

Today continue study of the 1<sup>st</sup> of the 4 major sections of 1 Thess, 1:2-10.

☞ Prayer report.

V 2, statement of & when.

➤ We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers

☞ As noted, basically in 3-10, Paul & team note 4 reasons for giving thx

Few wks ago, 1<sup>st</sup> reason.

➤ The faith of the Thess. expressed itself in wks, their love for others prompted them to action on their behalf, & they tenaciously endured opposition & hostility

Last time, 4-5.

➤ v 4 (NLT), 2<sup>nd</sup> reason.

▷ We know, dear brothers and sisters, that God loves you and has chosen you to be his own people.

➤ Because Paul & team knew the Thess believers were gen. part of people/family of God.

➤ Expansion, 5a (NCCS).

▷ How knew the Thess believers were gen. part of people/family of God.

➤ Because our good news did not come to you as a message only, but it also came in a powerful way through the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. 1/12

▷ I.e., these Thessalonians responded positively ~ to the powerful gospel that came to them via the Holy Spirit.

‣ The gospel is heavily loaded with the power of the Holy Spirit.

‣ He works through the message to open a person's heart & mind to the truth of the gospel, to convict them of sin, and then regenerate those who respond positively to the gospel.

▷ The gospel came in a powerful way through the Holy Spirit and deep conviction.

‣ To be completely certain of the truth of something. ⇨ Full assurance, certainty.

→ Means, that the Holy Spirit gave them full assurance that what the missionary team said was true.

‣ ¶ comment, 5b.

▷ (CSB) You know how we lived among you for your benefit.

‣ Paul was perhaps simply implying that there is a definite connection between our lifestyle & our evangelism. ⇨ 1 Pet. 2:12.

▷ For their benefit . . . .

Today, vv 6-7.

‣ Break it down.

‣ Includes 3<sup>rd</sup> reason, 6a, And you became imitators of us and of the Lord. 2/12

► Plus includes 3-fold expansion, 6b, 6c, 7.

▷ 6b, cause of imitation.

► For you received the word

▷ 6c notes their acceptance of the message accompanied by a 2-fold seemingly paradoxical effect

► For you received the word in much affliction [external], with the joy of the Holy Spirit [internal]

▷ And 7 notes widespread result of reception, imitation, & joyful perseverance in persecution.

► (CSB) As a result, you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

Ok, let's dig in, Vv 6-7 today.

6a, 3<sup>rd</sup> reason for thanks.

After they accepted the gospel, they became imitators of Paul & his team & of Jesus.

► This may sound oddly self righteous and even conceited.

▷ However, it should be remembered that the preachers of that day could not exhort their hearers as we might do, "Don't copy us, copy Christ."

▷ These new believers had no firsthand knowledge of Jesus' earthly life & ministry.

▷ And the NT was just being written. 3/12

▷Note as well, to begin with, these new believers had no Christian examples to follow other than Paul and his colleagues.

>In time, they found other models and became imitators of the churches in Judea (cf. 2:14).

►Furthermore, 1 Cor. gives us the fuller picture of what Paul meant here.

▷1 Cor. 11:1, *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*

▷Paul calls on the Corinthian believers to imitate him.

▷But, in the very act of saying this he points them away from himself.

>The reason they should imitate him is that he imitates Christ.

→His example points them to the Saviour.

►Back to Thessalonians.

▷Paul and his team imitated Jesus.

▷Their example pointed these new believers to the Savior.

▷Their lives provided the model of a Christ-like life for those who had no firsthand knowledge of Jesus.

▷We could probably understand Paul as saying here, *You became imitators of us ~ and therefore of the Lord.* 4/12

➤ And 1<sup>st</sup> & foremost, Jesus is the one believers are to imitate.

▷ Eph. 5:1, *Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children.*

▷ And this means, ~ my . . . , our lives are to be models of a Christ-like life for those who have faulty or no firsthand knowledge of Jesus.

▷ Once again see lifestyle + evangelism.

Paul & his colleagues rejoiced in these believers' imitation of Jesus no doubt because it was further evidence that the gospel had taken root in their hearts.

➤ They also no doubt thanked God because their imitation of Jesus showed great spiritual growth on the part of these new believers.

➤ A Christ-like lifestyle is evidence of genuine salvation and of spiritual growth.

*Moving on, as noted, vv 6b, 6c, & 7 expansion of this 3<sup>rd</sup> reason in 6a.*

In this expansion Paul notes 3 things.

➤ 1<sup>st</sup>, vs 6b, notes the cause of their imitation = their acceptance of the gospel.

➤ 2<sup>nd</sup>, in vs 6c, he indicates acceptance of the message accompanied by a 2-fold seemingly paradoxical effect

➤ And 3<sup>rd</sup>, in vs 7, notes widespread result of reception, imitation, & joyful perseverance in persecution.

☞ Turn the spotlight on each point. 5/12

1<sup>st</sup>, Vs 6b, reception of the gospel was the cause of their becoming imitators.

TPID, the Thessalonians' life of imitation arose out of their personal acceptance of the gospel.

➤ Paul indicates this causal relationship by immediately adding for you received the word.

➤ Translated: for you welcomed the message.

➤ I.e., they accepted the gospel preaching and converted to Christianity.

▷ And having welcomed the gospel into their lives, the Thessalonians began to live in a Christ-like manner.

Once again, we are confronted by this truth.

➤ Genuine conversion to Christ, gives rise to tangible evidence.

➤ TPID, genuine Christian faith always displays the tangible evidence of its reality.

▷ It may start out small, when a person is first saved.

⇒ But as a genuine Christian matures spiritually, tangible evidence piles up.

Ok, to recap.

➤ Paul & his colleagues thanked God because these believers became imitators of them & Jesus.

➤ Then 3-fold expansion. 6/12

▷1<sup>st</sup>, we saw that he noted that their reception of the gospel was the cause of their becoming imitators.

▷Now let's turn to the 2<sup>nd</sup> note of his expansion.

The Thess. acceptance of the gospel accompanied by a 2-fold seemingly paradoxical effect, 6c.

<sup>6a</sup> And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, <sup>6b</sup> for you received the word <sup>6c</sup> in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, <sup>7</sup> so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

An external & an internal effect.

▷#1, external, persecution. ☞ & #2, internal, the joy of the Holy Spirit.

▷Paradoxical. ☞ But true.

1<sup>st</sup>, ~ external effect.

▷Much affliction indicates severe persecution.

▷As both Jesus and Paul had experienced severe opposition and rejection, so too had the Thess.

▷In fact, this was characteristic of the original evangelization of these believers.

▷2:2 (CSB), ~ On the contrary, after we had previously suffered and were treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, we were emboldened by our God to speak the gospel of God to you in spite of great opposition. 7/12

▷ The violent and hostile response of hostile unbelievers to the success of the gospel in Thessalonica was both immediate and severe.

▷ Paul & his team set the record straight right at start of their Christian lives.

⇒ That persecution is to be expected.    ☞ 3:2-4 . . . .

➤ Severe opposition should not come as a shock to any believers.

➤ In addition to Thessalonians, the likelihood of such suffering taught throughout NT.

▷ Acts 14:21-22, When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

▷ Jn. 15:20a, ~ Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

▷ 1 Pet. 4:12, ~ Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

⇒ The implication here is that fiery trials in our lives should be expected, not treated as something out of the ordinary.

➤ Persecution may vary in degree and take different forms in different countries and in different times.

▷ But the basic hostility of the world and all the forces of evil toward Christians remains unchanged.

▷ We need to cement this into our heads. 8/12



▷Believers will suffer because the world and all the forces of evil are hostile to the kingdom of God.

Ok, the 1<sup>st</sup> & external effect accompanying their acceptance of the gospel was persecution, 6c

➤And we see that these new believers endured the persecution.

And now, the 2<sup>nd</sup> & internal effect accompanying their acceptance of the gospel.

➤They experienced the joy of the Holy Spirit.

➤These new believers did not shrink from faith.

▷And they did not retaliate against any trouble-makers.

▷Rather, they met the occasion with joy.

▷This is the same kind of godly reaction that was seen in the missionary team and even the Lord Jesus himself.

⇒Paul & Silas.    ↪ Jesus.

➤Here we see the main point of comparison between the missionaries, Jesus, & the Thess.

▷They were probably imitating the missionaries & Jesus in a general way.

▷But in particular, ~ in the context of vs 6, they imitated the example of Paul, his colleagues, & Jesus in suffering.

⇒I.e., they experienced joy in the midst of it. 9/12

➤ But this joy is not something they conjured up within themselves.

▷ Neither did it stem from blindness to the seriousness of their current situation of affliction.

▷ The joy of the Holy Spirit = the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit.

▷ It is a joy that springs not from pleasant circumstances, but is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

▷ Furthermore, joy is 1 aspect of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

➤ The Holy Spirit enables believers to have the right perspective on trials & persecution.

▷ E.g., enables us to see beyond present suffering to the fact that our lives are in God's hands, not our enemies'.

▷ Enables us to see beyond present suffering to our future deliverance.

⇒ The Thessalonian converts were convinced that Christ will return from heaven to rescue them from the coming wrath of God.

▷ Enables us to see that present suffering results in incomparable glory that will be fully revealed in eternity.

➤ 2 Cor. 4:16-18

▷ Enables us to see that trials → testing of faith → endurance → sp. maturity.

➤ It is because of this Holy Spirit-given enablement that believers are able to face even severe affliction with an attitude of joy. 10/12

➤ The seeming paradox of suffering accompanied by joy ran right through the experience of the early church.

▷ 2 examples.

⇒ Acts 5:41 (NIV), ~ The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

⇒ 1 Pet. 1:6 (NIV), ~ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

### Ok, to recap.

➤ Paul & his colleagues thanked God because these believers became imitators.

➤ Then 3-fold expansion.

▷ 1<sup>st</sup>, ~ he noted that their reception of the gospel was the cause of their becoming imitators, 6b

▷ 2<sup>nd</sup> Paul explains that Thess acceptance of the gospel accompanied by a 2-fold effect

▷ Now let's turn to his 3<sup>rd</sup> note of his expansion.

### Vs. 7, notes widespread result of reception, imitation, & joyful perseverance in persecution.

(CSB) As a result, you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

➤ Recall, ~ Macedonia and Achaia were the northern and southern regions of Greece. 11/12

➤ The Thessalonians have not only imitated the apostles and Jesus.

▷ They themselves had become a pattern for other Christians.

Grk wd for example pictures an exact pattern or mold used to reproduce a figure or object.

➤ It says in effect that they had become a blueprint for other churches to emulate, a pattern of victorious Christian living ~ for other believers to copy.

➤ They had imitated the Lord and the missionaries.

▷ & now they had become models for others to pattern themselves after.

➤ It would do us well, NHCC, to pay close attention to Paul's description of these believers.

▷ Apply that pattern to our lives.

⇒ And pray that the Lord will help us become models for other believers to pattern themselves after. 12/12