



WEEK II

I THESSALONIANS 1

DAY 1 - MONDAY

1 Thessalonians 1:1-7, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Galatians 5:5-6

REFLECTION: Faith, hope, and love are the active characteristics of a life lived in genuine gratitude for the gospel. How can you begin to live a life of thankfulness by sharing your faith, hope, and love?

THANKFULNESS

Thanksgiving is a practice that is far too foreign to us today. Typically when we think of the posture of gratitude, it's wrapped around a holiday celebrated once a year when we gorge ourselves on delicious food and late-night shopping indulgences on Black Friday. As people, as Christians even, we struggle to live lives of thanksgiving. Paul demonstrates the act of thankfulness as part of the Christian life in almost every letter he writes to the early churches.

Every one of Paul's epistles, minus Galatians, opens with thanksgiving. This was a custom of introduction, but more specifically, this was also the posture of Paul's heart. He felt grateful for the impact the gospel message had on these churches, cities, and provinces. This was the mark of his gratitude towards the Thessalonians.

Paul points to three things he is specifically thankful for in the people of Thessalonica: the faith of the Thessalonians (faithful work), the love they share (loving deeds), and the hope they carry daily (enduring hope). These three things define Christian life lived in gratitude. Paul feels gratitude for the Thessalonians because of their defining Christian actions and characteristics- their faith, love, and hope.

"Faith, hope, and love" is not just a catchy motto or a nice home decoration. Faith, hope, and love are the active characteristics of a life lived in genuine gratitude for the gospel. As Christ followers, these characteristics of faith, hope, and love should be evident in our lives. Just as Paul is doing in Thessalonica, we should be thankful and eager to acknowledge the characteristics of faith, hope, and love in those around us too.

DAY 2 - TUESDAY

1 Thessalonians 1:1-7, John 14:15-26

REFLECTION: How often do you think about the Holy Spirit?

What do you think it would look like to invite the Holy Spirit into your life throughout your day?

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The truth of the Word, the conviction with which we speak it, and the power of its impact on others all come from the Holy Spirit. It is he who brings light to our minds, so that we put our message together with integrity and clarity. It is he whose inward witness assures us of its truth, so that we preach it with conviction. And it is he who carries it home with power, so that the hearers respond to it in penitence, faith and obedience. As the 1974 Lausanne Covenant put it, 'without his witness ours is futile...The same Spirit who gave power to those who preached the gospel gave joy to those who received it. He was working at both ends, so to speak, in the speakers and in the hearers. And it is not surprising to read of the converts' joy, for joy is a fruit of the Spirit. Wherever the gospel goes and people respond, there is joy - joy in heaven among the angels over sinners repenting, as Jesus said, and joy on earth among the people of God. This pattern of outward opposition and inward joy has often been repeated in the long history of the church.

by John R. W. Stott - *The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians*

DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY

I 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, Romans 8:35-39, I Peter 4:12-14

REFLECTION: What does it mean to share in Christ's Suffering? How can we best enter into the suffering of our brothers and sisters in Christ?

SHARING IN SUFFERING

Henri Nouwen once said,

"When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand."

Simply put, real friends are the ones who stick with you through the tough stuff. Instead of pontificating about the philosophical realities you're facing, they're the ones who enter the mess with you. They walk with you through the challenges and the painful moments, regardless of whether or not you've reached resolution, healing, or victory. The apostle Peter tells us we should not be surprised when affliction comes our way. "Instead," we ought to "rejoice as [we] share in the sufferings of Christ, so that [we] may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:13). Peter is primarily talking about our individual sharing of Christ's sufferings with Him. However, there is another layer here; we are to rejoice in sharing Christ's sufferings with one another. For Peter knew that shared suffering and perseverance would build not only a deeper connection with Christ, but also a more tightly knit community within the body of Christ.

Perhaps part of Paul's profound appreciation for the church at Thessalonica stemmed from the fact that they had stuck with him and supported him through thick and thin, "in spite of severe persecution" (1 Thessalonians 1:6). Yet they had not grown weary in doing good, caring for those in need, or preaching "the word of the Lord," which "rang out from [them]" through faith (v.8).

As members of the Body of Christ, we are meant to share in Christ's suffering. This often means that we will endure hardship and resistance for the sake of His name and His gospel. This also means we are called to lend a "warm and tender hand" to our friends and other members of the Body. When we lend our time, our treasures, and our talents to those in need—perhaps at the expense of our own comfort and security—we glorify God and participate in His kingdom work. Instead of fearing the fiery trials, we should aspire to be the kind of local church Paul would thank God for in this present age: empowered by the Holy Spirit to faithfully endure with one another and persevere against that which opposes God's kingdom. That's how we become a cause for thanks in tumultuous and painful times.

By Andrew Stoddard - *He Reads Truth 1 & 2 Thessalonians Reading Plan*

DAY 4 - THURSDAY

1 Thessalonians 1:6-10, John 13:15, Matthew 5:16

REFLECTION: Who is a follower of Christ that you admire? Why?

How can you be a Christ-follower that others admire in your daily life?

AN EXAMPLE TO ALL

Paul celebrates the Christians in Thessalonica because their example of living for Jesus has impacted other believers, pagans and Jewish people in the city, as well as people in the greater Macedonia region. A faith lived out is an example of something unique, desirable, and attainable to the world around us.

David Guzik expresses the impact of living out your faith as an example for others like this in his 1 Thessalonians commentary:

As Christians, we always need others who will show us how to follow Jesus Christ, beyond the need of hearing about how to follow Him...The good work the Lord did among the Thessalonians became known all over the region, and everyone talked about the changes. In a cosmopolitan trading city like Thessalonica, the good news could sound forth in every place to all the earth.

The power of example is one we have all been impacted by. We have all had someone who has demonstrated what it looks like to follow Jesus. We need to ask ourselves, are we that example for those around us? How might our example impact those around us, including those who are hard to love?

DAY 5 - FRIDAY

1 Thessalonians 1:8-10, Romans 1:8, Philippians 3:17-20, Titus 2:11-14

REFLECTION: What does it mean to have a faith that is contagious? Why is it important for your faith to be contagious?

CONTAGIOUS CHRISTIANS

1 Thessalonians 1:8-10 clearly shows how the message of Jesus was spreading in Thessalonica. The faith of those in this church was not spread by their words, but by these three things:

1. How they welcomed others
2. How they turned from idols to serve God
3. How they looked forward to the second coming of Jesus

In a culture where it was common to worship many gods, it would have been noticeable to others if they showed allegiance to just one God as their authority.

The hope the believers had in the expectation of Christ's return was obvious. This hope gave them an urgency to serve and be about the Lord's work in their community, making a noticeable difference to the unbelievers around them. This hope of Christ's return was also helpful to the Thessalonians as they endured trials. They could cling to the fact their suffering would have an end date and it brought confidence that the Lord would eventually bring about redemption and restoration to the world.

In his book *Contagious Christianity*, Charles Swindoll shares this sentiment about what Paul was seeing and hearing, "Still echoing down the canyons and through the streets was the word of the Lord spoken by the Thessalonian believers. Their Christianity was contagious and spreading faster than Paul can travel." Swindoll goes on to say that their lives had two purposes: "to serve a living and true God" and "to wait for His Son from Heaven..." which led them to have "responsibility in the present yet readiness for the future." He shares that there is a tendency for us, as humans, to anticipate the Lord's return so much that we neglect our responsibilities in the present or we become so involved with our present existence that we neglect to remember the future glory of Christ's return. The Thessalonians are an example of living with a good balance of these two things.

How can you live with "responsibility in the present yet readiness for the future"?

DAY 6 - SATURDAY

Reflection Day

1 Thessalonians 1

REFLECTION QUESTIONS & NOTES:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is one truth you learned this week that you want to share?
- What do you think might need to change in your life in order for you to care for those around you the way that Paul cares for the Thessalonians?
- How can you begin to internalize and live out what you read and learned in this week's study?

DAY 7 - SUNDAY

Rest Day

*Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading that you missed.
Use the extra space on this page to journal, write down questions, thoughts, or ideas.*