

20200511 1 Thessalonians 1:1-7 We are not saved by our works

*1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,*

*To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:*

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, 4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. 5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.*

*6 And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. 8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. 9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*

Believed to be one of the first letters of Paul. Silas and Timothy were included because he had sent Timothy back to Thessalonika to check on their progress. There was a synagogue there and Paul began to minister to the gentiles when the Jews rejected the gospel. He left the city and went to Berea, but he sent Timothy back to check things out. Timothy brought a report, and Paul was delighted with what he heard.

Paul was diligent to pray about his area of ministry. What is your ministry? Are you praying for your area of ministry? I try to pray for the ministry of Union Grove. I should also be praying for my wife and my children in the same way. They are areas of my ministry. Paul thanks God and prays for this little church.

Everyone in here has a ministry. Whether you're a boss or your an employee, you have an area of ministry. Your job is to convey the newness of the gospel in the way you live. This is reflected in what you talk about and what you don't talk about. Learn to speak words of encouragment and healing to those to whom you minister. It's easy to get caught up in the conversations of the world.

God puts us in places where we can all minister. The other day, I was at the vet clinic and I overheard two people talking about a person in the community who recently died. They both knew of many things this person had done that were bad acts. I listened for a while, full knowing horrible things this person had done also. But instead of joining in the criticisms, I just asked both of them, "Doesn't this make you want to live your life in a way that when you are gone people will say, 'wow, he did so much good for so many people. He seemed to just be led by the Lord and to be involved doing the things of God.'" The conversation changed and we began to talk about how to live our own lives in ways that are of benefit to others. Just start where you are living for Jesus and serving Him. That is your ministry. Then, pray for your ministry.

Verse 3 - Paul remembers the wonderful things that the church was doing. He remembers three things from being in Thessalonika: 1) Their work that was produced by faith, 2) Their labor prompted by love, and 3) Their patience and endurance inspired by hope in the Lord. It was such a testimony to those around them. This is faith, hope, and love. We've seen that before, haven't we? That's what 1 Corinthians 13 is all about. You are saved to do good works (Ephesians 2:10)

We are not saved by our works, but we are saved to do good works. We forget that. Our works cannot be met in the flesh. They have to be born out of faith to be of any spiritual use. He commends them on the labor prompted by love. When we love others, we get outside of ourselves and we can begin to see others through the eyes of Jesus. Our love for others prompts us to do acts of labor for others. Love is a great motivator, and love is closely tied to giving. Remember that the word love in Hebrew has its root in the word for love. Love is giving. Giving is love. When you love the Lord with all of your heart, soul, and mind, you will begin to love others as you love yourself. The love of God carries us through when our own will to love dries up. Endurance is not necessary when things are easy. We need endurance when we are in hard circumstances. We see so many verses that speak to the what will keep us going. The best thing for driving us is the hope in the Lord. That gives us the endurance to keep on keeping on. Our hope goes far beyond anything else. It is a "hope that is an anchor to our soul" (Hebrews 6:19)

Putting our hope in anything but Jesus is waste of time. My hope can't be in this economy, this president, the doctors, a vaccine for coronavirus. These things will all fail, but Jesus is a hope that is an anchor for the soul. Grab hold of Him and hope in Him. My hope is in the Lord and in Him only.

We know He has chosen us because our salvation came not only with words, but with power. There's a "word" group in the church and there's a "power" group, and they need to come together. When the word gets into us we experience a changed life. I've appreciated the few things in my life when I've seen the supernatural. But, the real thing is seeing changed lives, that take the word, and allow it to change us and make us into something new and different.

Paul then talks about how he and they were living in verses 5 and 6. It is only possible to really imitate God through the power of the Holy Spirit. As a pastor, I love seeing people changed by the Word and the power of God.

Verse 7 - You became a model to everyone around you. That is what I desire for myself and for all of the congregation at Union Grove. I've seen your lives changed from serving "idols" to serving Jesus. This service has brought joy into your lives and it is infectious. There are still idols: money, success, pleasure, etc. These are the things that many worshipped before coming to Christ, and now you're a model of those who have turned to God instead of loving money, success, and power. Verse 10 shows another sign of our salvation. Our attention is turned to heaven because that is where our future lies.

It is wonderful to me as a pastor when I hear of our reputation getting out beyond us. I hear people talking about what the saints at Union Grove are doing in and among the community.