

For GC Discussion

- Pick out the hallmarks of the Thessalonian church. How can each one apply to us in our own lives today?
- How can we stir up our faith in the Gospel and a belief that it is still able to radically impact whole cities for Jesus?
- Are we truly 'waiting' for Jesus return? How can we make this more a part of our lives?

Next Week: we'll move on to look at chapter 2 verses 1-16 and Paul's care for the church.

Notes and Questions

For Worship: Listen to '*Even so Come*' by The Passion Band. You can find it on YouTube, or on the Hill City Church blog on the website.



1 Thessalonians

Waiting for the King

Week 1: A Model Church

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

This Weeks Summary

This week we begin our study in 1 Thessalonians as Paul commends them for the great beginning they have had to their existence, and the great fruit that is already being seen in and through them as a church.

For Study:

Here are some more verses on the 3 main subject areas in this weeks message:

Work of Faith:	Matthew 14:22-33 Hebrews 11:1-12:3 James 2:14-26 1 Peter 1:3-9
Labour of Love:	1 Corinthians 13:1-13 Luke 6:27-36 Mark 12:28-34 1 John 3:11-24
Steadfastness of Hope:	2 Corinthians 4:7-5:10 Romans 5:1-11 Romans 8:18-30

As we start off our series in 1 Thessalonians, let's think a bit about the context of the letter, and the big ideas Paul is trying to communicate.

The Church Planted - A Demonstration of the Power of God

Acts chapter 17 gives us the story of how the Thessalonian church came into existence, and it's a story of God working through Paul in a remarkable way. Firstly we're told that Paul only reasoned in the synagogue in the city for 3 sabbaths, and the text isn't even clear that he stayed any longer than that. Many people would say that he stayed some time longer, but however you look at it, we're only talking a matter of a few months that Paul stayed in the city, and he leaves behind a church that he's confident will stand the test of time. In the cultural situation that we currently live, surrounded by apathy to anything religious, let alone true Christianity it is easy for us to begin to doubt Paul's statement in the book of Romans that the simple message of the Gospel is the 'power of God' (Romans 1:16) - able to save anyone in a moment, regardless of the hardness of their hearts, but that's exactly what this account shows us. We're so used to the hard slog of ministry over the course of years with little significant fruit (and there's nothing necessarily wrong with that) that it can cause us to struggle to cling onto the fact that we serve a God who can intervene into any situation in an instant. The story of the planting of the Thessalonian church should encourage us to believe God for what we might see as the impossible, which to Him is really nothing.

The People Saved - A Demonstration of a Deep Work of the Spirit

The situation in Thessalonica is in so many ways different to what we see now. This was the very first church ever to be in existence in the city, and the church as the entity we now know was only just beginning to spread into the world. The people of Thessalonica had very little to compare their experience of church with, and they wouldn't have had access to much if any of the New Testament Scriptures. Despite all this, a new community of people springs into life at the Holy Spirit empowered preaching of Paul, and the church is begun. Immediately this happens however, the whole city is thrown into uproar and a mob is sent to attack the house of Jason, who you would assume was one of the lead guys in this fledgling work of God. He and some others are dragged before the authorities and accused of being revolutionaries against Ceasar - to the point where they have to send away the guy who has just started the church, and are left on their own, surely wondering what on earth was going to happen next!

Could you not forgive these men and women for asking the question 'is

this really worth it?', 'Do we really want to stake our eternities on a message that is going to get us beat up, threatened, imprisoned and maybe even killed?' - and yet that's exactly what they did. I'm sure there were some who turned their backs following the troubles, but enough stayed to lay the foundations for an enduring work of God in that city. The Holy Spirit had so convinced them of the truth of Paul's message that they answered their own questions emphatically - yes, it is worth it, and yes we do want to stake everything on the message of King Jesus because we know we've found the 'Pearl of Great Price' to which nothing else can compare.

The Purpose of the Letter - The Importance of Discipleship

We've already mentioned the fact that the Thessalonian church stood the test of time, and the very letter we're reading communicates just how important to Paul this really was. It's so easy for us to look back at the times in our lives when God has worked in dramatic power - saving, healing or transforming situations, and live off those former glories despite what is happening today. Paul could have done that & been telling the dramatic story of what happened in Thessalonica for years to come - but he knows this isn't enough. Paul knows that for those 3+ weeks to have been worth anything, the church must persevere to the end, and that's why he writes this letter. He's desperate that nothing would come in to distract this young church, or cause them to compromise. The suffering they have begun to experience will inevitably continue and he wants them to stand strong against this, but there's also another teaching that Paul weaves into the whole of the book that he is eager to communicate to them:

The Big Picture - Jesus will be Returning

As you read both of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians there is one huge issue which is clearly a big reason why Paul is writing the letters. Somehow, through the lies of false teachers, and maybe their own mistakes, the Thessalonian church had got confused about the reality of Jesus return to judge the world and take His church to be with Him in glory. The subject is woven into every chapter of the book, and is addressed in more detail later on too. Paul is clearly concerned that losing the truth of Jesus return will steal something of the fulness of the impact of the Gospel on God's people, and he wants to make sure that in their lives, and also in ours the second coming of Jesus is just like this book - woven into everything we do, every day of our lives. May God use this series to do just that for us as His people.