might take a little time.
- The best way to start is to find someone who is serving God and come alongside them to help.
- The church is a great place to start that process.
- Just find a good Bible-teaching church and look for a way you can help.
- Most pastors would be overjoyed to have someone come and ask them if they can serve somewhere.
- It doesn't have to be in the church, just find a place to serve and be faithful.

- The Holy Spirit will work to get you into just the right place and doing those good works God prepared for you to do.
- Another thing that was evident to the people around the Thessalonian church was their attitude about the future.
- They had turned from idols to the living and true God, following the example of Paul and his companions, and were doing the work of faith, the labor of love, and were patient in hope as they **Wait for His Son from Heaven.**

- While Jesus was with His disciples, He told them He was going away.
John 14:1-3

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

- When Jesus ascended back to heaven after the resurrection, the disciples stood there staring into the sky.
- An angel had to tell them; Jesus will come again.
- When we look at the Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament, we can see God had always planned on two advents of the Messiah/Savior.
- In the first advent the Messiah came as the Suffering Servant who would give His life as a ransom for lost sinners.
- The Old Testament also teaches us about the Messiah who would come as a conquering King who overthrew all His enemies.
- The Jews of Jesus' time were waiting for that second advent of the Messiah.
- That was the Savior they wanted.
- When Jesus came as the Suffering Servant, they were offended and rejected Him.
- To this day, Jews are offended at the thought that their Messiah would die on a cross, that is not the Messiah they want.
- Jesus is going to come back.
- We don't know when, but He is coming back.
- When He comes back, it will be with a sword to execute judgment upon the wicked, God-hating, Christ-rejecting people of the world.
- As Christ-followers, we have no fear of the judgment to come.

- Jesus took our judgment to the cross. **Colossians 2:13-14**
And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.
- Everything that made you worthy of the wrath God will pour out on this world was nailed to the cross with Jesus.
- One of the glorious promises of our faith is that Jesus will deliver us from the wrath to come.
- Once we get to chapter four, we will look at the mechanism He will use to rescue us from the wrath of God.
- While we wait for that glorious day, let us show the world our faith through works of faith, labors of love, and patience grounded in our hope in God and Christ Jesus.
- **Pray**