

Spurgeon on 1 Thessalonians

SERMON ON 1 THESSALONIANS

by C H Spurgeon

1 Thessalonians 1:4 Morning and Evening by C H Spurgeon

Many persons want to know their election before they look to Christ, but they cannot learn it thus, it is only to be discovered by "looking unto Jesus." If you desire to ascertain your own election;-after the following manner, shall you assure your heart before God. Do you feel yourself to be a lost, guilty sinner? go straightway to the cross of Christ, and tell Jesus so, and tell him that you have read in the Bible, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Tell him that he has said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Look to Jesus and believe on him, and you shall make proof of your election directly, for so surely as thou believest, thou art elect. If you will give yourself wholly up to Christ and trust him, then you are one of God's chosen ones; but if you stop and say, "I want to know first whether I am elect," you ask you know not what. Go to Jesus, be you never so guilty, just as you are. Leave all curious inquiry about election alone. Go straight to Christ and hide in his wounds, and you shall know your election. The assurance of the Holy Spirit shall be given to you, so that you shall be able to say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." Christ was at the everlasting council: he can tell you whether you were chosen or not; but you cannot find it out in any other way. Go and put your trust in him, and his answer will be-"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. " There will be no doubt about his having chosen you, when you have chosen him.

"Sons we are through God's election,
Who in Jesus Christ believe."

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10 The Gospel in Power

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"For our gospel came not unto you in word only," etc., (down to) "from the wrath to come" — 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10.

A Workman likes to see that he has been doing something. It is very dispiriting if he has spent much toil, and can see no result. God's workmen by faith would continue still to labor, even if they saw nothing come of it; but it is much more comforting, much more easy for them to continue in service when they see that God is blessing them. Now it is not wrong for a Christian minister to speak about the conversions that have been wrought under his ministry, for Paul says that he would have done so, only that others did it so constantly that there was no need of it. Paul, however, would not, under any circumstances, have done a wrong thing, and, therefore, we gather that it is most allowable sometimes that we should see what has been done, and should speak of it, and the more especially because if any good be done by any ministry, it is God that has done it, and all the glory is due to him, and to him alone. Not to speak of what God has done would be ingratitude. It might have a semblance of humility, but in reality it would be disloyalty to the Most High. Paul therefore did not hesitate to speak of his converts at Thessalonica, and of their good character, and of the good fruit which they had borne, and the way in which they had spread abroad the gospel. He did not boast; he gave God the glory of it, but he did speak of what had been done. And we think we may do the same; in any measure in which — God shall bless our work, any one of us may tell of it to the praise and glory of God, and to the encouragement of our fellow laborers. Now the Apostle in this passage tells us what God had done at Thessalonica. We will proceed at once, for our text is long — we will proceed at once to the handling of it.

And you will note that he tells us, first, what he had preached at Thessalonica; then how it had come to the people; and, thirdly,

what had been the result of this to themselves; and, fourthly, what had been the result of it to other people. First, the Apostle tells us: —

I. What Was Preached At Thessalonica.

He says, "Our gospel" — (note that word) — "Our gospel came not unto you in word only. "Why does Paul call it" our gospel "? He did not invent it; he did not think it out, and make it fresh every Sunday. No; it was Christ's gospel long before it was Paul's gospel. Yet he calls it our gospel by way of distinction, for there were other gospels. There were those who came and said, "This is the good news!" and others, on the other hand, who said, "This is the good news," but Paul says that there was another gospel, and he adds, "Yet not another; but there be some that trouble you." He, therefore, put down his foot, and he said, "Bring what gospels you like, each of you; but I have a gospel which I preach, distinct from yours, and that gospel it is which I have preached to the Thessalonians, and which has not come to them in word only. "In those times, beloved, there must be made a distinction between men's gospel and God's gospel; for nowadays man's gospel is popular enough. Somebody thinks until his head aches, and he gets into nonsense, and then he comes and brings this forward as something fresh. Men go to the bottom of a subject until they stir the mud at the bottom and cannot see their own way themselves, and nobody else can see, and then forthwith they come out with something marvellous and, having used some words that are hard to pronounce and harder still to understand, they earn a cheap name for being great scholars and profound divines. Well, let such go their way; that is their gospel; but we have another gospel from that — one which we have gained in another way, and which we desire to propagate in another fashion. Paul said "our gospel," then, by way of distinction.

But he meant this too. It was his gospel because it had been committed to him; he had received it as a sacred deposit; he was, as it were, a steward for God — put into commission to preserve and keep alive the truth in the world; and Paul did keep it unadulterated, so that when he closed his life he could say, "I have fought a good fight; I have kept the faith." Whoever may have adulterated the gospel, Paul did not. He gave it forth as Christ gave it to him. Oh! that each one of us who is called to preach the gospel, and, indeed, every church member would feel that the truth is committed to us to keep it in the world! Our sires kept it at the stake, and on the cruel rack, and when they went in their chariots of fire to heaven they left the truth to their sons to preserve. Handed down to us in the long line of martyrs and confessors, Covenanters and Puritans, what will we do with it now? Will we not feel that all the cost expended on it in the centuries past demands of us that we should spend the like still, if there be a necessity for it — even our blood — and that, while we live, it shall never be said that in our life, in our prayer, in our conversation, or in our preaching, the gospel suffered anything at our hands? "I know whom I have believed," said Paul, and "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him," or rather, as some read it, "He is able to keep my deposit, that which we committed to me to keep; Christ also will keep and preserve the gospel pure and clear, even until time's latest hour." The Lord grant it, for his name's sake!

But I think the Apostle used the term "our gospel" not only for distinction and because he felt it was committed to his trust, but because he had enjoyed it himself and had experienced it. What right has any man to preach that which he has not himself enjoyed and made his own? I have heard of a certain physician who usually tried his own medicines upon himself; and surely this should always be the practice of those that serve the heavenly physician. How shall we come and preach of the Balm of Gilead, which is to heal all wounds, if our wounds be unhealed? What a wretched case must that man be in who talks of regeneration, but is not born again; who preaches faith, but has never believed; who talks of pardon, but has never washed in the precious blood; speaks of the righteousness of Christ, but is shivering in the nakedness of his own corruption! Ah! wretched man, to be a herald of good news, while he himself partakes not therein! Ezekiel, before he had to go and speak of the message of God, had that message given to him, and what was said? "Son of man, eat this roll." He had to take the message written on the roll and eat it, and when it was in his own body then it was that he could tell it out with great power. It is a good old saying, "If your preaching is to go to the heart, it must come from the heart." It must first have moved our souls, before ever we can hope to move the souls of others. The Lord is my witness that, in preaching to you here, beloved, these many years, I have preached to you what I have tasted and handled of the good Word of God. I have preached the doctrine of human sin, for I have felt its power, felt its bitterness and shame, and lain in the dust before God, even in despair. I have preached to you the power of the precious blood to cleanse from sin, for I have looked to Christ's dear wounds and found cleansing there. We have only spoken to you what we have ourselves known, and felt, and proved to be true, and I should go to my chamber this night wretched indeed if I had no other assurance of the truth of my message than that which I could find in the experience of other men. Now many of you are engaged in preaching Christ to others, and in teaching Christ to the children in the schools. Always speak out of the fullness of your own hearts, for when you can say, "I have tried this; I am rejoicing in this," then your word will be pretty sure to come with power to the hearts of those that hear you. The man who desires to bring others to Christ should imitate Elisha, the prophet, who, when he found the child dead in the bed and that it could not be raised to life by any other means, went and put his mouth upon the child's mouth, and his hands upon the child's hands, and his feet upon the child's feet, and then by-and-bye the life was restored to the child. We must feel an inward sympathy with those whom we would bring to Christ, and then must tell out from our own soul what we know about the Savior, and it will be

sure to come with freshness and with power, God, the Holy Spirit, blessing it. This, then, I think, was Paul's reason for calling it "our gospel" — the gospel committed to him, and the gospel which he had tasted and handled for his own self personally. Now I shall want you to observe in the second place: —

II. How The Gospel Came To The Thessalonians.

He describes it as coming in four degrees. First, he says, "It came not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost, and, fourthly, in much assurance." Now these four words enable me to divide the present audience. To all who have been here present, who have been sitting in these pews for any length of time, our gospel has certainly come in word; they have all heard it — heard it, too, so as to understand the run, the gift of it. They have heard it in many forms and shapes commending itself to their attention. But, oh! it is to be feared that there are some to whom it has come in word only, and it is indeed to the preacher (and more still it should be to those who are in such plight) sad that this life-giving Word should be only a word. There was the gospel feast, and the message was sent, but they who were invited came not to the feast. They heard the message; that was all. Here are sick men lying at Bethesda's pool: they see the water, and that is all; but they step not in, and are not healed. Oh! to lie sick, with healing within reach! To be hungry, and bread hard by! To be thirsty, with the stream flowing at one's foot, and not to drink! Remember dear hearers, that if the Word of God comes to you as word only, it will one day be something more than that, for it is an undoubted truth of Scripture that hearers are responsible for what they hear. "Take heed how ye hear!" shall have to be answered for at the day of judgment. "Ye heard The gospel, but ye rejected it!" shall be one of the charges brought against those who listened to it, and it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than it shall be for such. I would like to divide the congregation now upon this question, "How many are there here now to whom the gospel has come in word only? "Let conscience speak; let each man put his hand upon his heart and answer, "Is that my case?" If so, may it not be your case any longer, nay, not a single day longer, but may the Word come to you in another way!

But there were, secondly, some to whom it came in power. Now there are hearers to whom the gospel comes with an arousing power. They used to be careless, but they cannot be now. They hear the word "Eternity! eternity! eternity" ringing in their ears, and it startles and awakens them. They cannot be at ease while they are at enmity with God; they feel that their nest is stirred up. It has come with power to them. More than that, there are some to whom the Word has come with crushing effect; it has smitten them down; it has bruised their righteousness; it has dashed to shivers their hopes of themselves; and though they have not looked to Christ for the true hope, yet they feel the power of the gospel, which lays all other hopes in the dust. Ah! I know some of you have felt the power of the gospel, for you went home and prayed, perhaps a score times — after hearing the sermon, you have gone up to your chambers, and you have begun to pray, but the next morning you have forgotten. Your goodness has been like the morning dew, and has melted when the heat of the day's cares has come upon it. Alas! alas! alas! in many a furrow we have sown in vain. We have cast the seed on stony ground; we have thrown it on the highway side, and we have lost our pains; nevertheless, we are to continue still to preach the gospel, for in some it will come with a greater power than this.

Again, I would entreat another division of the house. I knew there are some who will come under this head. They are not saved, but still they cannot ridicule it: they cannot pass it off with indifference. It is like a sharp two-edged sword; it pierces, and cuts, and wounds. I pray God it may kill them spiritually, that they may yet be made alive.

Now the third degree of the coming of the Word to Thessalonica was that it came in the Holy Ghost. Ah! here is the blessed way; for if it shall come in any other power than this, it will come in vain; but if it come in the Holy Ghost, Oh! then, then its end is achieved, for the Holy Ghost quickens men by a mysterious operation, which we cannot describe, but which some of us have felt, which comes upon men and creates in them a new life, and whereas they were dead in sin they begin to live as they lived not before. That same Spirit then enlightens them, showing a thousand truths in a light in which they never saw them before; they find they have entered into a new world; they have passed from darkness into marvellous light. Then the Spirit of God begins to purify them. He purges them from this sin and that, and he refines, renews them; he is in them as a spirit of burning, consuming sin — a cleansing spirit purging them from unrighteousness. Then he comes as a consoling spirit, and gives them joy and peace, uplifts them above their cares, their temptations, their doubts and fills them with a preface of eternal bliss. Oh! blessed is that man to whom our gospel comes with the Holy Ghost. Beloved, we do not wonder if persons sneer at the gospel in itself, or if others hear it and are unaffected by it, for the gospel in itself is like a sword without a warrior's arm to wield it. But when the Spirit of God comes, man is a doubter no longer. When he lays home the truth he cuts so to the diving of soul and spirit, joint and marrow, that men are convinced, converted, saved, and the truth is to them indeed a living thing. Pray, O beloved members of this church, pray that the Word of God, even our gospel, may come with the Holy Ghost.

But there was a fourth class to whom the Word came in a yet higher degree; for it is added "and with much assurance." To all Christians it comes with the Holy Ghost, but to some with a still greater degree of spiritual power. They believe the gospel, but they do not believe it timidly; they accept it as a matter of firm, solid, indisputable fact; they grasp it as with an iron hand, and their own

interest in it does not remain a question. No; they know whom they believe, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which they have committed to him. They believe in Christ with the faith of Abraham, which staggered not at the promise through unbelief. Clouds and darkness have gone away from their sky, and they see the clear blue ether of God's own presence above them. They rejoice in the Lord always, and again they do rejoice. There are some such in this house; I bless God for every one of them. May there be many more; for you that possess full assurance are the men that are strong for service. Having the joy of the Lord in your own souls, it becomes your strength as you go forth to fight the Master's battles, because you feel the Master's love. The Lord give us many, many such in the church, to whom the Word of God shall come with the Holy Ghost and with much assurance. Now this is how the Word of God came to them. I must pass on to the third point, and that is: —

III. What Had Been The Result Of This In Themselves!

You will kindly observe that the Apostle says first, "Ye became followers of us and of the Lord." A man when he is at first converted is not fit to be a leader; he has to be a follower. We do not take recruits and make them captains; they must be drilled; they must go into the rank and file a bit. So one of the first things that grace does is to make a man a disciple, that is, a learner, and then he sees in God's Word what his life and conduct should be, and, looking about him, he sees some whom God has blessed with his grace whose life and conduct is according to the Word, and he follows God's servants not slavishly; he draws a distinction between them and their Master, and only follows them so long as they keep company with their Lord. "Ye became followers of us and of the Lord." Brethren, I know that many of you here present, when the Word of God came to you, became followers of holy men. If you heard of any good action, you desired to, imitate it. If you read any biography that told of noble deeds, you aspired to emulate such deeds. And when you read the character of your Lord and Master in the four Evangelists, you asked that you might have grace to live a life of self-sacrifice, of devotion to God, and of philanthropy to men. Well, this is no mean work of grace when a man is brought to be a follower of that which is good.

At the same time he tells us that these people received the Word of God "in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. "I do know that there are some in this house who, when they received the gospel, had to suffer for it, but they rejoiced to do so. From the day in which they put on Christ publicly they were, jeered; they became subjects of derision. Brethren, some have gone back from us because they could not bear the perpetual taunt, but others of you have been kept by the grace of God and made able to bear any stigma or any sneer. And, indeed, is it not a small thing to bear the jests and jeers of men if the heart be right towards God? What care we — what should we care though all men point the finger and should hiss because of it? Be true to God, believer, and to thy conscience too, and thou mayest well receive the Word "with joy of the Holy Ghost," even "in much affliction." This is one proof of every Christian minister's ministry, when he can point to a people who have become followers of that which is good, and have continued to follow when they have been made to suffer for it.

But it appears that these people at Thessalonica went farther. They grew out of being followers in some sense and, therefore, became leaders. "So that ye were examples to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia." Now it is a very easy thing for a Christian to be an example to a sinner. He ought to be, and he is not a Christian if he is not. I won't give twopence for your religion if you do not set a fair example to the ungodly. But it is a higher degree of grace when a man becomes an example even to Christians — when he is such a believer that others may look upon him as the typical Christian, for that is the word used here — may regard him as the type of what a Christian ought to be. Paul says that some of those degraded idolaters to whom he had preached the gospel first followed him and the Lord, and afterwards grew in grace, so that they stood the front rank and became an example to believers. Let, me hold this up, beloved, to your emulation. Let none of us be content to be according to the ordinary cold Christianity of this age. What cold, poor stuff it is! If the Lord himself should come, would he find faith in the earth? Where is the zeal of the days gone by? Where is the ardor, where is the courage of the ages that have gone! If these things be found nowhere else, O my brother, seek to have them in your own soul. Ask God, if you are compelled to see others decline, that you may not decline yourself, for God's grace can make you an example to the rest of his people. There are such here to-night of whom I might speak — only the Lord bless them and keep them as they are — for I have seen apostolic Christianity here. If I have seen it nowhere else, I have seen it here among some of my brethren and sisters here present, whose service for the Lord shall be remembered in the day of account. They wish it not to be known here, nor will it be, but they have, with tears and prayers, devoted themselves to Christ, and served him well, and he will remember them in that day.

Further, the Apostle goes on to tell us what was done by these Thessalonians, viz., that they turned from idols. Oh! that God might turn all of us from every idol that we have! We do not worship gods of wood and stone, but how many professors are there still who worship learning; let them seek it, but let them not worship it. There are some that worship fame; others that worship pleasure. This city is full of idolaters from end to end. When the grace of God comes, it makes men worship the unseen God, and leave their idols to those that choose them. Turning from idols, it appears that these people served the living God. They did not merely acknowledge that he was the living God; but they began to serve him; they put forth their strength in his cause. So will it be among us wherever the Word has come with the Holy Ghost; we shall spend and be spent in the service of our Creator and Redeemer.

And he adds that they waited for the coming of the lord. Oh! this is a high mark of grace, when the Christian expects his Lord to come, and lives like one that expects him every moment. If you and I knew to-night that the Lord would come before this service was over, in what state of heart should we sit in these pews? In that state of heart we ought to be. If I knew that I should see my Lord ere another sun should rise, how would I preach? I ought to preach just in that way as though he were sure to come at once, and there could be no doubt about it. We should hold very loosely by the things of this world if we knew that Christ was speedily coming; so loose we ought to hold by them. We should care but little for the discomforts of life if we knew that it would all be over and Christ would come very shortly; so little ought we to think of life's discomforts. Blessed is that man whose soul is always looking for the coming of the Lord! He may not study texts of Scripture to know the times and seasons, but if he be ever expecting that his Lord may come at any time, and shall live under the feeling of that belief and in the power of it, he will be the holy man. "What manner of persons," says Peter, "ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" Such we desire to be by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus we have noticed what the grace of God did for the Thessalonians themselves. Now let us mark: —

IV. What Was The Result Of This To Others?

And here I wish to speak practically to the members of this church. Thessalonica was a seaport. It was also a principal town in Macedonia. Hence, whatever was done in Thessalonica was pretty sure to be known throughout Macedonia and the rest of Greece. If the Church at Thessalonica had been a dull, sleepy Church, as some Christian churches are, it would have lost a fine opportunity of doing good, but being a thoroughly awake Church, really full of God's own power, from that Church was sounded forth the Word of God throughout all Greece, and when the ships left that port they carried the tidings to Asia minor and to other lands, so that Thessalonica became the starting point for the heralds of the cross. Now if there is any place in the world that ought to feel its responsibility, it is London. We are not egotistical, I think, when we say that it is the very heart of the world. Whatever is done here is sure to be known, and an earnest church in London is only what it should be. A church in London of any prominence that is sleepy, and dull, and cold will have a very heavy account to render when the great Master shall come. The Church at Thessalonica sounded forth the gospel involuntarily, and also voluntarily. They did it involuntarily, for their very lives spake. If they did not preach, they were so full of faith, and good works, and holiness, that other people talked about it, and the matter was known, and the work of God in the hearts of the Church could be perceived in the lives of the members, and so it went out. Oh! how happy should any pastor be whose people should be so godly, so united, so generous, so persevering, so prayerful, so full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, that everywhere they should be spoken of, and through them, through their conduct, the Word of God should be sounded abroad. See to that, my brethren — see to it. God has placed us where we are observed of many. Give them something to observe worth seeing. With the eyes of a multitude of witnesses upon us, let us run with patience — the race that is set before us.

But then the Church at Thessalonica sent out the Word voluntarily. I make no doubt that if they had any men among them that could preach the gospel, they bade them go and preach it; and if any went on their travels, whether they were sea captains or merchants that went from place to place, or persons of influence, or whatever they might be, they said to them, "Wherever you go, keep up the propaganda. Preach the gospel tell out Jesus Christ. Be, all of you, missionaries." Now in this I can rejoice, and will rejoice, that it has been so among us. At this present moment I suppose that not less than three hundred of our sons that have been borne upon our knees are preaching the gospel while I am preaching here — I mean ministers of Christ preaching the gospel. Besides that, All round these streets are our evangelists preaching at the street corner. There ought to be more of them. Some of you that come to hear me on Sunday nights ought not to come. If you have got the grace of God in your heart, come and get enough spiritual meat to feed you, but remember that London is perishing for the lack of the gospel. How dare you, then, sit still to enjoy the gospel while men are perishing? There are lodging-houses that are accessible; there are halls, large and small; there are the street corners; there are all sorts of places where Jesus can be preached. Oh! let us labor with all our might to make him known throughout the length and breadth of this great city. At this moment we have our sons, the sons of this church, preaching in Australia, in America — abundance of them there — preaching the gospel of Christ — in the islands of the Pacific — all through every portion of our Dominions. God be thanked that there are so many; but there ought to be many more. I propound as a theory, not that a Christian man ought to say, "Am I called to preach the gospel?" but that he ought to say, "Am I excused from preaching the gospel?" The old plan was for young men to preach before the Church to see if they could preach. I think we must bring them all up to make them prove that they cannot preach. Now Mr. Oncken has been blessed in Germany, as you knew, to the raising of many Baptist churches, and he always works upon this theory: — Every member of the church must say, when he comes in, what he can do. If he says he cannot do anything, and he be old, and infirm, and bed-ridden, very well, he can serve God by patient suffering; but if he has any ability, and says, "I cannot do anything," then the reply is, "You cannot come into the church." We cannot have any drones; we must have all working bees in the hive. I think it would be a good resolution for the Tabernacle to expel every member that is not doing something or other for the Lord Jesus Christ. I am afraid some of you would have to go. Well, we won't move that resolution, but we will move another, viz., that every member who has been a drone up till now shall pray to be a bee: that everyone who has done nothing shall ask the Lord to help him to begin; that those who have done half as much as they could

will do the other half; and that those who are doing all they can will always try to do a little more, for it is always that point of doing more than you can do that, in the long run, is the best kind of doing, for then you have to lean upon God's strength when you have gone to the limit of your own, and there is the point where the results are pretty sure to follow. I ask the prayers of the dear brethren who have been with us — some of them sixteen and seventeen years this service — that God would not stay his hand in our midst; that as he has multiplied us to an unexampled company of some 4,500 persons or thereabouts in membership, that he may give us unexampled grace; that our zeal and earnestness, and enthusiasm may be in proportion to the number; and that the success achieved for God may be commensurate with the responsibilities laid upon us. I sound the clarion again to-night! As God said, "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward," so would I speak to you. Forward, in God's name, forward! The world still lieth in the wicked one. Forward, ye light-bearers! Scatter the darkness. Satan still laughs at God. Forward, with the invincible weapon of the cross, and put him to flight! Now sound your trumpets around the walls of Jericho; continue still to compass it. Now let the trumpet sound, and the wall shall fall flat to the ground by the power of the eternal God. Forward! I hear the angels say it. Forward! I seem to hear innumerable spirits say, beckoning us like the Man of Macedonia, who beckoned Paul across the sea. Forward! The very powers of hell behind us might well drive us on. Forward! The love of Christ within us shall impel us, and let each man and women here that has been redeemed by blood resolve to-night, in Jehovah's strength, to do for God and for his truth something more than yet we have thought of, to the praise of the glory of his grace. God bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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1 Thessalonians 2:13-14

A Happy Minister's Meeting

Study Notes

by C H Spurgeon

PAUL unbosoms his heart to the loving church at Thessalonica. He knew what it was to be worried by the Corinthians and the Galatians, but he found rest when thinking of the Thessalonians. The most tried ministers have some bright spots. In setting forth his joyful memories of Thessalonica, Paul gives us a sight of three things:

I. MINISTERS GIVING THANKS. "We also thank God."

Ministers are not always groaning and weeping, though they often do so.

They have their times of thanksgiving, as in Paul's case.

1. This followed upon sore travail (see verse 9). Only as we sow in tears do we reap in joy.
2. This was backed by holy living. Dwell upon each point in verses 10 and 11. Unholy ministers will have scant cause for joy.
3. It prevented all self-laudation. They thanked God, and this is the opposite of glorifying self.
4. It was of a social character. "We thank God": Paul, Silas, and Timothy. We hold a fraternal meeting of joy when God blesses us among our beloved people.
5. It was of an abiding character: "without ceasing." We can never cease praising the Lord for his goodness in saving souls.
6. It cheered them for further service. They wished, according to verse 17, to visit the friends again, and further benefit them.

What a mercy for us all when God's servants are glad about us!

Their joy is in our salvation.

II. HEARERS RECEIVING THE WORD. "Ye received the word of God."

Not all receive it. How badly do some treat the gospel! Not all receive it as did the Thessalonians, for—

1. They received the word of God. They heard it calmly, attended to it candidly, considered it carefully.
2. They received the word of God with a hearty welcome. They accepted it by faith with personal confidence and joy.
3. They did not receive the word of man. It is well to keep the doors locked in that direction. We cannot receive everything. Let us

reject merely human teaching and leave the more room in our minds for the Lord's word.

4. They did not receive the gospel as the word of men. Their faith was not based on the clever, eloquent, logical, dogmatical, or affectionate way in which it was preached.

5. They received it as God's revealed word and therefore received it—

With reverence of its divine character.

With assurance of its infallibility.

With obedience to its authority.

With experience of its sacred power.

6. They received it so that it effectually worked in them. It was practical, efficient, and manifestly operative upon their lives and characters.

III. CONVERTS EXHIBITING THE FAMILY LIKENESS.

1. They were like Judean Christians, the best of them, in faith, in experience, in afflictions.

2. Yet many of them as heathen began at a great disadvantage.

3. They had never seen the church of God in Judea and were no copyists; yet they came to be facsimiles of them.

4. This is a singular confirmation of the divine character of the work.

The same Lord works in all believers. In the main, the same experience occurs in all the saints, even though they may never have seen each other.

This similarity of all regenerated men furnishes a valuable set of experimental evidences of the divine origin of conversion.

Let us not be daunted by opposition, for at Thessalonica Paul was persecuted and yet triumphant.

Let us rejoice in the effects of the word everywhere.

Memoranda

There was a minister of the gospel once, a true preacher, a faithful, loving man, whose ministry was supposed to be exceedingly unsuccessful. After twenty years' labor, he was known to have brought only one soul to Christ. So said his congregation. Poor worker in the trench! His toil was not seen by men, but the eye of God rested upon it. To him, one day, came a deputation from his people, representing to him, respectfully enough, that, inasmuch as God had not seen fit to bless his labors among them, it were better for him to remove to another sphere. They said that he had only been instrumental in the conversion of one sinner. He might do more elsewhere. "What do you say?" said he. "Have I really brought one sinner to Christ?" "Yes," was the reply, "one, but only one." "Thank God," cried he, "for that! Thank God! I have brought one soul to Christ. Now for twenty years' more labor among you, God sparing me, perhaps I may be the honored instrument of bringing two." — Calthrop

"Whoever made this book," said a Chinese convert, "made me. It tells me the thoughts of my heart."

A celebrated Frenchman said, "I know the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit because it has pierced me through."

Loskiel's "Account of the Moravian Missions Among the North American Indians" has taught me two things. I have found in it a striking illustration of the uniformity with which the grace of God operates on men. Crantz, in his "Account of the Missions in Greenland" has shown the grace of God working on a man-fish — on a stupid, sottish, senseless creature, scarcely a remove from the fish on which he lived. Loskiel shows the same grace working on a man-devil — a fierce, bloody, revengeful warrior, dancing his infernal war-dance with the mind of a fury. Divine grace brings these men to the same point. It quickens, stimulates, and elevates the Greenlander; it raises him to a sort of new life; it seems almost to bestow on him new senses; it opens his eye and bends his ear, and rouses his heart; and what it adds, it sanctifies. The same grace tames the high spirit of the Indian — it reduces him to the meekness, docility, and simplicity of a child. The evidence arising to Christianity from these facts is perhaps seldom sufficient by itself to convince the gainsayer; but, to a man who already believes, it greatly strengthens the reason of his belief. I have seen, also, in these books, that the fish-boat, and the oil, and the tomahawk, and the cap of feathers excepted, a Christian minister has to deal with just the same sort of creatures as the Greenlander and the Indian among civilized nations. — Richard Cecil

The edition of those living epistles is the same the world over; the binding only may differ.

1 Thessalonians 2:18
Morning and Evening
by C H Spurgeon

Since the first hour in which goodness came into conflict with evil, it has never ceased to be true in spiritual experience, that Satan hinders us. From all points of the compass, all along the line of battle, in the vanguard and in the rear, at the dawn of day and in the midnight hour, Satan hinders us. If we toil in the field, he seeks to break the ploughshare; if we build the wall, he labours to cast down the stones; if we would serve God in suffering or in conflict-everywhere Satan hinders us. He hinders us when we are first coming to Jesus Christ. Fierce conflicts we had with Satan when we first looked to the cross and lived. Now that we are saved, he endeavours to hinder the completeness of our personal character. You may be congratulating yourself, "I have hitherto walked consistently; no man can challenge my integrity." Beware of boasting, for your virtue will yet be tried; Satan will direct his engines against that very virtue for which you are the most famous. If you have been hitherto a firm believer, your faith will ere long be attacked; if you have been meek as Moses, expect to be tempted to speak unadvisedly with your lips. The birds will peck at your ripest fruit, and the wild boar will dash his tusks at your choicest vines. Satan is sure to hinder us when we are earnest in prayer. He checks our importunity, and weakens our faith in order that, if possible, we may miss the blessing. Nor is Satan less vigilant in obstructing Christian effort. There was never a revival of religion without a revival of his opposition. As soon as Ezra and Nehemiah begin to labour, Sanballat and Tobiah are stirred up to hinder them. What then? We are not alarmed because Satan hindereth us, for it is a proof that we are on the Lord's side, and are doing the Lord's work, and in his strength we shall win the victory, and triumph over our adversary.

1 Thessalonians 4:14
Morning and Evening
by C H Spurgeon

Let us not imagine that the soul sleeps in insensibility. "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise," is the whisper of Christ to every dying saint. They "sleep in Jesus," but their souls are before the throne of God, praising him day and night in his temple, singing hallelujahs to him who washed them from their sins in his blood. The body sleeps in its lonely bed of earth, beneath the coverlet of grass. But what is this sleep? The idea connected with sleep is "rest," and that is the thought which the Spirit of God would convey to us. Sleep makes each night a Sabbath for the day. Sleep shuts fast the door of the soul, and bids all intruders tarry for a while, that the life within may enter its summer garden of ease. The toil-worn believer quietly sleeps, as does the weary child when it slumbers on its mother's breast. Oh! happy they who die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them. Their quiet repose shall never be broken until God shall rouse them to give them their full reward. Guarded by angel watchers, curtained by eternal mysteries, they sleep on, the inheritors of glory, till the fulness of time shall bring the fulness of redemption. What an awaking shall be theirs! They were laid in their last resting place, weary and worn, but such they shall not rise. They went to their rest with the furrowed brow, and the wasted features, but they wake up in beauty and glory. The shrivelled seed, so destitute of form and comeliness, rises from the dust a beauteous flower. The winter of the grave gives way to the spring of redemption and the summer of glory. Blessed is death, since it, through the divine power, disrobes us of this work-day garment, to clothe us with the wedding garment of incorruption. Blessed are those who "sleep in Jesus. "

1 Thessalonians 4:17
Morning and Evening
by C H Spurgeon

Even the sweetest visits from Christ, how short they are-and how transitory! One moment our eyes see him, and we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, but again a little time and we do not see him, for our beloved withdraws himself from us; like a roe or a young hart he leaps over the mountains of division; he is gone to the land of spices, and feeds no more among the lilies.

"If to-day he deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin,
He to-morrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within."

Oh, how sweet the prospect of the time when we shall not behold him at a distance, but see him face to face: when he shall not be as a wayfaring man tarrying but for a night, but shall eternally enfold us in the bosom of his glory. We shall not see him for a little season, but

"Millions of years our wondering eyes,
Shall o'er our Saviour's beauties rove;
And myriad ages we'll adore,
The wonders of his love."

In heaven there shall be no interruptions from care or sin; no weeping shall dim our eyes; no earthly business shall distract our happy thoughts; we shall have nothing to hinder us from gazing for ever on the Sun of Righteousness with unwearied eyes. Oh, if it be so sweet to see him now and then, how sweet to gaze on that blessed face for aye, and never have a cloud rolling between, and never have to turn one's eyes away to look on a world of weariness and woe! Blest day, when wilt thou dawn? Rise, O unsetting sun! The joys of sense may leave us as soon as they will, for this shall make glorious amends. If to die is but to enter into uninterrupted communion with Jesus, then death is indeed gain, and the black drop is swallowed up in a sea of victory.

Nearest and Dearest Fellowship
1 Thessalonians 4:17
Faith's Checkbook
by C H Spurgeon

While we are here the Lord is with us, and when we are called away we are with Him. There is no dividing the saint from His Savior. They are one, and they always must be one: Jesus cannot be without His own people, for He would be a Head without a body. Whether caught up into the air, or resting in paradise, or sojourning here, we are with Jesus; and who shall separate us from Him?

What a joy is this! Our supreme honor, rest, comfort, delight, is to be with the Lord. We cannot conceive of anything which can surpass or even equal this divine society. By holy fellowship we must be with Him in His humiliation, rejection, and travail, and then we shall be with Him in His glory. Before long we shall be with Him in His rest and in His royalty, in His expectation and in His manifestation. We shall fare as He fares and triumph as He triumphs.

O my Lord, if I am to be forever with Thee, I have a destiny incomparable. I will not envy an archangel. To be forever with the Lord is my idea of heaven at its best. Not the harps of gold, nor the crowns unfading, nor the light unclouded is glory to me; but Jesus, Jesus Himself, and myself forever with Him in nearest and dearest fellowship.

1 Thessalonians 5:6
Morning and Evening
by C H Spurgeon

There are many ways of promoting Christian wakefulness. Among the rest, let me strongly advise Christians to converse together concerning the ways of the Lord. Christian and Hopeful, as they journeyed towards the Celestial City, said to themselves, "To prevent drowsiness in this place, let us fall into good discourse." Christian enquired, "Brother, where shall we begin?" And Hopeful answered, "Where God began with us." Then Christian sang this song-

"When saints do sleepy grow, let them come hither,
And hear how these two pilgrims talk together;
Yea, let them learn of them, in any wise,
Thus to keep open their drowsy slumb'ring eyes.
Saints' fellowship, if it be managed well,
Keeps them awake, and that in spite of hell."

Christians who isolate themselves and walk alone, are very liable to grow drowsy. Hold Christian company, and you will be kept wakeful by it, and refreshed and encouraged to make quicker progress in the road to heaven. But as you thus take "sweet counsel" with others in the ways of God, take care that the theme of your converse is the Lord Jesus. Let the eye of faith be constantly looking unto him; let your heart be full of him; let your lips speak of his worth. Friend, live near to the cross, and thou wilt not sleep. Labour to impress thyself with a deep sense of the value of the place to which thou art going. If thou rememberest that thou art going to heaven, thou wilt not sleep on the road. If thou thinkest that hell is behind thee, and the devil pursuing thee, thou wilt not loiter. Would the manslayer sleep with the avenger of blood behind him, and the city of refuge before him? Christian, wilt thou sleep whilst the pearly gates are open-the songs of angels waiting for thee to join them-a crown of gold ready for thy brow? Ah! no; in holy fellowship continue to watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.

Perfection and Preservation
Faith's Checkbook
1 Thessalonians 5:24
by C H Spurgeon

Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

What will He do? He will sanctify us wholly. See the previous verse. He will carry on the work of purification till we are perfect in every part. He will preserve our "whole spirit, and soul, and body, blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He will not allow us to fall from grace, nor come under the dominion of sin. What great favors are these! Well may we adore the giver of such unspeakable gifts.

Who will do this? The Lord who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light, out of death in sin into eternal life in Christ Jesus. Only He can do this: such perfection and preservation can only come from the God of all grace.

Why will He do it? Because He is "faithful"--faithful to His own promise which is pledged to save the believer; faithful to His Son, whose reward it is that His people shall be presented to Him faultless, faithful to the work which He has commenced in us by our effectual calling. It is not their own faithfulness but the Lord's own faithfulness on which the saints rely.

Come, my soul, here is a grand feast to begin a dull month with. There may be fogs without, but there should be sunshine within.

1 Thessalonians 5:24
Morning and Evening
by C H Spurgeon

Heaven is a place where we shall never sin; where we shall cease our constant watch against an indefatigable enemy, because there will be no tempter to ensnare our feet. There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Heaven is the "undefiled inheritance"; it is the land of perfect holiness, and therefore of complete security. But do not the saints even on earth sometimes taste the joys of blissful security? The doctrine of God's word is, that all who are in union with the Lamb are safe; that all the righteous shall hold on their way; that those who have committed their souls to the keeping of Christ shall find him a faithful and immutable preserver. Sustained by such a doctrine we can enjoy security even on earth; not that high and glorious security which renders us free from every slip, but that holy security which arises from the sure promise of Jesus that none who believe in him shall ever perish, but shall be with him where he is. Believer, let us often reflect with joy on the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, and honour the faithfulness of our God by a holy confidence in him.

May our God bring home to you a sense of your safety in Christ Jesus! May he assure you that your name is graven on his hand; and whisper in your ear the promise, "Fear not, I am with thee. " Look upon him, the great Surety of the covenant, as faithful and true, and, therefore, bound and engaged to present you, the weakest of the family, with all the chosen race, before the throne of God; and in such a sweet contemplation you will drink the juice of the spiced wine of the Lord's pomegranate, and taste the dainty fruits of Paradise. You will have an antepast of the enjoyments which ravish the souls of the perfect saints above, if you can believe with unstaggering faith that "faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. "

1 Thessalonians 5:24a
Morning and Evening
by C H Spurgeon

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1 Thessalonians 5:25
Morning and Evening
by C H Spurgeon

This one morning in the year we reserved to refresh the reader's memory upon the subject of prayer for ministers, and we do most earnestly implore every Christian household to grant the fervent request of the text first uttered by an apostle and now repeated by us. Brethren, our work is solemnly momentous, involving weal or woe to thousands; we treat with souls for God on eternal business, and our word is either a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. A very heavy responsibility rests upon us, and it will be no small mercy if at the last we be found clear of the blood of all men. As officers in Christ's army, we are the especial mark of the enmity of men and devils; they watch for our halting, and labour to take us by the heels. Our sacred calling involves us in temptations from which you are exempt, above all it too often draws us away from our personal enjoyment of truth into a ministerial and official consideration of it. We meet with many knotty cases, and our wits are at a non plus; we observe very sad backslidings, and our hearts are wounded; we see millions perishing, and our spirits sink. We wish to profit you by our preaching; we desire to be blest to your children; we long to be useful both to saints and sinners; therefore, dear friends, intercede for us with our God. Miserable men are we if we miss the aid of your prayers, but happy are we if we live in your supplications. You do not look to us but to our Master for spiritual blessings, and yet how many times has He given those blessings through His ministers; ask then, again and again, that we may be the earthen vessels into which the Lord may put the treasure of the gospel. We, the whole company of missionaries, ministers, city missionaries, and students, do in the name of Jesus beseech you

"BRETHREN, PRAY FOR US."