

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10 Paul's Past Conversation - 2

1

Introduction

Paul states that the Thessalonian church was a **example**. He says that they were examples not only to the unsaved, but also to believers.

1. They had ministers who preached the gospel in power (v. 5).
2. They received the Word (the gospel) despite opposition and persecution (v. 6).
3. They became examples to other believers (vv. 7–8).
4. They turned to God from idols (vv. 9–10).

2

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

⁶ And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. 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. 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, 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.

3

The Gospel was Preached in Power

1 Thessalonians 1:5

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

Paul preached the Gospel, and it came to those who listened in the power of God and in the working of the Holy Spirit.

4

They Received the Gospel

1 Thessalonians 1:6

And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.

The Thessalonians received the Word (the gospel) despite opposition and persecution. That persecution became so threatening that Paul had been forced to flee the city (see Acts 17:4–10). However, his absence did not stop the persecution. In fact, it seems that the attack upon the church and its young believers became even more fierce. The Jews had convinced some of the Gentile citizens to join them in trying to stop the gospel and destroy the church (see 1 Th. 2:14).

5

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But note what Paul says:

⇒ The gospel still bore fruit. Some persons still received the Word and accepted Christ despite the opposition and persecution.

⇒ The Holy Spirit rewarded the believers' commitment to Christ. He stirred joy in their hearts and lives, giving them full assurance of their eternal salvation and deliverance from death.

6

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One other fact is important: the believers became followers of Paul and Christ. The word “follow” means to imitate. Is it right for people to imitate and follow preachers and other outstanding Christian leaders?

1 Corinthians 11:1

Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

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They Became an Example to Others

1 Thessalonians 1:7-8

So that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. 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.

The Thessalonian church became examples to other believers. This young church was so committed to the Lord that their testimony spread all over the world.

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When Rome conquered Greece, it divided the country into two provinces, the northern province being Macedonia and the southern province being Achaia. Paul clearly says that the testimony of the church had spread all over Greece, both northern Greece and southern Greece. Then he adds that their faith had spread out beyond the borders of Greece.

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Thessalonica was a major commercial center where salesmen, tradesmen, and businessmen visited from all over the world. Think what these believers must have been doing day by day. Their excitement and enthusiasm for Christ and the opposition and persecution against them must have been the talk of the city and world.

10

They Turned to God from Idols

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

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, 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.

The Thessalonian church turned to God from idols.

Remember that Paul had been forced to flee from Thessalonica for his life. The only way he knew how the young church and its believers were holding up was from others who had been to Thessalonica. What he had heard encouraged him. The believers were standing fast in the gospel he had preached. Notice three things about their testimony.

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- The believers had turned to God from idols.** They did not seek to clean up their own lives by themselves. They did not try to reform themselves by turning away from idols and then turning to God. They turned to God first, then with God's help and strength, they repented and turned away from idols.

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2. The believers had turned to God because of the promise of Christ's return. It was God's Son who was returning to earth, the Person who had died for them so that they might be acceptable to God and live with Him forever. They believed that they were to live with God forever. The word "wait" is in the present tense. This means that they expected Christ to return at any moment.

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Because of the resurrection, we know that Christ is going to return to earth and take believers to live with God forever. By resurrecting Christ, God ...

- proved that He is the God of all power
- proved that He has the power to raise the dead
- proved that He is going to do just as Christ taught. He will raise all men, some to eternal life and some to eternal death.

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3. The believers had turned to God to escape the wrath of God.

A day of wrath is coming. The tribulation period is coming when God pours out judgement on the world. This is the view here. Jesus is going to deliver us from that period with the rapture. However, there is another wrath that awaits all those who reject Jesus. Those who are not in Christ will be condemned to hell forever where they will endure God's wrath.

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So What ...

We are God's witnesses in this generation. We can have confidence in sharing the Gospel.

- God's power is at work, not our own.
- The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness and a judgment to come.
- Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was sufficient to pay our sin debt.
- That as God transforms our lives, we become examples for others to follow.

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