

Session 2

An Exposition of I & II Thessalonians

I Thessalonians 1:6–10

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I Thessalonians 1:6 *And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.*

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord.

The Greek word for *followers* is #3402 *mimētēs*. Its definition is “one who imitates, emulates.” From *mimētēs* we have the English word *mimic*.

In many places the apostles and those sent by Christ were persecuted, but the Thessalonians emulated and imitated their godly lives.

What separated the Thessalonians from the Corinthians is that they became followers of those who brought them the Word and did not seek to divide God’s messengers in an attempt to prove their own self-righteousness.

It is one thing to follow those in the faith who have gone before us, as God’s Word clearly instructs saints to do, and quite another for men to use godly names and ministries only to cause division in the church.

No man also can be a true follower of God and not follow the example of His son.

John 10:27 *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

Ultimately, all men follow and pattern themselves after something, including their own foolish thoughts and ideas, the carnal world around them, or hopefully the benevolent God trying to save them.

Having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.

An illustration of this affliction and persecution is revealed in Acts 17:5–8.

Jesus had instructed His disciples that they would be hated of all men for His sake.

Servants are not above their master; thus, all Christians will suffer for their Christian faith, just as Christ needed to do. Yet neither persecution nor affliction can stop belief in the gospel.

History has proven that when saints are persecuted for believing the truth, it only inspires them to cling to it even more.

Hence, for the true followers of the Lord Jesus, affliction will do no more than draw them closer to the Lord.

This was true of David, and it will be true of us as well.

The Thessalonians also possessed that *joy* of the Lord found in all to whom Jesus sends His Spirit.

John 15:11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

True joy, like peace, is a fruit of the Spirit, which has its origination in Him who gives the Spirit.

The proof that God is a living God is evidenced by the spiritual joy and peace He gives His people.

Hence, though the faith of these early believers was tested on the outside, Christ strengthened their resolve to remain faithful to God on the inside.

No man also who is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ can know or possess that spiritual joy that Christ imparts to those who have believed.

Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

Through also God imparting joy into His people, they are internally strengthened for the lives He has called them to live.

When men love and believe in the Father through the Son, they are filled with unspeakable joy.

What the Father and Son are they can give, and joy is an element of their Spirit.

This is why whenever men walk in true fellowship with the Lord, they experience supernatural and spiritual joy in their hearts.

I John 1:3–4 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

⁴ And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

Because also God's Word has its source in God, when men through faith are exposed to it, it will produce rejoicing in the soul.

Jeremiah 15:16 Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

When men also rejoice in the Word of God as though they have found great spoil, it reveals how much they treasure the Holy One who sent it.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Jer. 15:16

This eating of the divine words expresses also the close union between that which came from God and the prophet's own being.

How men also receive the Word gives insight into their true character.

The Jews often resisted the Word, revealing their rejection of God's sovereignty and their unwillingness to yield to God's government.

Practically speaking, a rejection of the Word of God demonstrates willful resistance to God's divine rule.

I Thessalonians 1:7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

The word *ensamples* in Greek is #5179 *tupos*. It is defined as "the mark of a blow, then a stamp struck by a die."

The word is used for the nails in Christ's hand, the example of God's judgment upon sinners, and the pattern or copy that the temple on earth is to the real temple of God in heaven.

The force and importance of where *tupos* is used reveal the great and lasting impression that the Thessalonians' example of faith had on others who also believed the gospel.

What caused the Thessalonians to be such an example of faith?

(1) They imitated and followed the same subjection to Christ that those who brought them the Word possessed.

The apostles were single-minded and totally devoted to God in their faith, and so were the Thessalonians.

(2) The Thessalonians recognized that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were servants of Christ. By recognizing this, they yielded their lives to the Lord. Sensing the Spirit of God, they gladly became willing to place themselves under Its rule.

(3) They received the Word brought to them as the Word of God and not as the word of men. Perceiving Christ's Spirit in the apostles caused them to realize that an invisible God existed. Ultimately they received the gospel as the *Word of the Lord* simply because they could detect the Lord's divine nature in it.

(4) By perceiving the gospel's source to be the Father, the Thessalonians pursued the godly and spiritual qualities of faith, love, and hope, which are themselves characteristics of God.

(5) Ultimately, the joy of the Holy Spirit in the Thessalonians' hearts proved their relationship to Christ. Consider as well that there is a great difference between religion, which possesses no joy on its own, and true faith in God, whereby Christ imparts joy to His followers.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Thess. 1:6

With joy of the Holy Ghost - With happiness produced by the Holy Ghost. Though they were much afflicted and persecuted, yet there was joy. There was joy in their conversion - in the evidence of pardoned sin - in the hope of heaven; see the notes, Acts 8:8. However great may be the trials and persecutions experienced in receiving the gospel, or however numerous and long the sufferings of the subsequent life in consequence of having embraced it, there is a joy in religion that more than overbalances all, and that makes religion the richest of all blessings.

For those who sincerely believe upon Jesus Christ, an abundant spiritual joy becomes a reality, whereby through the abundance of Christ His people are filled with His own divine attributes.

John 10:10 I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, John 10:10

Might have it more abundantly - Literally, that they may have abundance, or that which abounds. The word denotes that which is not absolutely essential to life, but which is superadded to make life happy. They shall not merely have life - simple, bare existence - but they shall have all those superadded things which are needful to make that life eminently blessed and happy.

Those who have believed upon the Son of God will attest that Jesus will do more for the soul than what the land of Canaan did for Israel.

Hence, it will not be merely a *land flowing with milk and honey* that Jesus gives to satisfy His people, but also, spiritual blessings like joy and peace in the heart.

If men believe upon the Son of God, they will experience for themselves the abundant life purposed for them by God. The Lord is rich, and those who receive His sovereignty will partake of His rich estate.

I Thessalonians 1:8 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.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Thess. 1:8

For from you sounded out the word of the Lord - The truths of religion were thus spread abroad. The word rendered "sounded out" - ἐξήχηται *exēchētai* - refers to the sounding of a trumpet (Bloomfield), and the idea is, that the gospel was proclaimed like the sonorous voice of a trumpet echoing from place to place; compare Isaiah 58:1; Revelation 1:10. Their influence had an effect in diffusing the gospel in other places, as if the sound of a trumpet echoed and reechoed among the hills and along the vales of the classic land of Greece.

When men truly believe the gospel, they will seek to spread the gospel. This is why the Thessalonians *sounded out the word of the Lord*.

This teaches us that any church, if the Spirit of Christ truly leads it, will be evangelical.

Out of the abundance of the heart, men speak, so if God's nature permeates a man's soul, God's Word will be spoken.

Jeremiah is a wonderful example of how God's Spirit living in a man will compel him to speak for the Lord.

Jeremiah 20:9 Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

Matthew Pooles' Commentary, Jer. 20:9

Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name: this daily scorn and reproach which the prophet saw himself exposed unto, for preaching against the sin and wickedness of the people, was a sore temptation upon him to lay down his

employment as a prophet. He did not speak this openly, but he spoke it in his heart, he had (as he confesseth) many such thoughts in his breast. But he saith he was not able to do what he thought to do, he found in his heart a constraint to go on, that when a revelation came at any time from God unto him, it was like a fire in his bones, which he must quench by uttering what God had revealed to him.

The Thessalonians preached and sought to bring others into an awareness of the *Word of the Lord*.

The Greek word for *Lord* is #2962 *kýrios*, defined as “a person exercising absolute ownership rights” or “an owner (master) exercising full rights.”

To the Thessalonians, Jesus was not simply their healer, deliverer, or even their Savior. Instead, Jesus held the grand title of *Lord* in their hearts.

Because of their faith in the Son of God, the Thessalonians yielded complete sovereignty of their lives to God.

They gave Jesus absolute ownership of themselves. Their lives were no longer their own, and they were happy to present them to God as living sacrifices.

I Peter 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It was not merely religious duty that prompted this spiritual surrendering to the Son of God, but faith in the reality of Christ’s Lordship over the world.

Like the Israelites, who had received the Word of God through Moses, the Thessalonians recognized a new revelation from God, given through the Son of God.

When the Scriptures speak about the *Word of the Lord*, it is in reference to the one whom Old Testament prophecies revealed would be given reign and rulership over all the earth. The *Word of the Lord*, then, specifically relates to Israel’s Messiah, the one Daniel said would be given dominion over all people.

Daniel 7:13–14 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

¹⁴ And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Benson Commentary, Dan. 7:13–14

I saw in the night visions, &c. — Here is described by what means these changes were to be brought about; *behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven* — One in the shape and likeness of a man, but clothed with such ensigns of majesty and honour, (signified here by the clouds of heaven,) as showed him to be an extraordinary person, (compare Revelation 1:13; Revelation 14:14) indeed no less than the Messiah, as the following description of him declares. As the two foregoing verses declare why the fourth beast was destroyed, this part of the vision shows by whom it was done; setting Christ forth in his judicial capacity, and describing him by that title, which, in allusion to this place, he often gave himself, namely, *the Son of man*. He particularly alludes to this text, Matthew 26:64, where he speaks of his *coming in the clouds of heaven*; by which expression he acknowledged himself to be the true Messiah here described, and gave a direct answer to the question there proposed to him...

There was given him dominion, &c. — “All these kingdoms shall in their turns be destroyed, but the kingdom of the Messiah shall stand for ever. It was in allusion to this prophecy that the angel said of Jesus, before he was conceived in the womb, Luke 1:33, He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

The Thessalonians knew Jesus Christ to be the long-awaited Messiah of Israel—He who would usher in a kingdom with no end. In this kingdom also, God’s people will both serve and worship the Son of God.

Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers, Dan. 7:14

Serve him.—In Biblical Chaldee this word is only used of rendering Divine service or worship. The “Son of man” is therefore here spoken of as God.

Barnes’ Commentary describes the dominion that the *Ancient of Days* (God) has given the Son of Man.

Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, Dan. 7:14

And there was given him dominion - That is, by him who is represented as the “Ancient of days.” The fair interpretation of this is, that he received the dominion from him. This is the uniform representation in the New Testament. Compare Matthew 28:18; John 3:35; 1 Corinthians 15:27. The word dominion here means rule or authority - such as a prince exercises. He was set over a kingdom as a prince or ruler.

And glory - That is the glory or honor appropriate to one at the head of such an empire.

And a kingdom - That is, he would reign. He would have sovereignty. The nature and the extent of this kingdom is immediately designated as one that would be universal and perpetual. All that is necessary to be noticed here is, that it is everywhere promised in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be a king, and have a kingdom. Compare Psalm 2:1–12; Isaiah 9:6–7.

That all people, nations, and languages should serve him - It would be universal; would embrace all nations. The language here is such as would emphatically denote universality. See the notes at Daniel 3:4; Daniel 4:1. It implies that that kingdom would extend over all the nations of the earth, and we are to look for the fulfillment of this only in such a universal reign of the Messiah.

By seeking to spread the *Word of the Lord*, this revealed that the Thessalonians were uniquely aware of the universal authority the Father had given the Son.

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Jesus Christ was the Thessalonians’ Lord, and His resurrection from the dead proved that one day He will return to establish justice and judgment on the earth. As the Son of Man and Son of God, Jesus has been granted by God the right to reign over man.

Ultimately, also, it will be the *Word of God* spoken by Christ which will be the final judge of all men.

John 12:48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, John 12:48

The word that Christ has spoken, the doctrines of his gospel, and the messages of mercy, will be that by which the sinner will be judged in the last day. Every person will be judged

by that message, and the sinner will be punished according to the frequency and clearness with which the rejected message has been presented to his mind, Matthew 12:41.

This divine revelation that Jesus Christ is now Lord of all men, is the genesis of all true evangelism. Those also who know Christ to be the Lord desire nothing more than to spread knowledge of His sovereignty to others.

I Thessalonians 1:9 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;

What causes men to yield their lives to serve God is their sincere belief in God.

This is why tradition or handed-down religious beliefs will do nothing to inspire energetic and inspired service for the Lord. Dead things also, whether they be dead religions or dumb idols, do nothing to inspire people to offer themselves as living sacrifices.

Hence, at the core of all true Christian service lies an understanding that God is alive and will reward those who diligently seek Him.

The manner in which the Thessalonians turned to serve the Lord proved the sincerity of their faith.

The Greek for *serve* is #1398 *douleuó*, “to be a slave, to serve.” *HELPS Word-studies* defines the word as “properly, to serve as a slave, having all personal ownership-rights assigned to the owner; (figuratively) to willingly give over the prerogative to be self-governing.”

Ultimately, it was the manner in which the Thessalonians gave themselves to God that revealed their faith in Him.

The gospel, therefore, made such an impact on their lives that they completely and wholly abandoned lives of sin to turn and serve a living God.

This is also what belief in the truth will produce today. For if men truly believe the gospel, they will turn from lives of sin to serve the One who sent it.

I Thessalonians 1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

A great part of Christian character is dependent upon waiting for the Lord. Waiting for Christ's return, therefore, will not be different.

James 5:7–8 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

⁸ Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

It is thus essential that Christians learn to wait, simply because all things will be done according to God's timetable and not man's.

By also subjecting ourselves to wait upon the Lord, we reveal our total and complete subjection to Him, knowing that what God has promised, in His time, He will perform.

Equally important to the Thessalonians giving their lives to God was the fact that they expected God's Son to return from heaven.

Consider as well that there is no true faith that does not hold the Son of God as the main object in it.

It is only when men receive Christ as Lord that they are given the power to become sons of God, and it is only by possessing the Christ Spirit that one proves true spiritual adoption in God's family.

Ultimately, the Son of God is the center of all true and divine religion. If He is not, then it is only another religion formed by man and governed by Him also.

It was Christ's resurrection from the dead that proved His divinity.

Romans 1:4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

It will be Christ's return that will prove His sovereignty.

II Thessalonians 1:7-9 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

⁸ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

⁹ Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

To the saved, Christ's coming will mean the complete opposite that it does to the unsaved.

Where Jesus's return from heaven will be salvation to some, it will result in divine judgment for others. It is this coming wrath of God that faith in Christ saves men from.

Revelation 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Sin must be reckoned with. God's justice demands it. Ultimately, at Christ's return, He will reveal Himself as this world's Savior as well as its final judge.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Rom. 2:5

The guilt of man is accumulated little by little. The punishment will be discharged upon him all at once, in one overwhelming tide.

Though sinners remain indifferent to sin and seem to possess no sensitivity to its awful consequences, a day is coming, which will be ushered in by Christ's return, when all sin must be accounted for.