

# 1 Thessalonians 1-3 Sermon Illustrations

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## 1 THESSALONIANS 1 Devotionals and Sermon Illustrations

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**1 Thessalonians 1:1-10** -Eugene Lang, a self-made millionaire, greatly changed the lives of fifty-nine students in East Harlem. Asked to speak to the sixth-grade class at a school with a high drop-out rate, he wondered what he could say to inspire these students to stay in school. He wondered how he could get them to even look at him. Scrapping his notes, he decided to speak to them from his heart. "Stay in school," he admonished, "and I'll help pay college tuition for every one of you." For the first time, those children had hope. Said one student, "I had something to look forward to, something waiting for me. It was a golden feeling." Nearly ninety percent of that class went on to graduate from high school.

People without hope are people without a future. But when hope is restored, so is life. Nowhere is this more true than with those who come to know Christ. He gives a sure basis for hope. He has promised to return to earth to receive His own (1 Thess. 1:10). Until then, we have help through the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 1:5). The believer anticipates a new kind of life that begins now and is fulfilled when Jesus returns.

Knowing Christ gives us a hope that makes life worth living. —M.R.D.II

Hope is the anchor of the soul, and the stimulus to action and achievement.

### 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 A Working Church

Read: Revelation 2:1-7 | Bible in a Year: Malachi 1-4

We give thanks to God always for you all, . . . remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope. —1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

My wife, Shirley, and I enjoyed a cruise along the fjords of Norway in celebration of our 50th wedding anniversary. As we journeyed northward, we stopped in numerous towns and villages, often visiting churches. Among them was a 12th-century church that our guide described proudly as "still a working church." I asked, "What do you mean?" She referred to the days of the state church, when the state-appointed pastors simply collected their paychecks but no one attended the services. But this church had been faithfully holding worship services and actively serving the Lord for almost 1,000 years!

I immediately thought of the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 to whom Jesus said, "I know your works" (2:2,9,13,19; 3:1,8,15). In addition, the church of Thessalonica was commended by the apostle Paul for its "work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 1:3).

I also thought of my church at home. For more than 130 years it has been faithful in preaching and caring for its congregation and community. It is truly a "working church." What a privilege we have if we're part of a local body of believers where we can grow and serve our Lord!

Lord, thank You for placing us into Your family and

giving us the privilege and responsibility to serve  
You through our churches. May we be a shining light  
of Your love to our communities and the world.

The church is a living body and must have working parts.

By David Egnor |

## 1 Thessalonians 1

### You Are A Role Model

Charles Barkley, superstar basketball player for the Phoenix Suns, said in a television ad, "I am not a role model." But, like it or not, he is. Everybody is a role model for somebody else.

As we grow up, we have many role models, people who inspire us—parents, teachers, athletes, political leaders, characters in novels and in the pages of history.

The Bible also gives us many role models. The apostle Paul, for one, is a challenging example of discipleship. In fact, he held himself up as a pattern for all Christians to follow. "Imitate me," he urged, "just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). He knew, of course, that he could serve as a godly example only if he faithfully followed his Lord.

Paul commended the Thessalonians because they followed him and the Lord (1 Th. 1:6). They became examples to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia, and they were well-known for their faith in God (vv.7-8).

As we copy Paul, who himself was copying the Savior, we in turn become models who are being copied. What is the quality of our spiritual influence? Negative or positive? Remember, it can't be neutral. No one can rightly say, "I'm not a role model."— by Vernon C. Grounds

We cannot live our lives alone, For other lives we touch Are either strengthened by our own Or weakened just as much. —Anon.

### The best role models model Christ.

## 1 Thessalonians 1:1

### A Gift Of Grace

In high schools in the US, being elected homecoming queen is a great honor for any young woman. But when a high school near Houston, Texas, crowned Shannon Jones, it was a special moment for her and for everyone in the community. Nineteen-year-old Shannon, who is an award-winning athlete and an active member of her church youth group, has Down syndrome.

Shannon knew this once-in-a-lifetime experience was a gift from her younger sister Lindsey, who was the catalyst to elect her. Their dad said, "I'm so proud of Lindsey. Probably somewhere in the back of her mind, this is something she'd like to do." But she made it happen for Shannon.

The most inspiring acts of human love are only a shadow of the immeasurable gift our Savior has given us. Paul wrote, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Christ left His glory in heaven and died on the cross for our sin so that we could be forgiven through faith in Him. His sacrifice was based on His love, not on our merit. All we are and all we have are the Savior's loving gifts of grace to us.—David C. McCasland

God gives His grace so rich, so free—  
No one will He deny;  
For He has promised in His Word  
An infinite supply. —D. De Haan

Grace is an unearned blessing to unworthy sinners.

## 1 Thessalonians 1:2

### PRAYER AND PRETZELS

Constantly making mention of you in our prayers. 1 Thessalonians 1:2

I can imagine some of you are surprised by the title of this devotional — and I will freely admit that I used it to get your attention.

However, there is a very real relationship between prayer and pretzels! The twisted bits of salted, baked dough that go by that name were first made in northern Italy about A.D. 610. A monk who had been baking bread found he had some dough left over, so he formed it into thin, pencil-like rolls, and then twisted them into little figures representing children with their arms folded in prayer! Coating them with syrup and salt he put them in the oven. Finding them very palatable, he gave them as rewards to the youngsters who learned their catechism lessons. He called these tasty morsels "pretiola" which in Latin means "little reward." This monk who invented pretzels, and gave them to the children for knowing answers to Bible questions, was using good psychology. Explaining that the twisted dough represented them in an attitude of devotion, perhaps he hoped thereby also to remind them to "pray in" the truths of the Word they had only mentally digested. Can we not all learn a lesson from this? Let us also add much prayer to our study of the Bible, beseeching God to give us a deeper "heart understanding" of its precepts, and a greater wisdom in applying its purifying lessons to our daily lives.

From now on, every time you see pretzels, I hope you are re-minded that they represent "children at prayer." Incidentally, if more people thought of their youngsters praying for them when they ate those salted goodies, they would not drink along with those snacks some of the things they do! (Enough said?)

Someone prayed as I met the test  
Of temptation fierce and strong;  
I felt God near, He gave me rest;  
Somebody prayed, I know.

Someone prayed when my faith was dim  
And when Satan pressed me sore,  
God answered them, gave strength within;  
Somebody prayed, I know. —Mrs. M. Spittal, alt.

Prayer will drive sin out of your life; or sin will drive prayer out!

### **1 Thessalonians 1:2 Before, Not After**

Mary Chestnut's father-in-law had the enduring habit of returning thanks after his meals. As he left the table he would invariably say, "I thank God for a good dinner." When asked why he didn't pray prior to eating, he replied "My way is to be sure of a thing before I return thanks for it."

Christians never fear that giving thanks involves a gamble. Their experience verifies that nothing will ever be more certain than God's provisions for life. The feeding of the four and five thousand people offers a parable of God's provisions. After everyone had eaten to complete satisfaction, seven and twelve basketsful remained. Left over! Ready to serve to others! That's what Jesus accomplishes with those who commit themselves to him. For the use of Peter's boat, Jesus filled the nets so full of fish they began to tear and the boats nearly to sink. The divine bounty proved so lavish it threatened disaster! If that for the use of a boat, what will God give for the use of a life?

### **1 Thessalonians 1:2 Look For The Good**

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers. —1 Thessalonians 1:2

I read about a young boy who had been naughty. During family devotions the father prayed for his son and mentioned a number of bad things the boy had done. Soon afterward the mother heard the 6-year-old sobbing. When she asked what was wrong, the boy cried out, "Daddy always tells God the bad things about me. He never tells Him the good things I do!"

What happened to that child underscores a shortcoming that is common to many of us. Instead of recognizing the good in people, we tend to notice their faults. We could learn from the example of the apostle Paul. In his letter to his spiritual sons and daughters in Thessalonica, he wrote, "We give thanks to God always for you all" (v.2). He remembered their "work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope" (v.3). He told them that because they "received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit," they were an example to others (vv.6-7). He said that from them "the word of the Lord has sounded forth ... in every place" (v.8). Paul's words must have encouraged them and spurred them on to even greater service for the Lord.

Let's be more ready to commend than to condemn. When we see good in others, let's tell them. It will encourage them, and that's exactly what they need. —Richard De Haan

Could we only see the goodness  
Of the ones we meet each day,  
We would overlook their failures  
As we greet them on life's way. —Anon.

Correction does much, but encouragement does more.

## **1 Thessalonians 1:5**

### **The Power of God's Word**

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

First-century believers communicated the gospel verbally while it was being put into written form. In each generation since, believers have taken the truths of the Word of God with them as they moved about, proclaiming them openly in church services and whispering them in secret. Christianity has taken root and grown strong because God's Word has brought salvation and hope to people of every station in life. The written Word of the living God was given to all mankind, and its impact on our world is immeasurable.

American clergyman and author Henry van Dyke expressed the broad influence of the Book of books in this way: "Born in the East and clothed in oriental form and imagery, the Bible walks the ways of all the world with familiar feet and enters land after land to find its own everywhere. It has learned to speak in hundreds of languages to the heart of man. It comes into the palace of the monarch to tell him that he is a servant to the Most High, and into the cottage to assure the peasant that he is a child of God."

Kings and peasants have read the Bible and believed, nations have been altered, and cultures have improved because of its message. The Bible makes a difference wherever it goes, and it makes a difference in our lives when we read it, meditate upon its truth, and apply it to our lives. The Book for everyone has a special message for each of us.—D.C.E.

The Bible, like a bank, is most helpful when it's open.

### **1 Thessalonians 1:5-10 A Small But Powerful Seed**

February 23, 2000 — by Dave Branon

The small piece of paper was hardly worth bending over to pick up. Yet the young father retrieved it, and what he read changed his life.

As a devout Hindu living in India, he was religious to the core, with temple ritual an integral part of his life. But as he focused his eyes on the paper he had picked up, he noticed that it explained a new concept. It told him that he was a sinner and needed a Savior. He decided to put his faith in Jesus Christ, who freely offers forgiveness of sins to all who will ask.

One tiny tract. One powerful seed that had far-reaching results. The man eventually became a preacher, taking the good news of Jesus to areas in India where the gospel had not been proclaimed. Later, two of his sons became missionaries, taking the good news about Jesus to new towns. As a result, 22 churches have been started, and thousands have heard God's message of freedom in Christ.

If a piece of paper has the gospel printed on it, it has the power of God behind it. Likewise, when we share the gospel with others, our words have the power of God in them.

The gospel is not static—it comes equipped with God's power and the Spirit's conviction (1 Th. 1:5). When we tell a friend about Jesus, we plant a small but powerful seed.

You think your word or deed is very small,

That what you say will hardly count at all;

But God can take the seed that you have sown

And nourish it until it's fully grown. —Hess

We plant the seed, but God gives the harvest.

### **1Thessalonians 1:6 Models For Imitation**

Herbert Vander Lugt

Leslie Strobel became a Christian in 1979 and modeled her faith in such a way that it influenced her atheistic husband Lee to begin his own search for God. In his book *The Case for Christ*, he tells of his 2 years of intensive research that finally led him to receive Jesus as his Savior. With a law degree from Yale and an award-winning career in journalism at the Chicago Tribune, Lee had the

ability to answer tough questions raised by unbelievers and cynics.

The change in his life also influenced their 5-year-old daughter Alison, who said, “Mommy, I want God to do for me what He’s done for Daddy.” Leslie’s faith created a ripple effect that changed the whole family.

This pattern of modeling or imitating is what Paul described in the first chapter of 1 Thessalonians. His example, along with that of Silas and Timothy, motivated the new believers in Thessalonica to imitate them (the word followers carries that idea). Then, as these new believers suffered for Christ with patience and endurance, they in turn became models to believers in Macedonia and Achaia, inspiring them to new levels of devotion.

Our example can be our most persuasive influence for Christ. Do others imitate us because we model Him?

Only one life, so live it well,

And keep your candle trimmed and bright;

Eternity, not time, will tell

The radius of that candle's light. —Miller

The one who follows Christ leads the way for others.

### **1Thessalonians 1:6**

#### **The Joy of Waiting**

Nine months can seem like forever for a mother-to-be. In the first trimester, hormonal changes sometimes cause lingering morning sickness. Emotions rise to the surface, prolonging afternoon blues. Then a changing appetite stretches out evening hours with late-night cravings for pizza, chocolate, and dill pickles.

During the next 3 months, Mom outgrows her clothes and spends long hours looking for a new wardrobe. The last trimester turns normal activity into a chore as the final watch begins.

Then, suddenly the endless waiting is over. Nine months become like yesterday’s newspaper. They are gone. They become insignificant, a faint memory—overcome by joy. Ask the new mom if she regrets enduring her pregnancy. Never!

Hannah’s wait began even more slowly. For years she was unable to have a child. She felt so unfulfilled, so dishonored (1 Samuel 1). But the Lord remembered her, and she conceived. Her joy was complete.

Hannah waited patiently and saw the Lord turn her sorrow into overflowing joy. Her song (2:1-10) is a reminder that disappointment and the most bitter distress can lead to fulfillment and delight. For those who wait on the Lord, long hours of enduring will one day give way to rejoicing. —Mart De Haan

Let patience have her perfect work;  
Let God refine your gold;  
For in His time He’ll show you why,  
And blessings great unfold. —Bosch

God’s gift of joy is worth the wait.

### **1 Thessalonians 1:6**

#### **Imitators of Christ**

A respected author on Christian ethics. E. Calvin Beisner, said that when he was younger he greatly admired a very intelligent and articulate theology teacher for whom he worked. He imitated the older man’s “study habits, manners of speech, and writing style.”

Beisner said, “And while I now recognize that some of that imitation was juvenile, I am convinced that I grew because of it.”

Having a godly role model can be very helpful, especially for Christians who are young in the faith. The trouble with all human models, however, is that they have flaws and sooner or later will disappoint us. Beisner experienced this. He gradually became aware that this teacher treated his assistants shabbily and showed little appreciation for their abilities. He tended to magnify his own accomplishments, even to the point of stretching the truth.

How can we avoid being disillusioned by the spiritual examples we admire? The secret is to imitate them but not idolize them. Paul

saw himself as a copy to be followed only to the extent that he reflected the original. Therefore he wrote,

“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”

It's good to follow godly examples, but our worship must be reserved for Christ alone.

What you worship determines what you become.

## **1 Thessalonians 1:6**

### **More Than Good Advice**

A few years ago, I was invited to speak on the subject of guidance. In my preparation, I opened my concordance to look up the word guidance, expecting to find a long list of verses promising guidance from God. To my surprise, guidance wasn't there. Instead, I found the word guide and a number of verses promising that God Himself would be the guide of His people.

This discovery added fresh insight to my Christian pilgrimage. I was reminded that people who are blind need guide dogs, not guidance dogs! Even if dogs were capable of talking, how unsatisfactory it would be if they were mere bystanders, shouting warnings to the blind from a distance: "Careful now! You're approaching a hole. Watch out for the curb!" No, these mute but faithful creatures escort their sightless companions every step of the way, being their eyes and steering them safely along precarious pathways.

Some people want God to be like a glorified advice bureau. But when our sight is dim and our way is dark, as it often is, we need more than good advice—we need the Good Shepherd to lead us (John 10:3,11).

As we follow Christ each day, we'll have all the guidance we'll ever need.

—Joanie Yoder

Though guidance is our need each day  
We need not search to find our way;  
We only need a faithful Guide  
And strive to stay close by His side. —D. De Haan

Looking for guidance? Follow Christ, your Guide.

## **1 Thessalonians 1:6 YOU ARE A ROLE MODEL**

Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1

Charles Barkley, superstar basketball player for the Phoenix Suns, said in a television ad, "I am not a role model." But, like it or not, he is. Everybody is a role model for somebody else.

As we grow up, we have many role models, people who inspire us -parents, teachers, athletes, political leaders, characters in novels and in the pages of history.

The Bible also gives us many role models. The apostle Paul, for one, is a challenging example of discipleship. In fact, he held himself up as a pattern for all Christians to follow, "Imitate me," he urged, "just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). He knew, of course, that he could serve as a godly example only if he faithfully followed his Lord.

Paul commended the Thessalonians because they followed him and the Lord (1 Th. 1:6). They became examples to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia, and they were well-known for their faith in God (1Thes 1:7-8). As we copy Paul, who himself was copying the Savior, we in turn become models who are being copied. What is the quality of our spiritual influence? Negative or positive? Remember, it can't be neutral. No one can rightly say, "I'm not a role model."- Vernon C. Grounds

We cannot live our lives alone,

For other lives we touch

Are either strengthened by our own

Or weakened just as much.- Anonymous

The best role models, model Christ.

## **1 Thessalonians 1:6**

## Always A Role Model

As we grow up, we have many role models, people who inspire us-- parents, teachers, athletes, political leaders, characters in novels and in the pages of history.

The Bible also gives us many role models. The apostle Paul, for one, is a challenging example of discipleship. In fact, he held himself up as a pattern for all Christians to follow. "Imitate me," he urged, "just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). He knew, of course, that he could serve as a godly example only if he faithfully followed his Lord.

Paul commended the Thessalonians because they followed him and the Lord (see **note** 1Thessalonians 1:6). They became examples to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia, and they were well-known for their faith in God (see **notes** 1Thessalonians 1:7; 1:8).

As we copy Paul, who himself was copying the Savior, we in turn become models who are being copied. What is the quality of our spiritual influence? Negative or positive? Remember, it can't be neutral. No one can rightly say, "I'm not a role model." --VCG

We cannot live our lives alone,  
For other lives we touch  
Are either strengthened by our own  
Or weakened just as much. --Anon.

The best role models model Christ.

## 1 Thessalonians 1:6

### This Little Light Of Mine

The Lake Michigan shoreline (a short drive from where I live) is dotted with lighthouses built to enable ship captains to navigate into safe harbors. The structures are varied in size, shape, and color, but each has unique charm and beauty. Pictures of the lighthouses are featured in books and calendars, and some people collect replicas and other lighthouse items.

But lighthouses were not built just to be admired; they were built to hold lights that guide sailors to safety. A lighthouse is most useful and appreciated when, in the darkness of night, only its light can be seen—not the structure itself.

When Jesus sent out His disciples, He called them "the light of the world" (see **note** Matthew 5:14). He also indicated that their task was not to draw attention to themselves, but to do good works that would cause people to recognize God's goodness and glorify Him.

Jesus said that just as a lamp's purpose is to give light, we also are to let our light shine (see **notes** Matthew 5:15; 5:16). We're most effective when we shine brightly in the darkness, guiding people who need to find safe harbor in Christ.

For a light to be effective, it has to be shining in a dark place. —Julie Ackerman Link

My life was dark until the Light shone in,  
That Light was Christ, who saved me from my sin;  
His light that I've received I want to share  
And let it shine to people everywhere. —Hess

A little light makes a big difference in the darkest night.

## 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10 COPY THE MASTER

The Louvre in Paris is perhaps the most famous art museum in the world. It displays originals by such masters as Delacroix, Michelangelo, Rubens, da Vinci, Ingres, Vermeer, and many others.

Since 1793, the Louvre has encouraged aspiring artists to come and copy the masters. Some of our most famous modern artists have done that and have become better painters by copying the best the world has ever known.

An article in Smithsonian magazine tells about Amal Dagher, a 63-year-old man who has been duplicating art at the Louvre for 30 years. Dagher remains in awe of the masters and continues to learn from them. He said, "If you're too satisfied with yourself, you can't improve."

Paul instructed us to be "imitators of God" (see **note** Ephesians 5:1). In his first letter to the Thessalonians, he commended the

believers because they were becoming like the Lord and setting an example for others (1 Thessalonians 1:6-10).

Like the Louvre copyists, we'll never reach perfection before we get to heaven. Even so, we must resist the temptation to be satisfied with our present imitation of Jesus. We need to keep looking to Him, learning from Him, and asking for His help. Let's copy the Master. —David C. Egner

More like the Master I would live and grow,  
More of His love to others I would show;  
More self-denial, like His in Galilee,  
More like the Master I long to ever be. —Gabriel

To become like Christ, we must learn from the Master.

## **1 Thessalonians 1:6-7**

### **A Daily Beauty**

When you look in a mirror, what do you see? Do you see a lovely reflection? A handsome face? Or do you see a plain or unattractive countenance?

We want to give those who behold us what my friend called an aesthetic blessing. But what about the beauty of holiness? Are others blessed by the beauty that flows through us from Christ?

A distinguished Bible scholar of the 19th century, J. B. Lightfoot, was described by one of his devoted students as “startlingly ugly: a stout little man with a grotesque figure and a squint.” But that same student also said that Lightfoot was “the best man I have ever encountered, and I say this deliberately after the experience of many years. In a day or two ... his face appeared the most beautiful and lovable thing imaginable.”

When Stephen was brought before the Jewish council for interrogation, “they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke” (Acts 6:10). As he was being accused, they “saw his face as the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15).

By God's transforming grace, we too can have a daily beauty in our lives. As we walk prayerfully in the Spirit, our faces increasingly reflect the beauty of Jesus. —Vernon C Grounds

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,  
All His wonderful passion and purity;  
O Thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine  
Till the beauty of Jesus is seen in me. —Orsborn

Nothing can dim the beauty that shines from within.

## **1 Thessalonians 1:6-7 Encouraging Examples**

### **David C. McCasland**

The couple's example of love and compassion was an encouragement to me. They were in their early forties and had three children of their own when the Lord led them to take in four foster children, all siblings less than 4 years old. A month later, the woman found out she was pregnant!

Over the next few years, with their house bulging and their budget straining, they discovered that their situation was an encouragement to the other families in their church who could look at them and say, “And we think we have problems!” They were a vivid example of joyfully following Christ's leading, even when it's difficult.

Paul commended the Christians in Thessalonica for following the Lord, even though they suffered hardship. And their joy from the Holy Spirit enabled them to become “examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe” (1 Th. 1:7).

What I remember most about the couple with all those young children is their joy. They sometimes shook their heads in wonder at God's leading, but they always had a smile that said, “We would do it all again.”

Are you facing difficult, faith-stretching circumstances today? Your joyful obedience to God can be an encouraging example to others.

Joyfully following Jesus the Lord  
And trusting His lead every day



Makes us examples that others can see  
To follow when trials come their way. —Sper

### **A godly example is worth more than a thousand words.**

**Likable Christians** - The local newspaper reported the death of a semi-pro baseball pitcher I had admired during my teenage years. His name was Elmer "Lefty" Nyenhouse. He was a likable Christian. The article said that he had been active in his church and a respected member of his community until his death at 88.

On several occasions I saw "Lefty" pitch against a topnotch semi-pro team, the Chickie Giants. Knowing that Elmer was a devout Christian, some of his opponents tried to rattle him in tense situations (like when the bases were loaded with no outs). They would drop to their knees by their dugout and shout, "Better get on your knees and pray, Elmer!" "Lefty" took it in stride. Those who heckled him actually respected him.

As Jesus grew up, He "increased ... in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). People were drawn to Him. Their fondness for Him, of course, alarmed the religious leaders who hated Him because of His teaching, and they "sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people" (22:2).

Today, as always, some will hate you for being an outspoken follower of Jesus. But make sure it's not because you are unpleasant, critical, and hard to get along with. Being a likable person is to be like Jesus. —Herbert Vander Lugt

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me—  
All His wonderful passion and purity!  
O Thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine,  
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. —Orsborn

Christlike people are likable people even if hated by some people.

### **The Greatness Of Godliness**

In the eyes of most people, Jacob's brother Esau was the greater man of the two. Through the years he had accumulated immense wealth and power. He was the ruler of the land of Edom and could have met Pharaoh on his own terms. Yet Esau, with all his earthly authority, could not have blessed Pharaoh. Only Jacob had that power (Genesis 47:10).

The spiritual is greater than the natural. God can endow a humble human being with awesome moral force. Holiness has within itself the power to master all other powers.

The Greek word for power or authority (exousia) contains the preposition ex, which means "out of" or "from." This suggests that the ability to influence others flows from inside. It is rooted in what we are. "Do you wish to be great?" Augustine asked. "Then begin by being." Greatness comes from holiness and nothing more.

I have a friend who makes his way through the halls of power in Washington, DC, meeting with the most prominent women and men in the world. He speaks a word or two, prays, and then walks on, but he leaves behind the lingering and compelling influence of Christ. He has the aura of greatness that surrounds all whose lives reflect the character of Jesus. It is the greatness of godliness. —David H. Roper

I want my heart His throne to be,  
So that a watching world may see  
His likeness shining forth in me;  
I want to be like Jesus. —Chisholm

### **Even a little example can have a big influence for Christ.**

#### **Walking Sermons**

The best "preaching" is often expressed in actions rather than in words. When we do right without saying anything, we can have far greater impact for good than when we tell others what they should do without doing it ourselves. Indeed, we might do better to skip the "preaching" altogether if there is no "practicing."

Many parents overlook this as they instruct their children. They talk about God, explain salvation through Jesus, and expect good works—but it all ends there because their own example fails to match the expectations they have for their children. In other Christian homes, however, mothers and fathers make sure their walk supports their talk. Their exemplary living provides clear and consistent

guidelines. Wise parents do not neglect verbal instruction, but they balance it with a worthy example.

We usually think of preachers as those who speak from the pulpit, but the truth is that we all are "preaching" every day. Our conduct at home, the way we handle business matters, our response to difficulties, our reaction to temptation—everything people observe about us is "preaching." Someone said, "What you do speaks so loudly that I can't hear what you say."

The actions of the Good Samaritan spoke so loudly that people still hear them today. Without demanding or expecting anything for him-self, He showed mercy to an injured man. As he did, we must make sure that all of our actions are in harmony with God's revealed will. Whether we realize it or not, our walking does our talking. —R. W. De Haan

### **Every Christian should be a walking sermon.**

#### **1 Thessalonians 1:6 Good Imitation**

You became imitators of us and of the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 1:6

"Today we're going to play a game called Imitation," our children's minister told the kids gathered around him for the children's sermon. "I'll name something and you act out what it does. Ready? Chicken!" The kids flapped their arms, cackled, and crowed. Next it was elephant, then football player, and then ballerina. The last one was Jesus. While many of the children hesitated, one six-year-old with a big smile on his face immediately threw his arms wide open in welcome. The congregation applauded.

How easily we forget that our calling is to be like Jesus in the everyday situations of life. "Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:1–2).

Jesus's arms of welcome are always open.

The apostle Paul commended the followers of Jesus in Thessalonica for the outward demonstration of their faith in difficult circumstances. "You became imitators of us and of the Lord," Paul wrote. "And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia" (1 Thess. 1:6–7).

It is the life of Jesus in us that encourages and enables us to walk through this world as He did—with the good news of God's love and with arms open wide in welcome to all.

Lord Jesus, may Your words of invitation and welcome, "Come to Me," be lived out through our lives today.

Jesus' arms of welcome are always open.

**1 Thessalonians 1:8 - Brown Bag Witness** - Ivan was a brilliant engineer, highly respected by his co-workers. But sometimes they called him "Deacon" or "Parson" because he had a deep religious faith and he didn't hide it. Every day at lunch, for example, Ivan would bow his head over a little brown bag and thank God for his food.

Jean Zeiler, who worked with Ivan, was intrigued by his consistent testimony. She wanted to find out what made him so different. She found her answer in a book Ivan told her about--the Bible. After buying one and reading it three times, she came to know Jesus in a personal way.

Ivan told Jean, "I used to wonder if I would ever lead anyone to Christ." But his quiet witness was not only the key to Jean's salvation, it also challenges thousands as she travels throughout the world and gives her testimony.

The apostle Paul reminded the persecuted Thessalonian believers that their "faith toward God" was touching lives in far-off places (1 Th. 1:8). This must have encouraged them to remain faithful to the Savior.

Never underestimate the impact you can have for Christ. When you live for Him in your workplace or neighborhood, you will send forth a quiet message that will be heard.

Lord, help us to be consistent witnesses for You. --DJD

Keeping in step with the Savior,  
Living a life that is true,  
Clearly let's sound out a witness,  
Proving what God's grace can do.

-HGB

**A quiet testimony is more convincing  
than a Loud sermon.**

**1 Thessalonians 1:6-7**

**A Mysterious Fragrance**

Most of us can think of someone—perhaps a relative or a friend—who is known for a particular perfume she wears. Even without seeing her, we know when she's nearby. Wordlessly, her fragrance welcomes us into her company.

Every Christian should also be known for wearing a particular perfume—the fragrance of Christ. But it can't be bought at a cosmetic counter. It can't even be bottled and sold by the church. This mysterious perfume rises always and only out of our intimate relationship with Christ and wafts a subtle yet noticeable influence toward others.

Someone said about a Christian in his small town, "That man never crosses my pathway without my being better for it!" Another remarked of him, "You need only shake his hand to know that he is full of God." Most likely, this admired believer had given a verbal witness at some point. But without the aroma of Christ, his witness would not have been effective.

The apostle Paul asked, "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2Cor 2:16). The answer is plain: Our fragrance, our entire sufficiency, is from Christ alone, not from ourselves. What fragrance will you be wearing today? — Joanie Yoder

When we've been alone with Jesus,  
There's a difference others know;  
And to them it's like a fragrance  
That we leave where'er we go. —Hess

**When you are walking with Christ,  
others will sense that He is with you.**

**1 Thessalonians 1:6-7**

**FOR EXAMPLE**

A mother cheetah brought a live gazelle fawn to her 5-month-old cubs and released it. After the cubs made several unsuccessful attacks, the mama cheetah intervened and showed them how to "catch dinner."

I observed a similar technique used by a life insurance salesman. After he told me about the benefits of a particular policy, he shared how much coverage he had for his own family. His words took on new meaning because he demonstrated by his own example how to insure a family adequately.

If we want to teach others the art of knowing God and serving Him, we can't overemphasize the importance and the power of example. That's how Christ and His apostles communicated the same message. Their obedience to God was seen in flesh-and-blood terms that were easily understood.

Leadership by example is contagious. When Paul mentioned the Thessalonians, who had become "followers of us and of the Lord," he said that they also "became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia" (1 Thessalonians 1:6-7).

Leadership is more than something that automatically goes with an official title like Dad, Mom, Pastor, or Teacher. Those who want to lead and help others must first of all be good examples. —Mart De Haan

All in vain is splendid preaching  
And the noble things we say;  
All our talk is wasted teaching  
If we do not lead the way. —Anon.

**You cannot teach what you do not know,  
nor lead where you do not go.**

**1Thessalonians 1:7-8**

Dwight Moody regularly asked complete strangers about their spiritual life. One day he stopped a young man and asked, "Are you a Christian?"

“It is none of your business.”

“Yes it is.”

“Then you must be Dwight L. Moody.”

What a splendid reputation to precede any Christian! What would others say of us if what we were best known for became public knowledge? If the letters of our life would form one word to describe us, what would it be? Better still, rather than describe ourselves, with what one word would others describe us? Evangelistic was the word that characterized Moody. What do we say, or do, that as quickly identifies us?

### **1 Thessalonians 1:8 Building A Bridge**

Read: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. —1 Thessalonians 1:8

James Michener’s *Centennial* is a fictional account of the history and settlement of the American West. Through the eyes of a French-Canadian trader named Pasquinel, Michener converges the stories of the Arapaho of the Great Plains and the European-based community of St. Louis. As this rugged adventurer moves between the growing clutter of the city and the wide-open spaces of the plains, he becomes a bridge between two drastically different worlds.

Followers of Christ also have the opportunity to build bridges between two very different worlds—those who know and follow Jesus and those who do not know Him. Early Christians in Thessalonica had been building bridges to their idol-worshiping culture, so Paul said of them, “For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place” (1 Thess. 1:8). The bridge they were building had two components: the “word of the Lord” and the example of their faith. It was clear to everyone that they had “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (v.9).

As God declares Himself to those around us by His Word and through our lives, we can become a bridge to those who do not yet know the love of Christ.

Father, help us live in such a way that others will want to know about Your Son. May we not merely try to do what’s “right” but instead live as people forgiven and loved by You.

Live the gospel, and others will listen.

INSIGHT: In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul says that the greatest things are faith, hope, and love (v.13). In today’s passage, he commends the people of the church in Thessalonica for exhibiting these very traits. They work in faith and labor in love while hoping in Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1:3).

By Bill Crowder

### **1 Thessalonians 1:8 What A Ride!**

Read: 1 Thessalonians 1

The word of the Lord has sounded forth . . . in every place. —1 Thessalonians 1:8

Francis Asbury rode 6,000 miles a year on horseback for nearly half a century. Despite ill health, he drove himself tirelessly. He sustained himself with venison jerky—a food that wouldn’t spoil during his extended travels. Asbury is remembered for introducing the Methodist “circuit-riding preacher” as an effective way to capture the American frontier for Christ. Planting new churches in remote areas was central to his approach.

At the close of Asbury’s ministry, he had recruited over 700 traveling preachers. In 1771, when Asbury arrived in the colonies, there were only about 600 Methodists in America. Forty-five years later, there were 200,000!

In many ways, Asbury’s strategy for planting churches reflects the approach of the apostle Paul. To the church he had planted in Thessalonica, Paul wrote: “From you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place” (1 Thess. 1:8; see Acts 17:1-10).

The days of the “circuit-riding preacher” have come and gone. But each of us has a “frontier” where friends, relatives, and neighbors are our mission field. Can you think of someone today who needs to hear the good news?

Lord, lay some soul upon my heart, And love that soul through me; And may I nobly do my part To win that soul for Thee. —Tucker

Those who love Christ have a love for the lost.

By Dennis Fisher

### **1Thessalonians 1:8**

#### **Vance Havner commenting on 2 Timothy 4:10**

There was a good church in Thessalonica. It was the first gospel broadcasting station: "For from you sounded out the word of the Lord . . ." we read in 1 Thessalonians 1:8, but I do not think Demas went there to preach. The devil always has a Thessalonica for a Demas when he is trying to escape the reproach of a Roman prison and a Pauline Christianity. If you have a king other than Caesar, Rome is a hot spot to live and preach in.

### **1Thessalonians 1:8 Connectors**

by David C. McCasland

Marketing professionals have known for years that a product recommendation from a friend is among the most effective means of advertising. That's why many large companies recruit consumers who receive free samples of their products along with the encouragement to recommend them to family and friends. One major US corporation regularly sends coupons and products to 725,000 selected people called "connectors," who spread the word to others.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is more than a product. It is God's great plan for bringing people into a living, vital relationship with Him. But the gospel is conveyed most effectively by example and by word of mouth. Paul commended the Christians at Thessalonica for their exemplary living and their effective witness: "From you the word of the Lord has sounded forth ... Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything" (1 Thess. 1:8). Because their lives had been radically changed (v.9), they found it impossible to keep silent about their faith.

A university professor who trains advertising professionals says, "It's human nature to talk about things that excite us." God's grace is all the incentive we need to recommend our Savior to a friend.

I'll tell the world how Jesus saved me  
And how He gave me a life brand new;  
And I know that if you trust Him  
That all He gave me He'll give to you.  
—Fox © 1963, Fox Music Publications.

**If you want others to know what Christ will do for them,  
tell them what He has done for you.**

### **1Thessalonians 1:8**

#### **To Tell the Truth**

When you think of the term evangelism, what picture flashes onto the wall of your mind? A large stadium filled with people? A small booklet with a set of diagrams? A Christian wearing a pin with the symbol of a fish? A zealous believer playing intellectual chess with a pagan opponent? A salesman convincing a reluctant person to "try Jesus"?

Evangelism is a 10-letter dirty word to some of us. While we think it's a dandy idea for others, we're sure it isn't for us. We're not cut out to sell, nor shrewd enough to play intellectual games with non-Christians.

Evangelism, though, isn't about being a huckster who cons people into buying what they don't need. It has nothing to do with grabbing people by the lapels and shoving on them a faith that goes no deeper than the shirt pocket. What a grim indictment resides in the remark, "You could identify the people she had witnessed to by their haggard look."

Evangelism is simply sharing with others what we know about Jesus. "We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord" (2 Corinthians 4:5). No tricks. No deception. Speak the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth—in love. Then leave the results with God.—Haddon W. Robinson

It's not our task to force God's truth

On those who may the truth detest,  
But we are asked to share Christ's love  
And let God's Spirit do the rest. —D. De Haan

**We who know the joy of salvation should not keep it to ourselves.**

## **1 Thessalonians 1:8**

### **LASTING IMPRESSIONS**

From you the word of the Lord has sounded forth - 1 Thessalonians 1:8

When American financier John Pierpont Morgan died in 1913, his last will and testament revealed his genuine faith in Jesus Christ. He had prefaced his specific bequests with these significant words:

"I commit my soul into the hands of my Savior, in full confidence that having received it and washed it in His most precious blood He will present it faultless before the throne of my heavenly Father. And I entreat my children to maintain and defend, at all hazard, and at any cost of personal sacrifice, the blessed doctrine of the complete atonement for sin through the blood of Jesus Christ, once offered, and through that alone."

Those words must have left a lasting impression on his heirs. Yet as commendable as it is to leave such a clear witness to one's faith after we die, it is even more imperative to share our faith in Christ while we are still alive. The converts in Thessalonica responded to the witness of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy by imitating their life and witness so that "the word of the Lord sounded forth" beyond Macedonia and Achaia (1 Th. 1:6-8). Likewise, as we spread the gospel through our words and actions, we will leave lasting impressions on our world.- Vernon C. Grounds

I love to tell the story,  
For some have never heard  
The message of salvation  
From God's own holy Word.- Hankey

**Thought for the Day:**  
**A life lived for God leaves a lasting legacy.**

## **1 Thessalonians 1:8 The King's Message**

by Vernon C. Grounds

On January 21, 1930, the name of Harold Vidian became synonymous with heroism. On that day, England's King George V was scheduled to give the opening address at the London Arms Conference. The king's message was to be sent by radio all around the world.

Donald McCullough, in his book *The Trivialization of God* (NavPress, 1995), tells us that a few minutes before the king was to speak, a member of the CBS staff tripped over an electrical wire and broke it, cutting off the whole American audience. With no hesitation, chief control operator Harold Vidian grasped one end of the broken wire in his right hand and the other in his left, thus restoring the circuit. Electricity surged through his body. Ignoring the pain, Vidian held on until the king had finished his address.

I see in this a challenge for Christians. The message of the King of kings must go to the whole world. But only as we allow God's power to pass through us can the Lord's saving gospel be transmitted. Paul wrote, "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" (Rom. 10:14). If we are willing to serve as conduits, regardless of the cost to us, the good news will be proclaimed around the world.

Will you be a conduit for the King's message?

When I gave my life to Jesus,  
He became my Lord and Friend;  
Now His power is flowing through me,  
As His message I extend.

—Hess

**The good news of Christ  
is the best news in the world.**

**1 Thessalonians 1:8 How Will They Hear?**

by **David C. McCasland**

As I was riding a bus through London, I was struck by the sight of people from so many races and cultures who live in that great city. I began to focus on all the nationalities represented and wondered how the whole world would ever hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

While I was deep in thought, a woman stopped in the aisle next to my seat. With a beautiful smile, she extended a sheet of paper and asked, "Would you like to read about being born again?" I thanked her and told her that I knew the Lord Jesus Christ. "Praise God," she said quietly, and moved on to the next person.

I thought, That's how they'll hear! One at a time they'll hear the gospel from faithful believers who reach out to others wherever they are. The woman on the bus made me think of Paul's commendation to the Christians in Thessalonica: "From you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place" (1 Th. 1:8). Instead of being paralyzed by the thought that millions haven't heard, she was sharing Christ with a few, right where she lived. What if we all did that—starting today?

How will they hear? Only as we reach out to one person at a time and share the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

We know that millions haven't heard

About God's only Son,

So we must witness where we are

And tell them one by one.

—Sper

**Reach out to a world in need with the word it needs.**

**1 Thessalonians 1:9 A Spiritual Journey**

by **Dennis Fisher**

The miracles that God worked through Moses challenged the many gods of Pharaoh. Yet, in another time, there was a Pharaoh who promoted the belief in one deity. Pharaoh Akhenaten pointed to the rising and setting sun as the great deity who gave life to the earth. His religious symbol for Aton, the sun god, was represented by a single disc of light with emanating rays. Though this Pharaoh's idea came closer to the one God of the Bible, it was still idolatry.

When Paul addressed the people in Athens, he was grieved by the idolatry in that city. Yet he used the people's imperfect understanding of God to point them to the God of Scripture. Of their efforts in trying to find God, Paul said: "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24).

In our increasingly pluralistic world, the people around us may worship a multiplicity of deities. Yet their spiritual journey need not end there. We never know when someone might be moving toward the kingdom of God. Following the example of Paul, we should respect a person's religious background, watch for spiritual receptivity, and then point him or her to the one true God of Scripture.

A Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to lead the lost away from all that is false. And to lead them to You—the one and only God— who alone offers true life. Amen. God alone is worthy of our worship.

**1 Thessalonians 1:9 Change Of Direction**

Read: 1 Thessalonians 1 | Bible in a Year: Daniel 3-4; 1 John 5

They themselves declare . . . how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. —1 Thessalonians 1:9

The United States Secret Service was founded in 1865. Their mission? To deal with counterfeiters in an attempt to protect the dollar and, as a result, America's national economy. This targeted group of law enforcement officers, however, experienced a change of direction in 1902. They became best known for protecting the President of the United States, although their charge still embodies a variety of tasks.

That change of direction in the Secret Service duties is nothing compared to the completely altered lives of the believers at Thessalonica. They had a spiritual transformation that turned their lives around, which was noticed by people far and wide. Paul

wrote, “You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9). And “you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. . . . Your faith toward God has gone out” (vv.7-8). The change of direction they displayed was dramatic, to say the least— abandoning the worship of idols to embrace relationship with the true and living God. And people noticed the difference in their lives.

I wonder—do people recognize such a profound change in our hearts and lives?

If you are going in the wrong direction, Or if you have no goal in view, Let Christ transform you, have control, Then honor Him in all you do. —Hess

Coming to Christ is not merely informational; it's transformational.

By Bill Crowder

### **1 Thessalonians 1:9 The One True God**

Read: Acts 17:16-34

Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. —Philippians 2:11

The Pantheon in Rome is a magnificent circular structure that was built in 27 BC and completely reconstructed by the emperor Hadrian about ad 120. Its purpose was to unite the conquered peoples of the empire by providing a central place for their gods. When Christians were offered a niche for a statue of Jesus, they replied, “Never! He cannot stand beside gods that are not true.”

In AD 609 the Pantheon became a Christian church. Centuries later, a British lecturer visited Rome and found that all the niches around the wall were empty except one. It contained a statue of Jesus.

This reminds me that Jesus Christ has no equal in the world. He stands out from all others. For that reason, Christianity is both the most exclusive and inclusive religion of all. Christ said that He Himself is the truth and the only way to God (Jn. 14:6). But forgiveness of sin and knowledge of the true God are available to all who put their faith in Christ and His atoning death. It's no wonder that Paul could not remain silent when he saw an altar in Athens addressed “to the unknown god.”

Father, we believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Help us by Your power to let Him have His way in our lives so that others may know You, the one true God.

He is the way, the truth, the life—  
That One whose name is Jesus;  
There is no other name on earth  
That has the power to save us. —Sper

You can have tons of religion without one ounce of salvation.

By Dennis J. De Haan

### **1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 Do You Have Hope?**

by Mart De Haan

Several years ago, millionaire Eugene Lang was asked to speak to a class of sixth-graders from East Harlem, New York. What could he say to inspire these students, most of whom would drop out of school? Scrapping his notes, he decided to speak to them from his heart. “Stay in school,” he admonished, “and I'll help pay the college tuitions for every one of you.”

That was a turning point. For the first time in their lives, these students had hope. One said, “I had something to look forward to, something waiting for me. It was a golden feeling.” Nearly 90 percent of that class went on to graduate from high school.

People without hope are people without a future. But when hope is restored, life is restored. This is especially true for those who come to know Christ. He gives a sure basis for hope. He has promised to return to earth to take us to our eternal home (Jn. 14:3; 1 Th. 4:17). Till then, there is help through the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Th. 1:5). The believer experiences a new kind of life now and anticipates its fulfillment when Jesus returns.

Is that hope alive in your heart? If not, admit that you are a sinner. Trust Christ as your Savior. And He'll give you a hope that makes life worth living.



Is ours from heaven above;  
God fills our hearts with steadfast hope  
And gives us faith and love.

—DJD

**If Christ lives in your heart,  
you have a living hope.**

## **1 Thessalonians 1:10**

### **Lipstick on a Bulldog**

"In a lot of organizations, change is like putting lipstick on a bulldog. There's a tremendous amount of effort involved, and most times all you get is some cosmetics—and an angry bulldog." So writes Dave Murphy of the San Francisco Chronicle.

Real change, whether in a business, church, family, or in ourselves, can be difficult and elusive. While we long for a deep and lasting transformation, we often get only a temporary cover-up that solves nothing and satisfies no one.

The word repent is used in the Bible to describe the beginning of genuine spiritual change. Language scholar W. E. Vine says that to repent means "to change one's mind or purpose." In the New Testament it always involves a change for the better as a person turns away from sin while turning toward God. Jesus began His public ministry with the call, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17).

When we feel sorry for doing wrong or for getting caught, it may be nothing more than a spiritual cosmetic. But true repentance occurs deep in our hearts and results in a visible difference in our actions.

When we turn to Christ and yield ourselves to Him, He produces real change—not just a cover-up. —David C. McCasland

Don't hide your sin and cover up,  
Pretending there is nothing wrong;  
Instead, confess it and repent,  
And God will fill your heart with song. —Sper

**Repentance is not just words but actions.**

## **1 Thessalonians 1:10**

### **Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily**

Oh blessed hope! Is it not wonderful that each of the chapters of this Epistle brims over with the glad anticipation of the Master's quick return!

We should never lose this spirit of eager longing and waiting. It hath the promise of the life that now is, as of that which is to come. It lifts above the darkness of the present age; links the present with the great future; comforts us amid bereavement with the hope of speedy reunion; quickens us to watchfulness and consecration by the thought of the shortening of our opportunities; leads us to purify ourselves as He is pure, to gird our loins and trim our lamps.

Notice how closely the apostle combines the service of the living and true God, herein distinguishing Him from the dumb, dead stones of heathen idolatries, with this waiting for his Son from heaven. It has been alleged that the hope of the Second Advent is a dreamy, mystical sentiment, which disqualifies one for the active fulfilment of the duties of life. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who cherish that anticipation, who awake in the morning, saying, "Perhaps it will be today"; who go to their sleep whispering to their hearts, "Perchance I shall be changed into his likeness in a moment as I sleep, and wake in my resurrection body" — these are among the most devoted, strenuous, and successful workers of the Church. They are not recognized in the daily or religious Press; but God knows and honors them.

Oh, blessed Hope! With this elate,

Let not our hearts be desolate;

But strong in faith and patience, wait

Until He come.

**1Th. 1.9-10 Ye turned ... to serve ... and to wait.**

**G Campbell Morgan**

This letter is full of interest because it is certainly among the first of those which have been preserved for us from the pen of Paul. It was the first he wrote to European Christians, and in it the fundamental things of the Christian life are very clearly set forth. The words we have taken necessarily need their context for full interpretation, but taken out in this way they help us to see, in sharp outline, what it means to be a Christian. This is especially so if they are read in connection with an earlier description, that in which the Apostle spoke of their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope." The first thing in Christian life is that of turning to God: that is the "work of faith." The whole course of that life is that of serving the living God: that is "the labour of love." The persistent attitude of those who, thus turned to God, are serving Him, is that of waiting for His Son; that is "the patience of hope." It follows that here we have standards by which we may test ourselves constantly. To turn back to idols, such for instance as "covetousness which is idolatry," is to turn from God. To do that, is inevitably to slacken in service; therefore slackness in service should ever give us serious concern. To cease to wait for the Son is to lose the most powerful inspiration to loyalty, and the most urgent reason for service. Notice that the true expression of our having turned to God is that of our serving Him; and so also is service the true way in which to wait for the Son from heaven.(Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible).

**1 Thessalonians 1:10**

**Not My Hand**

There are times when it's best to wait for God to act instead of trying to make things happen ourselves. It's a lesson we see clearly when David refused to take King Saul's life, even though the king was trying to kill him (1 Samuel 24). When Saul was alone and vulnerable in a cave, David's men told him this was a God-given opportunity to take the kingship that rightfully belonged to him (v.4). But David refused, saying, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him" (v.6).

After Saul left the cave, David called out to him, "Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you" (v.12). David knew that God had chosen him to become king. But he also knew that killing Saul was not the right way to make it happen. He would wait for God to remove Saul from the throne.

Is there an obstacle between you and something that is rightfully yours? You believe it's God's will, but the method of obtaining it and the timing don't seem right. Think long and pray hard before taking a bad path toward a good goal.

Waiting for God to act is the best opportunity for the right things to happen His way. —David C. McCasland

O God, make me one of those rarest of souls  
Who willingly wait for Thy time;  
My impatient will must be lost in Thine own,  
And Thy will forever be mine. —Bowser

**God's timing is always right—  
wait patiently for Him.**

## **1 THESSALONIANS 2**

### **Devotionals and Sermon Illustrations**

**1Thessalonians 2:2**

**The Fear of Man Bringeth a Snare**

The pioneer evangelist Peter Cartwright spent 70 years in the work of the Lord and always preached the Word of God without fear or favor. One Sunday he was asked to speak at a Methodist church in the southern part of the United States. During the song just before the message, the pastor whispered to him that Andrew Jackson had just entered the sanctuary. He cautioned Cartwright to be very careful of what he said lest he offend their famous guest. The evangelist, however, knowing that "the fear of man bringeth a snare" (Pr. 29:25), was determined not to compromise the truth. He also knew that great leaders need the Lord as much as anyone, so he boldly proclaimed the gospel. In fact, halfway through his sermon he said, "I understand that Andrew Jackson is present in the

congregation today. If he does not repent of his sins and accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, he will be just as lost as anyone else who has never asked God for His forgiveness.”

Instead of becoming angry, Jackson admired the preacher for his courage. He listened with keen interest to the message and felt such deep conviction that after the service Cartwright was able to lead him to the Lord. From that moment on, the two became the best of friends.

The fear of man should never keep us from speaking out for Christ. The gospel is a powerful message, and the indwelling Holy Spirit will impart power to our words (2 Tim. 1:7). Holy boldness is needed, and if we trust Christ, holy boldness will be given. -HGB

## **1Thessalonians 2:3-6**

### **Careless Preachers**

Some opponents of Christianity may not be so much against Christ as they are against the hypocrisy of His followers. Ironically, it hasn't occurred to them that no one was more opposed to hypocrisy than Jesus Himself.

We've all met scoffers who thoughtlessly parrot the phrase, "The church is full of hypocrites!" But let's not be thoughtless in our response and dismiss such pronouncements without taking heed lest they be true.

We tend to think that it's not true of us. But let's think again. Have we ever been like the Christian who glanced through her window, only to see a nosy, noisy neighbor approaching her door? Her young, impressionable children heard her as she growled, "Oh, no—not her again!" Whereupon she opened the door and gushed insincerely, "How very nice to see you!"

Our lips and our lives often preach a mixed message. In Matthew 23:1-12, Jesus described the hypocritical teachers of the law and warned His disciples, "Do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do" (v.3).

God forbid that some opponent of Christ would be influenced by careless hypocrisy in our lives.

Lord, help us to be "careful preachers." —Joanie Yoder

You can fool the hapless public,  
You can be a subtle fraud,  
You can hide your little meanness,  
But you can't fool God.  
—Kleiser

**A hypocrite will often pray on his knees on Sunday  
and prey on his neighbors on Monday.**

### **1 Thessalonians 2:4 What Motivates Us?**

My wife and I received a notice that we had won a prize of either \$1,000 dollars in cash or \$250 in vouchers. When we arrived at the collection site, we were told that to be eligible, we would have to sit through a 90-minute presentation.

As we listened, we learned that we could receive vacation accommodations for 25 years at today's prices, which would amount to about \$15,000 in savings. But to enjoy this privilege, we had to pay a membership fee of \$5,200. We declined the offer but were given some discount vouchers, which we realized we'd probably never use.

Reflecting on that experience, my wife and I wondered why we had endured what had become a 3-hour presentation. What had motivated us? We wanted to be polite, but we also had to admit we were partly motivated by greed.

Wrong motives can even slip into our service for the Lord. Paul wrote to the believers at Thessalonica: "You remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you" (1 Thessalonians 2:9). He had the right to receive financial help from them, but he didn't want to be accused of unworthy motives.

What motivates us? Let's learn from Paul's example, remembering that God tests our hearts.

—Albert Lee

You know me, O Lord, for who I am,  
My motives are open to You;  
Oh, help me to live as Jesus did—  
With motives both noble and true.

**The world sees what we do-God sees why we do it.**

**1Thessalonians 2:5 Assault And Flattery**

**by Mart De Haan**

A stand-up comedian has provided a couple of one-liners that, when combined, can provide us with a spiritual parallel. He said, “I looked high and low for you, but I didn’t look low enough.” He also joked, “I have a considerate doctor. If you can’t afford the operation, he touches up the x-rays.”

If we put those two together and make it refer to the same person, what do we have? A description of someone who is so low that he wouldn’t hesitate to alter the truth to make you feel better. He will use exaggerated praise to win the affection and goodwill of people by telling them what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear.

The apostle Paul recognized the sin of insincere praise and was careful to avoid it. He wouldn’t stoop so low as to “doctor up” the facts just to gain the support of his listeners. Paul’s aim was to please God, not man. Yet he didn’t hesitate to express his approval when he could do it honestly. For example, he let the Thessalonians know how much he valued and loved them (1 Th. 2:17-20). Paul was not against praise—just insincere praise.

Are we so committed to pleasing God that we would never give false praise to gain the approval of others? Flattery is no joke, even if it does get you a smile.

We flatter those we scarcely know,  
We try to please each one we see;  
But we should never traffic in  
The sin of insincerity.  
—Anon.

**A flattering mouth works ruin. —Proverbs 26:28**

**1Thessalonians 2:7 Truth And Tenderness**

**by Joanie Yoder**

Some parents raise their children with harsh authority, but wise parents exercise their authority with lots of TLC—tender loving care!

Paul and his co-workers, Silvanus and Timothy, were spiritual parents to God’s family in the Thessalonian church. Paul said, “We were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children” (1 Th. 2:7). And he spoke of exhorting, comforting, and admonishing them “as a father does his own children” (1Th. 2:11). Like all Christian mothers and fathers, Paul desired that his spiritual children would grow up to reflect God’s glory.

Bible commentator Albert Barnes wrote, “Those who minister the gospel should be gentle, tender, and affectionate... What is wrong we should indeed oppose—but it should be in the kindest manner toward those who do wrong.”

In other words, we are to hate the sin but love the sinner. That’s not easy, especially among those we know best. For author C. S. Lewis, it seemed impossible until he remembered: “There was a man to whom I had been doing this all my life—namely myself!”

Let’s apply that principle toward others today and rediscover the power of truth joined with tenderness.

What wisdom lies in gentleness!  
What force true meekness holds!  
As truth combines with Christlike love,  
A tale of good unfolds.  
—DJD

**When truth is mixed with tenderness,  
it’s easier to take.**

**1 Thessalonians 2:7**

**G Campbell Morgan**

But we were babes in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children.—1 Thess. 2:7

I have resolutely adopted the marginal reading of the Revised, substituting the word "babes" for "gentle." Most of the ancient authorities have this word "babes." The word "gentle" has been preferred because it has been thought to suit the context better. Personally I do not think it does. The statement as it stands is very full of beauty. Perhaps no word of Paul anywhere more vividly sets forth his tender solicitude for his spiritual children. Observe the latter part of the figure first. It is not that of a mother. It is that of a nurse and mother. The Revised helps us here by the rendering, "a nurse cherisheth her own children." The conception is that of the merging of trained intelligent skill with natural mother-love. That is perfect care. A nurse may have real skill, and even be scientifically devoted to her charges, but all this leaves something lacking which is found in motherhood. On the other hand, mothers whose love and devotion are undoubted, have often wronged their children through ignorance. Given a nurse with her own children, and the ideal is realized. Paul said that this was his attitude toward his spiritual children, and he gives a beautiful description of it as he writes: "We were babes in the midst of you." Origen interpreted this to mean that Paul had talked to them in baby-language. Immediately the nurse-mother among her bairns is seen and heard, and there is nothing more to be said. Such was Paul's method with his babes in Christ; and such should ever be the way of those who have the oversight of the new-born children of God. (Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible).

### **1Thessalonians 2:7 Tender Loving Care**

**by David C. McCasland**

For years, researchers were baffled by the declining number of giant cactus plants in Saguaro National Park near Tucson, Arizona. They suspected climate change, air pollution, and bacterial infection. It seemed that the saguaros might even disappear.

Finally, scientists discovered that for the first 20 to 30 years of a saguaro's life, it needs a nurse plant such as a paloverde or mesquite tree to shade it in summer and provide winter warmth. Grazing and mining had destroyed the nurse plants, leaving the young saguaros unable to survive.

We all recognize the need for special care of the young in many areas of life, including new Christians. The great encourager, the apostle Paul, described how he and his associates treated the new believers in Thessalonica: "We were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children" (1 Th. 2:7).

Do you know a new Christian who needs encouragement and help? God may have placed you nearby as a "nurse plant" to help that person weather the critical time of beginning to think and live in a radically new way. You can offer companionship, scriptural guidance, prayer support, and a listening ear. Will you give tender loving spiritual care?

A babe in Christ grows strong and true,  
Is helped to know God's will to do,  
When we extend a loving hand  
And kindly love without demand. |  
—DJD

**If you are mature in your faith,  
help others to mature in their faith.**

### **1Thessalonians 2:7 Servant-Friendship**

**by Anne Cetas**

Don Tack wanted to know what life was like for homeless people. So he concealed his identity and went to live on the streets of his city. He found out that food and shelter were offered by many organizations. At one shelter he could spend the night if he listened to a sermon beforehand. He appreciated the guest speaker's message and wanted to talk with him afterward. But as Don reached out to shake the man's hand and asked if he could talk with him, the speaker walked right past him as if he didn't exist.

Don learned that what was missing most in ministry to the homeless in his area were people who were willing to build relationships. So he began an organization called Servants Center to offer help through friendship.

What Don encountered at the shelter was the opposite of what the people who heard the apostle Paul experienced. When he shared the gospel, he gave himself too. He testified in his letter to the Thessalonians, "We were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us" (1Th. 2:8). He said, "We were gentle among you," like a mother (1Th. 2:7).

In our service for the Lord, do we share not just our words or money but our time and friendship?

I want to do service for Christ while I live,  
And comfort and cheer to poor lonely hearts give;  
For this is the program approved by the Word,  
To visit the needy and speak of the Lord.  
—Bosch

**One measure of our likeness to Christ  
is our sensitivity to the suffering of others.**

### **1Thessalonians 2:7 A Family Reunion**

**by David C. McCasland**

For the past 29 years, the annual Celebration of Life reunion in our city has brought together members of a unique family. The festive gathering reunites doctors, nurses, and staff from Colorado Springs' Memorial Hospital for Children with former patients from its neonatal intensive care unit. Some are infants in strollers while others are young teens. Their parents have come with them to say thank you to those who saved their children's lives and gave them a second chance. Edward Paik's article in The Gazette quoted Dr. Bob Kiley's heartfelt response: "Both professionally and personally, for all the staff, this solidifies why we're in this job."

I wonder if in heaven there will be many such times when spiritual caregivers and those they helped as "babes in Christ" will reunite to share stories and give praise to God. The New Testament describes how Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy worked among the young believers in Thessalonica with gentleness, "just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children" (1 Thess. 2:7), and with comfort and encouragement, "as a father does his own children" (1Th. 2:11).

Helping new believers at a critical stage in their faith is a labor of love that will be cause for great rejoicing at the "family" reunion in heaven.

Friends will be there I have loved long ago,  
Joy like a river around me will flow;  
Yet, just a smile from my Savior, I know,  
Will through the ages be glory for me.  
—Gabriel

**One of heaven's pleasures will be  
to share our earthly stories.**

### **1Thessalonians 2:8 What Is This About?**

**by Dave Branon**

Love. Forgiveness. Mercy. Grace. Goodness. Compassion. Kindness. Generosity.

Who in the world would be against these characteristics? Who could oppose such positive forces in a person's life? In other words, who could be against Christians? Who could call Christians nasty names, consider them dangerous, and seek to put as much distance as possible between themselves and Christians?

Who? Many people. But why? It's because in the Christians they already know, they do not observe love, forgiveness, compassion, goodness, kindness, mercy, grace, and generosity.

They won't see Christ and His attributes if we're standing in the way. If we have a self-serving agenda or cause, they'll see our hate instead of our love, our grudges instead of our forgiveness, our indifference instead of our compassion, our harshness instead of our goodness. Our lives need to be consistent with the message we proclaim (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

Christianity is about Christ and His loving, forgiving, and compassionate gift of eternal life. Anything we do that reflects something else gives others the wrong idea.

It's all about Jesus. Let Him shine through your life so that others can see Him. —J D Branon

Show me the way, Lord, let my light shine  
As an example of good to mankind;  
Help them to see the patterns of Thee,  
Shining in beauty, lived out in me.  
—Neuer

## Live so that others will want to know your Savior.

### 1 Thessalonians 2:8 The Family Of Faith

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:6-14

You had become dear to us. —1 Thessalonians 2:8

During the 1980s, a singles' class at our church became a close-knit family for many people who had lost a spouse through divorce or death. When someone needed to move, class members packed boxes, carried furniture, and provided food. Birthdays and holidays were no longer solitary events as faith and friendship merged into an ongoing relationship of encouragement. Many of those bonds forged during adversity three decades ago continue to flourish and sustain individuals and families today.

Paul's letter to the followers of Jesus in Thessalonica paints a picture of life-giving relationships in God's family. "We were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children" (1 Thess. 2:7). "For you remember, [brothers and sisters], our labor and toil . . . that we might not be a burden to any of you" (v.9). "We exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children" (v.11). Like mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters, Paul and his associates shared the gospel and their lives with these fellow believers who "had become dear" to them (v.8).

In God's family of faith, He provides mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers for us. The Lord gives His joy as we share our lives together in His grace and love.

Father, You've called us to serve one another. Give me a heart willing to accept the care of others. May I ask for help when I am in need and respond with a heart of grace to others when they ask me for help.

God loves you and me; let's love one another.

INSIGHT: Paul often talks about the relationship that followers of Christ have with each other. This relationship is so close that he compares it to the parts of the body working together (1 Cor. 12). Jesus says that people will know we are His followers by the way we treat one another (John 13:35).

By David McCasland

### 1 Thessalonians 2:8 Give It Away

Parents, teachers, and school board members in central Texas were astounded when a retired couple offered 4-year college scholarships to all 45 children in a local school's first-grade class. The only conditions are that the child stays off drugs, graduates from the high school in that district, and attends an accredited Texas public university, junior college, or trade school. Years earlier, a company had paid half the college tuition for one of the donors, and he never forgot. "They helped me," he says, "and now it's my turn."

All of us have received a gift we can share with others. Although it may not be money, it's something that has enhanced our lives. Paul reminded the Thessalonians that "we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us" (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

What has been given to you that you need to pass along in the name of Christ? The gift of listening when someone needs to talk? Sharing in a Bible-study group where people learn to nourish themselves from the Word? Sending a thoughtful card to someone with a heavy heart?

The gospel is always most effective when it is shared by people who joyfully give themselves away. —David C. McCasland

The message you may give,  
The words that come from you,  
Most truly honor Jesus  
When love is given too.  
—D. De Haan

**God gives to you so you can give to others.**

### 1Thessalonians 2:9 Helpful Comparisons

**by Herbert Vander Lugt**

While traveling to speak at a Bible conference in Malaysia, I had to fly nonstop for 20 hours. Some sympathetic friends made remarks like this: "My, that must have been tiring!" I couldn't encourage their well-meant comments, however. During the flight I had been thinking about the hardships of the pilgrims as they sailed to America on the Mayflower, and I could find no reason to complain.

Sometimes it's good to compare our situation with that of others. This is especially true when we think we are too tired to put forth that extra effort in serving the Lord. Consider the apostle Paul, for example. He worked "night and day" at tentmaking to support himself so he could preach the gospel to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 2:9).

Today, many youth workers give their all to run successful camping programs. Missionaries undergo hardships to evangelize the world. Busy mothers sacrifice to help in vacation Bible schools. Of course, we must maintain a balance between work and rest. But when we put forth that extra effort for God, we will at times become very tired. We may even get so weary that our bedtime prayer will be, "Lord, I'm exhausted. Amen." I think God will smile approvingly and give us a good night's rest.

Work, for the night is coming,  
Work through the sunny noon;  
Fill brightest hours with labor—  
Rest comes sure and soon.  
—Coghill

**When the going gets too easy, you may be going downhill.**

**1Thessalonians 2:10**

**Thanks, Dad**

**by Albert Lee**

In the US, more long distance calls are made on Mother's Day than any other day. But on Father's Day, the most collect calls are made. It seems that children still depend on their fathers to provide, even when they are far away from home.

Fathers are needed and wanted for much more than financial help. While 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 is primarily directed toward church leaders, Paul talks about how their role is similar to a father's. He states: "You know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children."

Exhorted is "to call near." It is easy for fathers to think that all that's required of them is to bring home a paycheck. But children need their close encouragement.

The word comforted is "to console." Nothing is more valuable to a child than the time given by a father to listen and talk. Without constant relating, relationships turn cold.

Charged is "to affirm." Fathers challenge their children by affirming the truth of God's Word as they live it out in front of them. And even in failings, they affirm what is right through the asking of forgiveness.

How thankful we can be for fathers who help their children "walk worthy of God" (1Th 2:12).

We're thankful for our fathers, Lord,  
They're special gifts from You;  
Help us to show we honor them  
By what we say and do.  
—Sper

**Good fathers reflect the heavenly Father.**

**1Thessalonians 2:12**

**Living Royally**

There is an ancient story about a man named Astyages who determined to do away with a royal infant named Cyrus. He summoned an officer of his court and told him to kill the baby prince. The officer in turn delivered the youngster to a herdsman with instructions that he should take him high up into the mountains where the baby would die from exposure.



The herdsman and his wife, however, took the child and raised him as their own. Growing up in the home of those humble peasants, he naturally thought they were his real parents. He was ignorant of his royal birth and his kingly lineage. Because he thought he was a peasant, he lived like one.

Many Christians fail to realize the royal heritage that is theirs in Christ. They live as spiritual peasants when they should be living royally. According to the apostle Paul, believers "are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). He also said, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal 4:6-7).

God has given us everything we need to live victorious, fulfilling lives. Let's not live like peasants.—Richard De Haan

Rejoice—the Lord is King!  
Your Lord and King adore!  
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing  
And triumph evermore.  
—Wesley

A child of the King should reflect his Father's character.

## **1Thessalonians 2:12**

### **Learning To Walk**

**1Th 2:12 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.**

I remember those days long ago when our children were learning to walk. First they showed their readiness by pulling themselves up and taking a tentative step or two. My wife and I would reach out our hands and encourage them to walk toward us. We held them up by their hands or by the suspenders on their overalls. We praised every effort and encouraged every attempt. We never grew discouraged, nor did we give up until they learned to walk.

So it is with our heavenly Father: He "taught [Israel] to walk" (Hos. 11:3). He took His children "by their arms" and "drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love" (Hos 11:3-4).

Our heavenly Father stands before us with outstretched arms, encouraging us toward holiness, eager to catch us when we stumble. He picks us up when we fall. He is never discouraged with our progress, nor will He ever give up. The more difficult we find the process, the more care and kindness He expends.

George MacDonald put it this way: "God will help us when we cannot walk, and He will help us when we find it hard to walk, but He cannot help us if we will not walk." Even though you fall, you must try again. Your Father holds you by the hand. —David H. Roper

Savior, let me walk beside Thee,  
Let me feel my hand in Thine;  
Let me know the joy of walking  
In Thy strength and not in mine. |  
—Sidebotham

**We can't run the Christian race until we learn to walk.**

## **1Thessalonians 2:13**

### **STAYING ON COURSE**

A new device developed by the United States military is now available for use by civilian pilots. Called the Global Positioning System (GPS), the unit utilizes signals from a system of satellites to calculate to within 50 feet the exact location of the plane, as well as the nearest airport.

David Ramsdale could have used such a device on one of his flights. As a pilot for the Jungle Aviation And Radio Service (JAARS) he was flying passengers over uncharted jungle from Yarinacocha, Peru, toward the Brazilian border. After a while, Ramsdale realized he had been following the wrong river and was lost. Daylight was fading and the plane was low on fuel. Radio contact with the base gave no navigational help. Through the dusk, Ramsdale spotted a little river. He followed it to a larger river, and then to a village where he was able to land on a narrow airstrip just as darkness fell.

A similar thing can happen in our spiritual journey. We lose our bearings and get off course. Soon we realize we're going in the

wrong direction. But we have a positioning system that will always tell us which way to go -- the Word of God. If we consult it regularly, it will guide our path and keep us from straying. - David C. Egner

Lamp for the feet that in byways have wandered,  
Guide for the youth that would otherwise fall;  
Hope for the sinner whose life has been squandered,  
Staff for the aged, and best Book of all. --Anon.

**To stay on course,  
trust the unfailing compass of God's Word.**

## **1Thessalonians 2:13**

### **Tapping the Treasure**

And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. 1Thessalonians 2:13

Stephen May discovered a treasure while teaching literature at the University of Northern Colorado. In the library, he found 150 boxes of letters, manuscripts, journals, outlines, and notes given to the school by James A. Michener.

Surprisingly, no one was using those materials to write a biography of the Pulitzer Prize-winning author, known for his historical novels. After years of research and writing, May produced a new account of the life of Michener from that great treasure.

Each day, you and I are writing the story of our lives by what we say and do. Are we using the great, but often neglected, wealth of the Bible? The psalmist wrote: "I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches... Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law" (Ps. 119:14,18).

The Bible is the written record through which we get to know Jesus Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). Its nuggets of truth are available to us all.

A life well-lived is directly related to a Bible well-read. As we live out our life story, let's be sure to tap the treasure of God's Word every day. —David C. McCasland

My Bible to me is a treasure house,  
Where I can always find  
Whatever I need from day to day  
For heart and soul and mind. —Anon.

**The Bible's treasures  
are found by those who dig for them.**

## **1Thessalonians 2:13**

### **Frog and the Toad**

One of my favorite children's books is Frog And Toad Together by Arnold Lobel. Frog had a garden that Toad admired, and he wanted one too. So Frog told him: "It is very nice, but it was hard work." When he gave Toad some flower seeds, Toad quickly ran home and planted them.

"Now seeds," said Toad, "start growing." He tried very hard to make his garden grow. He shouted at the seeds, read them long stories, and sang songs to them—but they didn't grow.

"What shall I do?" cried Toad. "Leave them alone," Frog said. "Let the sun shine on them, let the rain fall on them. Soon your seeds will start to grow." Then one day, little green plants appeared. "At last," shouted Toad, "my seeds have stopped being afraid to grow! But you were right, Frog. It was very hard work."

So many people think it's very hard work to grow in righteousness. We must spend time reading the Word, praying, and cultivating our faith by being with other believers. But our progress in holiness is still dependent on God. As He shines His face upon us and rains His love into our lives, we will grow. Then righteousness will begin to "spring forth" (Isaiah 61:11). Don't be discouraged if growth comes slowly. Soon you will have a garden. —David H. Roper

Within the seed lies God's creative power—

He's given us the joy to see it grow;  
And when He puts new life within our heart,  
His wonder-working power we can know. —Hess

**Spiritual growth depends on the water of God's Word  
and the sunshine of His love.**

**1 Thessalonians 2:18 Turning Evil Into Good**

by Richard De Haan

The apostle Paul told the believers at Thessalonica that he and his co-workers wanted to visit them but Satan hindered them (1 Th. 2:18).

Does it disturb you to read that a child of God can be blocked by the devil from doing what he believes to be the will of God? If it does, remember that nothing happens without God's knowledge, nor apart from His direct or permissive will. The Lord can take any deed, whether of Satan or man, and turn it around for His own purposes and glory. The devil's hindering of Paul, for example, resulted in great benefit to Christians! Because the apostle couldn't speak to the Thessalonians personally, he wrote them a letter. This portion of the Bible has been a source of rich blessing and comfort to believers down through the centuries.

I'm reminded of Joseph's response to his brothers who had sold him into slavery. They feared that he would seek revenge, but he said, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" (Gen. 50:20).

What a comfort to know that nothing happens apart from the will of our heavenly Father! He is all-wise, all-knowing, all-powerful. Under God's sovereign control, evil can be turned around to accomplish His good purposes.

There is a certainty of love  
That sets my heart at rest,  
A calm assurance for today  
That what God does is best. —Anon.

**God can bring showers of blessing  
out of storms of adversity.**

**1 Thessalonians 2:19 Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily**

What is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye?

The tender heart of the apostle suffered keenly in his enforced absence from these beloved converts. He had cherished them as a nurse her children; he would have gladly imparted to them his own soul. Not once nor twice he had sought to see them again, but had been hindered by malign spiritual forces that were very real to him. He found comfort, however, in the thought that, at the Lord's coming, they and he would be re-united, and that they would be his joy, as now they were his hope. Now they lit his hope to an intenser passion; then they would intensify his joy to a more exquisite fulness.

But there is a further thought. The souls whom he had won for Jesus were to constitute his crown. It was as though they would be woven into a wreath like that given to the ancient athlete, and placed on his brow as he emerged from the terrific conflict of his life — not to be worn there, but cast forthwith at the feet of his Lord. What an incentive was this! Each soul plucked from the enemy would be another jewel for the Master's crown, and herein a fresh source of heavenly blessedness to himself.

I remember Mr. Spurgeon telling of an old Christian woman in his almshouses, who persisted in saying loving thoughts about her beloved pastor to his face, at which he greatly demurred. He feared that she was making more of him than of Christ. But she said sweetly, "It is written in the Song, 'Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit two hundred'; so, dear pastor, you must have your two hundred." Yes, it will be so; we shall partake with Jesus of the fish that we have caught; we shall have fellowship in his exceeding joy over the saved.

**1 Thessalonians 2:17–3:7 Much More Than Survival**

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:17–3:7 | Bible in a Year: Genesis 31-32; Matthew 9:18-38

Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love. —1 Thessalonians 3:6

In April 1937, Mussolini's invading armies forced all the missionaries serving in the Wallamo region to flee Ethiopia. They left behind just 48 Christian converts, who had little more than the gospel of Mark to feed their growth. Few even knew how to read. But when

the missionaries returned 4 years later, the church had not just survived; it numbered 10,000!

When the apostle Paul was forced to leave Thessalonica (see Acts 17:1-10), he yearned to learn about the survival of the small band of Christians he left behind (1 Thess. 2:17). But when Timothy visited the Thessalonian church later, he brought word to Paul in Athens about their “faith and love” (1 Thess. 3:6). They had become “examples” to the believers in the surrounding regions in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. 1:8).

Paul never claimed credit for any numerical increase in his ministry. Nor did he attribute it to anyone else. Rather, he gave credit to God. He wrote, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6).

Difficult circumstances may thwart even our best intentions, separating friends from each other for a season. But God is growing His church through every difficulty. We need only be faithful and leave the results to Him.

Lord, we are so prone to be fearful when we face opposition, yet so often we want to take credit for every little success. Help us see that You are the One who blesses and builds Your church.

I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. —Jesus (Matthew 16:18)

INSIGHT: In today’s passage, Paul reminded the Thessalonian believers about the great opposition to the gospel that accompanied his ministry to them. This young congregation had experienced its share of persecution, so Paul’s transparency about his struggles helped strengthen their faith.

By C. P. Hia

### **1Thessalonians 2:19-20 Pleasures In Heaven**

**by Richard De Haan**

The renowned 19th-century English preacher C. H. Spurgeon told this story about King Cyrus, the man who conquered Babylon and freed the Jews from captivity: A visitor who was admiring Cyrus’ gardens said it gave him much pleasure. “Ah,” said Cyrus, “but you have not so much pleasure in this garden as I have, for I have planted every tree in it myself.”

Spurgeon then commented, “One reason some saints will have a greater fullness of heaven than others will be that they did more for heaven than others. By God’s grace they were enabled to bring more souls there.”

Those words should cause all of us who know the Lord to do some serious thinking. How many people will be in heaven because of us? Our desire should be that when we reach our eternal home, some will say to us, “I’m so thankful for you. It was your testimony, your life, your invitation to accept Christ that accounts for my being here today.” The apostle Paul anticipated the joy in heaven of seeing people who were there as a result of his ministry (1 Th. 2:19-20).

Yes, heaven’s joys will be the fullest for those who have helped lead others to Christ. So do all you can to bring to Jesus those who are lost in sin. That’s how you can lay up pleasures in heaven!

We will not know until we reach  
Our heavenly home above  
How many souls have come to Christ  
Because we shared His love. —Sper

**One of heaven's pleasures will be to meet  
those we've helped lead to Christ.**

### **1 Thessalonians 2:19 THAT'S MY PAY!**

"What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you?" - 1 Thessalonians 2:19

A missionary was once asked about his salary. The inquirer knew it couldn't be much, and he wanted to know why anyone would give so generously of himself to help total strangers, yet be paid so little. The missionary pulled out a letter and read these words: "If it weren't for you, I wouldn't know Jesus Christ as my Savior. Every morning I kneel in prayer, thanking God for everything you've done for me."

"That's my pay!" exclaimed the dedicated servant of the Lord.

The apostle Paul must have had something similar in mind when he wrote to the believers in Thessalonica. Addressing himself to those he had brought to the Savior, he said, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you?"(1 Th. 2:19).

In a day when there is so much emphasis on acquiring material wealth, how refreshing it is to hear of Christians whose greatest reward is to see people accept Christ and grow in spiritual maturity.

Are you making it a practice to share the gospel with others? If you are, you'll be regarded with the best pay of all. You'll enjoy thrilling satisfaction here on earth, and you can look forward to even greater reward in heaven! -- Richard W. De Haan

God does not pay as others pay,  
In goods that perish and decay;  
But this is sure, let come what may,  
Who does God's work will get God's pay.-- Anon.

Work for the Lord --the retirement plan is out of this world.

## 1 THESSALONIANS 3

### Devotionals and Sermon Illustrations

#### 1 Thessalonians 3:3

##### Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

No man should be moved by these afflictions; for ... we are appointed thereunto.

We all love the sunshine, but the Arabs have a proverb that "all sunshine makes the desert"; and it is a matter for common observation that the graces of Christian living are more often apparent in the case of those who have passed through great tribulation. God desires to get as rich crops as possible from the soil of our natures. There are certain plants of the Christian life, such as meekness, gentleness, kindness, humility, which cannot come to perfection if the sun of prosperity always shines.

We often shrank from the lessons set us at school, and looked out of the windows, longing for the hour of release. But now how thankful we are for the tutors and governors, appointed by our parents, who kept us steadily at our tasks. We feel almost kindly to the schoolmaster or mistress that we dreaded. And, similarly, one day we shall be glad for those hard lessons acquired from the horn-book of pain. "We have had fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, who chastens for our profit, and live?"

The tears of those who suffer according to the will of God are spiritual lenses and windows of agate. As the weights of the clock or the ballast in the vessel are necessary for their right ordering, so is trouble in the soul-life. The sweetest scents are only obtained by tremendous pressure; the fairest flowers grow amid Alpine snow-solitudes; the rarest gems have suffered longest from the lapidary's wheel; the noblest statues have borne most blows of the chisel. All, however, is under law. Nothing hap. pens that has not been appointed with consummate care and foresight.

#### 1 Thessalonians 3:3

##### G Campbell Morgan

Here unto we are appointed.—1 Thess. 3.3

The "hereunto" refers to "afflictions." These Thessalonian Christians were in circumstances of actual suffering, resulting from persecution by their own country-men. Through these trials they had stood fast. Paul was full of joy because this was so, but was desiring to hearten and strengthen them in their loyalty. This he did, first, by reminding them that the churches in Judaea had suffered in the same way at the hands of their kinsmen. Then he made this declaration; "Hereunto we are appointed." Surveying the whole Christian movement, he saw suffering everywhere as the result of loyalty to the faith; and he did not conceive of it merely as something to be endured. He saw God ruling over all, and knew that this pathway of pain was a Divinely-arranged one. Therefore he realized that the sufferings of all Christian souls were not only within His knowledge; they were in His plan for His people. They were appointed to affliction. The word "appointed" here is the emphatic word. In affliction the saints are where God has put them, and they are there for purposes within the counsel of His will. It is patent that Paul was thinking in the realm of the Cross. As the sufferings of Christ were all by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and that in order to the accomplishment of His redemptive purpose, so all the affliction of those who followed Christ were of the same fellowship, and those enduring them were workers

together with God. (Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible).

### 1 Thessalonians 3:1-10 Booster Words

Exhort one another daily. —Hebrews 3:13

Booster shots—think of the benefits! They are part of a complete program of vaccinations that protect us against threatening diseases.

Booster words—ever heard of them? They are words we say to help others in the fight against discouragement and despair.

In his book *Secrets From The Mountain*, Pat Williams tells of an experiment with a group of students. They were told that scientists had proven that brown-eyed children were smarter than blue-eyed ones. Immediately, the brown-eyed students began doing better in school. A few days later, though, the students were told that they had been misinformed, and it was the blue-eyed youngsters who were actually smarter. Quickly, the scores of the blue-eyed children rose above those of their brown-eyed classmates.

Lying to children is never right, but the study demonstrates that words have the power to influence behavior. Paul recognized this, so he sent Timothy to the church at Thessalonica to encourage the believers in their faith—and his words did just that (1 Thessalonians 3:2-3,6).

Do we “exhort one another daily”? (Hebrews 3:13). Do we bring comfort and encouragement to the people we know? Try using some booster words today. —Dave Branon

#### Putting It Into Practice

Think of someone who needs encouragement.

How can you help that person today?

Make a phone call, send an e-mail, or pay a visit.

Hope can be ignited by a spark of encouragement.

By Dave Branon

### 1Thessalonians 3:3-4

#### Tough Trees

Bristlecone pines are the world's oldest living trees. Several are estimated to be 3,000 to 4,000 years old. In 1957, scientist Edmund Schulman found one he named "Methuselah." This ancient, gnarled pine is nearly 5,000 years old! It was an old tree when the Egyptians were building the pyramids.

Bristlecones grow atop the mountains of the western United States at elevations of 10,000 to 11,000 feet. They've been able to survive some of the harshest living conditions on earth: arctic temperatures, fierce winds, thin air, and little rainfall.

Their brutal environment is actually one of the reasons they've survived for millennia. Hardship has produced extraordinary strength and staying power.

Paul taught that "tribulation produces ... character" (Romans 5:3-4). Adversity is part of the process that God uses to produce good results in our lives. Trouble, if it turns us to the Lord, could actually be the best thing for us. It leaves us wholly dependent on Him.

So we should pray not just for relief from our affliction, but for the grace to turn it into greater openness to God and to His will for us. Then we can be strong in calamity, and at peace in the place where God has planted us. —David H. Roper

#### THINKING IT OVER

What trial in your life is making you wonder why God is allowing it? *Read* [Why Would A Good God Allow Suffering?](#)

God uses our difficulties to develop our character.

**The Good That Pain Can Do** - Affliction, when we accept it with humility, can be instructive, a discipline that leads us to a deeper, fuller life. “Before I was afflicted I went astray,” David said, “but now I keep Your Word” (Psalm 119:67). Peter would agree: Affliction leads us not to live for ourselves “but for the will of God” (1 Peter 4:2).

Far from being an obstacle to our spiritual growth, pain can be the instrument of it—if we're trained by it. It can push us closer to God and deeper into His Word. It is a means by which He graciously shapes us to be like His Son, gradually giving us the compassion, contentment, tranquility, and courage we long and pray for. Without pain, we wouldn't be all that God wants us to be.

His strength shines brightest through human weakness.

Has God set you apart today to receive instruction through suffering and pain? Endure this training patiently. He can turn the trial into a blessing. He can use it to draw you close to His heart and into His Word, teach you the lessons He intends for you to learn, and use it to bestow His grace on you.

God is making more of you—something much better—than you ever thought possible. —David H. Roper

By faith a Christian can have poise

And rise above all that annoys—

Sustained and strengthened by God's power

To live in victory hour by hour. —Hess

Whatever God teaches us through pain is gain.

**Raku** - Some friends gave us a piece of Raku pottery. "Each pot is hand-formed," the tag explained, "a process that allows the spirit of the artist to speak through the finished work with particular directness and intimacy."

Once the clay has been shaped by the potter it is fired in a kiln. Then, glowing red hot, it is thrust into a smoldering sawdust pile where it remains until finished. The result is a unique product—"one of a kind," the tag on our piece insists.

So it is with us. We bear the imprint of the Potter's hand. He too has spoken through His work "with particular directness and intimacy." Each of us is formed in a unique way for a unique work: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

But though we are created for good works, we're not yet finished. We must experience the kiln of affliction. Aching hearts, weary spirits, aging bodies are the processes God uses to finish the work He has begun.

Don't fear the furnace that surrounds you. Be "patient in tribulation" and await the finished product. "Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:4).—David H. Roper

We are here to be perfected,  
Only God our needs can see;  
Rarest gems bear hardest grinding,  
God's own workmanship are we.  
—Anon.

**Great Preachers** - The greatest sermons I have ever heard were not preached from pulpits but from sickbeds. The deepest truths of God's Word have often been taught by those humble souls who have gone through the seminary of affliction.

The most cheerful people I have met, with few exceptions, have been those who've had the least sunshine and the most pain and suffering in their lives. The most grateful people I have ever known were not those who had traveled a pathway of roses all their lives, but those who were confined to their homes, some to their beds, and had learned to depend on God.

The grippers, on the other hand, are usually those who have the least to complain about. The men and women who are the most cheerful and the most grateful for the blessings of Almighty God are often those who have gone through the greatest trials.

The Bible tells us that if we respond properly to the trials of life, we will develop patience and godly maturity (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:3-4). We must keep in mind that our present sufferings are "but for a moment" and that they are being used by God for our eternal good (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

So take heart, suffering one. Someday you too will realize that it was worth it all (1 Peter 1:7). —MRD —M. R. De Haan

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,  
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;  
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,  
So bravely run the race till we see Christ.  
— Esther Kerr Rusthoi  
(c) Renewal 1969 Singspiration, Inc.

Some of life's greatest lessons are learned in the school of affliction.

## 1 Thessalonians 3:3 The Way To An “Easy” Life

Read: 1 Thessalonians 3

No one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. —1 Thessalonians 3:3

Are parents trying too hard to make their kids happy? And is that having the opposite effect? These questions introduce an interview with Lori Gottlieb, author of an article on the subject of unhappy young adults. Her conclusion: Yes. Parents who refuse to let their children experience failure or sadness give them a false view of the world and do not prepare them for the harsh realities of adult life. They're left feeling empty and anxious.

Some Christians expect that the Lord will be the kind of parent who protects them from all sorrow and disappointment. But that's not the kind of Father He is. He lovingly allows His children to go through suffering (Isa. 43:2; 1 Thess. 3:3).

When we start with the mistaken belief that it's an easy life that will make us truly happy, we become weary trying to live out our faulty belief. But when we face the truth that life is difficult, we can invest our lives in the pursuit of a good and godly life instead. That kind of life strengthens us for the times when life is difficult.

God's goal is to make us holy, not just happy (1 Thess. 3:13). And when we are holy, we are more likely to be truly happy and content.

Must I be carried to the skies  
On flowery beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas? —Watts

A contented person has learned to accept the bitter with the sweet.

By Julie Ackerman Link

## 1 Thessalonians 3:4 Courage in Crisis

Through the centuries, some of God's servants have faced the possibility of an agonizing death unless they renounced their faith. They knew that God could deliver them, but they also knew that in keeping with His own purposes He might not answer their pleas for supernatural help.

In the book of Daniel, three young Hebrew captives faced a life-and-death choice: Worship the king's gold image or be thrown into the fiery furnace. Their response was unhesitating: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace." They added, "But if not, ... we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up" (Daniel 3:17-18).

But if not! Those words challenge our allegiance. Suppose we face crippling disease. Suppose we are facing shameful disgrace. Suppose we are facing painful loss. We plead for God's intervention, yet in every threatening circumstance our plea should carry the proviso, "But if not!"

Is our attitude that of Jesus in Gethsemane? "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39).

Are we willing to endure whatever will glorify God and work out His holy purposes?—Vernon C Grounds

They climbed the steep ascent of heaven  
Through peril, toil, and pain:  
O God, to us may grace be given  
To follow in their train. —Heber

When conviction runs deep, courage rises to sustain it.

## 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13 Praying Friends

Read: 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Brethren, pray for us. —1 Thessalonians 5:25



I met my friend Angie for lunch after having not seen her for several months. At the end of our time together, she pulled out a piece of paper with notes from our previous get-together. It was a list of my prayer requests she had been praying for since then. She went through each one and asked if God had answered yet or if there were any updates. And then we talked about her prayer requests. How encouraging to have a praying friend!

The apostle Paul had a praying relationship with the churches he served, including the one at Thessalonica. He thanked God for the faith, love, and hope of the people (1 Thess. 1:2-3). He longed to see them, and asked God “night and day” that he might be able to visit them again (3:10-11). He requested that the Lord would help them “increase and abound in love to one another and to all” (v.12). He also prayed that their hearts would be blameless before God (v.13). They must have been encouraged as they read about Paul’s concern and prayers for them. Paul knew too his own need for God’s presence and power and pleaded, “Brethren, pray for us” (5:25).

Loving Father, thank You for wanting us to talk with You. Teach us all to be praying friends.

I need the prayers of those I love  
While traveling on life’s rugged way,  
That I may true and faithful be,  
And live for Jesus every day. —Vaughn

The best kind of friend is a praying friend.

By Anne Cetas

### **1 Thessalonians 3:12 - Sign Language**

Read: John 1:14-18 | Bible in a Year: 1 Chronicles 16-18; John 7:28-53

May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all. —1 Thessalonians 3:12

A friend of mine pastors a church in a small mountain community not far from Boise, Idaho. The community is nestled in a wooded valley through which a pleasant little stream meanders. Behind the church and alongside the stream is a grove of willows, a length of grass, and a sandy beach. It’s an idyllic spot that has long been a place where members of the community gather to picnic.

One day, a man in the congregation expressed concern over the legal implications of “outsiders” using the property. “If someone is injured,” he said, “the church might be sued.” Though the elders were reluctant to take any action, the man convinced them that they should post a sign on the site informing visitors that this was private property. So the pastor posted a sign. It read: “Warning! Anyone using this beach may, at any moment, be surrounded by people who love you.” I read his sign the week after he put it up and was charmed. “Exactly,” I thought. “Once again grace has triumphed over law!”

This love for one’s neighbor springs from God’s kindness, forbearance, and patience with us. It’s not the law, but the goodness of God that draws men and women to repentance (Rom. 2:4) and to saving faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

As You have loved me, let me love Lost souls in darkness dwelling; To draw the needy ones to You, Lord, give a zeal compelling! — Bosch

Love is the magnet that draws believers together and attracts unbelievers to Christ.

By David Roper

### **1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 Keep The Deck Clean**

Read: 1 Thessalonians 3:6-4:2

May the Lord . . . establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God. —1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

I used to think my friends Irene and Ken were a little too fanatical about keeping the deck of their sailboat clean. The gleaming white deck is part of the boat’s beauty as she sweeps through the water in full sail under a bright sun. You aren’t aboard her very long before you realize that keeping her that way takes constant attention.

When you fish for bass over the side of the boat in some quiet bay, Irene makes sure that you clean up the black, gooey dirt from the nightcrawlers right away. Or if you’ve been ashore and you come on board with muddy shoes, you scrub the muck off the deck before it gets tracked all over.

Just as Irene works at keeping the sailboat clean, we need to work continually at keeping our lives clean from sin. Paul prayed that

the Thessalonian believers would be blameless and live in a way that pleases God (1 Th. 3:13; 4:1). He didn't mean that believers should be perfect—we can't be. But when we become aware that we have sinned, we must confess it, ask God's forgiveness, and forsake it—even a little sin.

With God's help, let's "clean the deck." Then we will be found blameless when Jesus comes.

Lord, grant that we may hear You speak,  
As truth within Your Word we seek;  
Reveal to us our every sin,  
And make us clean, without, within. —DJD

Confessing our sins to God always brings cleansing from God.

By David Egener

### **1 Thessalonians 3:12 The Heart Of The Church**

Read: 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13 | Bible in a Year: Psalms 103-104; 1 Corinthians 2

May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all. —1 Thessalonians 3:12

What makes a church successful? A big turnout on Sunday morning? A multimillion-dollar budget? A state-of-the-art building?

We all know those things aren't the criteria that define a successful church. Whether your church has stadium-size crowds or just a few in attendance, numbers are not the measure God uses for success. He looks at the heart of the church.

The apostle Paul planted an important church in Thessalonica, the capital city of Macedonia. He showed his desire for the church members there when he wrote: "May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all . . . , so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness" (1 Thess. 3:12-13). With these words, Paul showed us two characteristics that are vital for a successful body of believers—love for one another and holiness.

Congregations, church buildings, and budgets come in different sizes. The true measure of success is demonstrated by followers of Christ who love God and each other, and are committed to living holy lives. Our challenge can be found in the words of the prophet Micah: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (6:8).

If you believe on Jesus' name,  
Then of His church you are a part;  
By loving others you proclaim:  
"We are the church—we are the 'heart.'" —Hess

A small church with a big vision has greater impact than a big church with a small vision.

By Cindy Hess Kasper

### **1 Thessalonians 3:12 CLIMATE CONTROL**

May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another. 1 Thessalonians 3:12

It's one of the few places on earth where the air is as fresh and clean as it must have been millennia ago. Constant winds keep out pollution and germs, and the climate discourages the growth of native viruses.

It sounds like the healthiest place on earth. So why doesn't anyone want to live there? Because it's just too cold. With temperatures that drop to -100 Fahrenheit, the South Pole is too frigid even for germs.

Some churches bear a striking resemblance to that sterile atmosphere. The truth of God is preached, Scriptures are meticulously quoted, and error has no chance to survive. But there is no corresponding obedience or love, and the spiritual temperature is sub-zero. The poor are given the cold shoulder (Jas. 2:2-6). Those weak in the faith engage in icy arguments (Rom. 14:1). Brothers in Christ are left out in the cold because they pose a threat to comfortable cliques (3 Jn. 5-10). Unloved and untouched, many people leave.

The church was formed by the redeeming love of Christ and is designed to be a warm and inviting fellowship! Our desire must not be merely to "keep out the germs," but to let the Lord create a climate where brothers and sisters can open their hearts to His soul-healing love.- MRD II

The house of God should be a place

For praise and fervent prayer;  
How sad when folks let small things break  
Their sweet communion there! - HGB

The Church should always be a warm shelter in a cold world.

### **1Thessalonians 3:12 Legacy Of Love**

by **Mart De Haan**

Why would a 10-year-old girl tie a note to a helium-filled balloon and send it on its way to heaven? According to columnist Bob Greene, a grieving Illinois girl named Sarah sent a letter to her grandfather, who had died before she could have one last visit with him. The envelope was addressed to "Grandpa Bernie, in heaven up high." It represented a little girl's expression of love, and her hope that somehow Grandpa would read it.

Two months passed, and then a letter arrived addressed to Sarah. It began, "Your letter to Grandpa Bernie apparently reached its destination and was read by him. I understand they can't keep material things up there, so it drifted back to earth. They just keep thoughts, memories, love, and things like that."

If we are moved by this girl's love for her grandpa, what about those we love who are still living? Death and eternity have a way of putting things in perspective. Paul, in his first letter to the Thessalonians, wrote as one who knew the lasting value of relationships. He expressed his deep love and encouraged them to increase in their love for one another (3:12).

Father, help us to see that people, their faith, and their love are what count in life. Help us to show our love, before all that we have left are wishful longings. —MRD II

Lord, teach us the lesson of loving,  
The love You are asking today;  
Then help us to love one another—  
For this we most earnestly pray. —Anon.

**Love increases as we give it away.**

### **1Thessalonians 3:12 More And More**

A rallying cry often heard today in our economically challenged world is "Less and less." Governments are called to balance their budgets. People are urged to use less energy and decrease consumption of limited resources. It is good advice that we should all heed. In the realm of faith, however, there are no shortages of love and grace and strength. Therefore, as followers of Christ, we are urged to demonstrate His love in our lives in ever-increasing measure.

In the apostle Paul's first letter to the believers in Thessalonica, he urged them to "abound more and more" in a lifestyle that pleases God (1Th 4:1). He also commended them for their demonstration of love for each other, and called them to "increase more and more" in brotherly love (1Th 4:10).

That kind of ever-increasing love is possible only because it comes from God's limitless resources, not from our own dwindling supply. Poet Annie Johnson Flint wrote:

His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,  
His power has no boundary known unto men;  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

The apostle Paul expressed his desire for the believers: "May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you" (1 Thess. 3:12).

How much should we love God and others? More and more!

**Our limited ability to love does not change  
God's limitless power to love through us.**

### **1Thessalonians 3:13 No Looking Back**

When I was a boy on the farm, my dad would tell me, "You can't plow a straight row if you look back." You can test this for yourself by

looking back as you walk through snow or along a sandy beach. Your tracks won't be straight.

A good farmer doesn't look back once he has put his hand to the plow. Jesus used this analogy to teach us that if we are to be His disciples we must make a complete break with all loyalties that hinder our relationship with Him.

Total allegiance to God is a principle that is rooted in the Old Testament. The Israelites, after being freed from slavery and fed by supernatural means, looked back longingly to the days when they enjoyed fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic in Egypt (Numbers 11:5-6). God was greatly displeased, and He judged His people. Their looking back indicated a lack of commitment to Him.

Today, people who cling to old sins and the worldly pleasures they enjoyed before becoming Christians cannot be loyal disciples of Jesus Christ. When we repent and believe in Him, we become citizens of a new kingdom. We are to break with the sins of the past.

Discipleship means no looking back. —Herbert Vander Lugt

As a follower of Jesus,  
I am walking in His way;  
Straight ahead till life is over,  
I will walk with Him each day. —Hess

In the dictionary of discipleship, you won't find the word "retreat."