

1 Thessalonians 1

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Tape # 8184
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Okay, let's turn to First Thessalonians, chapter one, as we continue our journey through the Bible.

On Paul's second missionary journey, now Silas, is with him and also Timothy. And they began a ministry in Europe as Paul was called by the Lord in a vision, a man of Macedonia, saying come over and help us. So Paul set sail for Macedonia. And Timothy and Silas went with him. They first came to Philippi where they established a work. Then when trouble arose in Philippi, they left and they went to Thessalonica. And there on the Sabbath Day they went in and for three Sabbath Days, Paul was reasoning with those in the synagogue, out of the Scriptures, showing and proving that the Messiah would have to suffer and Jesus was the Messiah!

But then the Jews stirred up some problems for Paul there in Thessalonica. And they couldn't find Paul so they arrested a fellow by the name of Justus, who was one of the believers. They brought him to court. They accused him saying, the men that have turned the world upside down have come here. And he had to post bail and he was released.

Paul, Silas and Timothy left Thessalonica and went to Berea. They established a work in Berea. Those in Berea were more noble than those in Thessalonica, however, in that they searched the Scriptures to see if the things that Paul said were actually so. But there were those from Thessalonica who came down to Berea and began to stir up trouble against Paul. So Paul left Berea and went to Athens, Greece. He left Timothy and Silas there in Berea for a little longer, to establish the believers. Then he sent a message for Timothy and Silas to come. He went on to Corinth. Then Timothy and Silas joined Paul in Corinth.

At Corinth, Paul wrote this letter to the church in Thessalonica because some word had come to Paul concerning some of the problems that had developed. Now it is interesting to realize that Paul was there for perhaps no longer than just three weeks. And yet as he deals with the various issues in his first letter to them, he had covered so well, in the first three weeks, the major doctrine of the Bible. This showed the thoroughness with which Paul had ministered to them in such a short period of time.

But he is writing to them and this is probably the first letter that Paul wrote. Now at this time when Paul wrote the letter, there was no challenging of his apostleship. Now in most of the letters that Paul wrote later, he began them, saying, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. But because there has been no challenge to Paul's apostleship, that part of Paul's greeting is missing from First Thessalonians. There was no need to affirm that he was an apostle by the will of God, He was accepted as such by them.

So *Paul, and Silvanus* (and Silvanus is just another name for Silas), *and Timotheus*, (Because Silas and Timothy had been with Paul, in Thessalonica, they knew him, they knew them so Paul joins their names with his in the opening salutation.)

unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: So your address of the letter to the Thessalonians, the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God and in Jesus Christ. A great thing to be able to say about a church, that they are in God and they are in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As I have said before, Lord Jesus Christ is not first, middle and last name. It is unfortunate that we so often think of the Lord as the name for Jesus. His name is Jesus. His title is Lord. And it is a title. When you say, the Lord, Jesus, you are talking about relationship. He is the Lord. I am the servant. It implies servitude. It implies obedience, the Lord, Jesus is His name. The name Jesus is the Greek adaptation of the Hebrew name, Joshua or *Yeshua*, which name means in Hebrew, Jehovah is Salvation. And so it is a beautiful name. It is the Greek for the Hebrew, Jehovah is Salvation.

When the angel instructed Joseph, concerning the name, he said thou shalt call His name, Jesus, *Yeshua*, for He shall save His people from their sins. So the name implies His mission.

He came to save the people from their sins, but He is the promised Messiah. The word Messiah, means the Anointed One. The priests and the kings were anointed for their office. There were the two offices in which

they were anointed. Their anointing was the pouring of a cruise of oil over their head.

You remember how that the oil was on Aaron's head and ran down his beard and all. You know we are very, when we anoint people, we are very circumspect. We put a little bit on our finger and touch their forehead. But in those days they just poured it on you. You really got the effect of feeling, you know, it's a symbol of the Holy Spirit coming upon you. And when runs down your beard and all, you really get the full effect of it, as did Aaron who was anointed, the oil running down his beard!

But the idea of anointed One, the *mashiyach* or the Messiah, is that He is anointed by God to be King. And of course when He comes again, He has the vesture on His side, written, King and Kings and Lord of Lords. But He also, in the Scripture, our great High Priest. So the promised Messiah was to be the intermedator between God and man, the Anointed Priest, to mediate.

So Paul said there is One God, One Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, the Anointed, the Messiah, or the word in Greek, is *Christos*, from which we get our word, Christ. And so that's just saying Messiah.

Sometime I think that I might, well I doubt it, if I had time, I would write a New Testament. And in the New Testament, I would make definition for the word, Lord, that it would really indicate it, in other words, here I would put a comma after the Lord, because that's His title and Jesus, that's His name. And then instead of the Greek, *Christos* or Christ, I would put Messiah because that then, people would not think of it as His name. He is the Christ. Well, He the Anointed One. He is the Messiah. That is true, but that's not His name though. His name is Jesus. Thou shall call His name Jesus. But He is the Messiah! So it is often coupled together. He is the Lord. His name is Jesus. He is the Messiah.

So when you find Lord Jesus Christ, that's the whole implication, our Lord. We are submitted to Him. His name is Jesus. He has saved us from our sins. And He is God's Anointed King, who shall rule over the world.

So Paul's typical greeting, *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*. In his very first letter, he gives us this beautiful salutation of grace and peace. In all of Paul's letters, he uses this as the introduction of his letter, always wishing them grace and peace.

The grace was from the Greek language. It was the typical Greek greeting. They would greet one another with the typical Greek greeting, *charis*, or grace. It's a beautiful word of greeting in Greek, which means beauty and charm and warmth and form. The beauty of form, grace be unto you. In our understanding of the word, it means God's unmerited favor. It's just the beauty of God that has been bestowed on us, undeserving by our part.

The word, peace, was of course the typical Jewish greeting, *shalom*. So joining the Greek greeting and the Hebrew greeting, you have the grace and peace, Paul combines them. It makes a beautiful salutation. But it's interesting in the combining of them, it's always grace first. Never once did Paul say peace be unto and grace from God our Father. But he always would say, grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father. It was always in that order.

I believe the reason for the order is that you can never really never know the peace of God until you come to experience the grace of God in your life. Unto you really understand and know the grace of God, you are always under a pressure to perform. And you are looking to your performance for your acceptance by God. And as long as I am endeavoring to find my works and efforts to be justified or to be accepted by God, there is never any place for peace.

It's always a difficult position, because I'm never sure of just where I stand. When I am stand upon my goodness, when I'm standing upon my faithfulness, when I am standing upon my efforts for God. I'm never sure that I'm good enough. As a matter of fact, I know that I'm not. I'm never sure that my efforts are the best. They are usually not. And thus I'm always sort of uneasy because I know I've fallen short. I know I haven't measured up. And when my relationship is dependent on me then it is a shaky relationship. I'm trying to relate on the basis of my goodness and my work, but when I come to know the grace of God, I rest upon His goodness and upon His finished work in Jesus Christ. And because it's not something that's dependent on me, which is a variable, but upon God, which is stable, my relationship with God is not a variable thing anymore. My relationship with God is solid. It is something that is maintained even though I may vary, He doesn't! And thus, relating to God in the finished work of Jesus Christ, you always have a

glorious relationship. There is no problem. There is no variableness. And as thus, there is peace. Oh, what glorious peace when you really come to understand the grace of God! So that's why Paul always puts them in that order—grace and peace.

²*We give thanks* (Paul said) *to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers*; Now, in most of Paul's letters, he speaks of his prayers for them. How that he prays without ceasing. He had the churches on his heart. And he prayed constantly for the various churches.

You remember last week, when he was writing to the church in Colosse, he spoke of how he prayed for them and of course, Epaphras, who was one of them, how that he fervently prayed for them. Paul, what a man of God! What an example! Because of his tremendous prayer life, remembering them in prayer. He said, we give thanks to God always for you as we make mention of you in our prayers.

Then he said, ³*Remembering without ceasing* (That is his prayers for them again were constant. And I remember) *your work of faith*, Faith and works. It's important that we understand these things because there is a lot of confusion here.

A lot of times people say, well, that's a work. They are trying to say, as a Christian you shouldn't be doing any work. And that's work. As a Christian, yes there are works that we do. The thing is, we don't do the works in order to be accepted by God or in order to receive salvation, or in order to be justified or in order to receive the forgiveness of sin. There is no work that I can do that will justify me before God. There is no work that I can do that will make me righteous before God. There are no rules. There are no laws that I can keep, that will give me a righteous standing before God.

And as Paul is contrasting the works with faith and declaring that we are justified by faith that our righteousness is imputed to us by our faith in Jesus Christ, apart from works, apart from the works of law, he is absolutely correct.

But, because God has justified me, because God has declared me righteous, because God has forgiven my sins, by His grace, as a result of my faith in Jesus Christ, because of all that God has bestowed upon me, I respond to God in my work for God. And so I give myself to serve the Lord.

Now, again, the title, Lord, He is the Lord, Jesus Christ. The converse to that is that I'm the slave. He is the master! He is the Lord! I'm the servant. I'm the slave. And as the slave I'm responsible to total obedience to the Lord, never arguing, never questioning. Just obeying. Now the disciples were not always fully obedient. They would sometimes question the Lord. I sometimes question the Lord.

When Jesus called Ananias to go pray for Saul, there in Damascus. He said, Lord, I've heard about this fellow. How that he wasted the church in Jerusalem and how he's come here to Damascus to imprison those that call upon You. He was arguing. We often do that. Lord, I don't quite understand.

Peter (Acts 10:13-16), when Jesus gave him the vision and this sheet went down from heaven with all kinds of animals on it, and the Lord said to Peter, rise, Peter, kill and eat! Not so, Lord! I've never eaten anything that was not Kosher. But you see, it was the challenging of the Lord. But that's wrong. You can't really say, not so, Lord!

But there was that challenge. But it is to obey and thus, I obey in the commands of the Lord to go into all the world and to preach the gospel to every creature. To deny myself, pick up the cross and follow Him, these things I do. But not to be saved! These things don't save me. These things are the proof that the faith that I have in Jesus Christ is genuine.

Faith, works, as James said, I will show you my faith by my works. They are the proof of the genuineness of the faith.

It's easy to make an assertion. It's easy to say, Jesus, is the Lord of my life. We could all say that right now. Jesus is the Lord of my life. But that may not be so. It could be just mouthing words. How do know that He is the Lord of you life? We can know it as we observe you life and see if you are doing the works that Jesus commands us to do, as His servants. If you affirm it and yet you are not doing the things that he commands, then he really isn't Lord.

He says, why callest thou me, Lord, Lord, and you don't do the things I command you? That an inconsistency.

He says, in that day many will come unto Me and say, Lord, Lord, open unto us. Did we not prophesy in

Your name? Did we not do many marvelous works and so forth? He said, I never knew you! Not all who say, Lord, Lord are going to enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of the Father.

So there is a place for works in the believer's life. But never as a means of making me righteous, never as a means of gaining me salvation, never as a means of justifying me before God. Those things are all wrought by faith, but the kind of faith that works. That produces works that demonstrate itself in the works that I do.

So there are works of faith, and then secondly, *and labour of love*, There's no other motivation that God will accept for service, than love. The love of Christ, Paul said, constrained me!

Now there are people that do things for God for different motives. And the Bible tells us that one day we will stand before God and we will be judged according to our works, what manner or sort they are. This is, we will be judged according to what motivated us to do the things, not so much what I did, but what motivated me to do it. Much of the good things will be negated because they doing it out of wrong motivation.

If my motivation was for glory, I did it to be seen of people. I did it to be admired and held in high esteem by people. That was in my heart, the motive of my heart, then there is no reward for those kinds of works. I received the reward in the acknowledgement and the accolades that the people heaped upon me.

Jesus said take heed to yourself, that you do not your righteousness before men to be seen of men. Don't let that be your motive, to be seen of men, for I say unto you, you have your reward.

He also said let your light so shine before men that when they see your good works, they glorify your Father, which is in heaven, not that they glorify you.

There are people that are doing things for God for personal gain and profit. And that's not a labor that's motivated by love.

There are many people who are in the ministry as a profession. I don't believe the ministry should ever be a profession. I believe it is a calling. You should be as Paul said, woe unto me if I preach not the gospel. And that constraining love of Christ that causes us to make the sacrifices and go the extra mile and to push ourselves beyond our own capabilities or limits. But for the cause of Christ and for the love of Jesus Christ, we give up ourselves and our own eases. We just go out to serve Him because of the love of Christ constraining me. I will serve You because I love you. That's the only true motive for serving the Lord. And so the labors that come forth, the labors of love, how glorious they are!

I'll do a lot more for love than anything else. Because of my love, I will give up. I will sacrifice. I will do whatever is necessary for love's sake. It's so true in life. What we do out of love, we wouldn't do for money. You couldn't pay me to do some of the things that I've done. But for the love of Christ, you would gladly do them. And because you are doing it out of a love, you don't gripe about it. You don't complain about it. But you just do it and you count it a privilege and a joy to be able to do it for the love of Christ's sake.

and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, Remembering also their patience of hope. Waiting. Over and over again in the Scriptures, we are exhorted to wait on the Lord. Be of good courage. Wait on Him! And that patience as we wait in hope. We have the promise of God that He is going to do it. And that promise of God gives us a basis for our hope. Our hope is in the promise of God and in the Word of God. Now we wait patiently for God to keep that promise.

Now with the Thessalonians, he is talking about the hope of the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ and the establishing of the Kingdom of God upon the earth. It is interesting that Paul, only being with them for a very short period, no doubt a great part of his teaching did revolve about the second coming of Jesus Christ and the establishing of God's Kingdom upon the earth. Of course this would be necessary, because he is talking to them about the Messiah. And that Jesus is the Messiah! For three weeks, he was reasoning with them out of the Scriptures, showing that the Scriptures said the Messiah had to suffer.

Now they knew the Scriptures had spoken about the Messiah reigning over the earth. How the Messiah would establish God's Kingdom upon the earth. And the righteousness and the glory and the peace that would come to the earth when the Messiah established His Kingdom. What they didn't know, what that the Messiah first of all had to suffer and die. Those Scriptures they didn't comprehend or understand.

So Paul in dealing with Christ as the Messiah, would also deal with the fact that Jesus the Messiah did come. He suffered and died. He's gone into heaven, but He is coming back! And when He comes back, He is going to establish the Kingdom.

And so there was that anticipation, that hope of the return of Jesus Christ to establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth, when they then could live in this glorious Kingdom of righteousness and peace, in the reign of Christ. So he talked to them about the second coming of the Messiah, the second coming of Jesus. And as we get further into the epistle, we'll find Paul making mention of this quite often, even as he does in verse ten of our chapter tonight. But Paul will come back to this reference of Jesus, which was an important part of Paul's initial ministry to them.

It is sad today that very few churches ever talk about the second coming of Jesus Christ. There are many who do not even believe in the second coming of Jesus Christ. They believe that the church is ultimately going to establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth. And they don't talk about the second coming of Jesus Christ. They are really robbing the people of this glorious hope!

It was such an important doctrine, that Paul saw fit to teach it in just a few short weeks. It was one of the major emphases of Paul's ministry. Surely it was one of the major emphases of the New Testament. And that is that Jesus Christ is coming again to establish His Kingdom upon the earth! That is what the New Testament is all about! This same Jesus shall come again, in like manner as you have seen Him go. And when the Son of Man shall come, with all of His Holy angels, then shall He establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

Over and over, this is a recurring theme in the New Testament. And when you leave this out, you leave out a glorious part of the gospel—the good news—that things are not going to go on forever under Satan's control and power. That darkness is not going to rule forever! That Jesus is coming and the Kingdom of God shall be established upon the earth.

They were patiently waiting in hope. And so the patience of hope. James said, have patience brother unto the coming of the Lord. Establish your soul because the husbandman is waiting for the precious fruit and has long patience for it.

Peter (2 Peter 3:3-9) in talking about the delay of the return of Jesus Christ, said that in the last days there would be scoffers who would actually say, where is the promise of His coming? And would give up hope in the coming of Jesus Christ. And they would say things have gone on as they were from the beginning, nothing has changed.

But they are woefully ignorant of the fact that things have changed in history. The world that once was perished by water. That God is not really slack concerning His promises. He is faithful. But the reason why the delay, He's not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to salvation or repentance. And therefore realize that this long suffering of God is the salvation of many people. God is waiting that they might be added to the Kingdom

So there is patience in hope. Hope is such a glorious, sustaining thing. As long as there is hope, you are all right. When hope is gone and it turns to despair, that life becomes just intolerable.

It's an interesting thing throughout the years the philosophers were searching for truth. The whole idea of philosophy was the discovery of truth. And the philosophers would develop this school of philosophy. They would expound what they believed to be the truth. And then another school of philosophy would arise. They would put down that philosophy and establish a new, what they called was the philosophy of truth. So you have your various schools of philosophy, ideas of thought. And finally, however, the philosophers concluded that truth could not be found. That truth was relative and because truth is relative, it not a universal truth. It isn't a unified truth but what is true to you, is true. But it may not be true to anybody else or everybody else, but if it is true to you, it is true. And thus it is relative to the individual. So there is no universal truth or no unified truth that a man can discover. Now in declaring this, and of course it's the present day philosophy, it is existentialism, that truth is relative to the situation and to the individual. And in coming to that they gave up hope of discovering the truth.

You remember when Pilate was questioning Jesus, and Jesus spoke about the truth. He said, cynically, what is truth? And that is the feeling of philosophers today, what is truth? There is no universal truth,

coming to the conclusion that truth did not exist universally. In other words they despaired of finding truth.

But they soon discovered that man cannot live in despair, in hopelessness. And when they gave up their quest for truth, including that it could not be found, they entered into a despair, but the despair was so terrible, that so many students in Europe were committing suicide, that they felt well, we've got to give some kind of hope. We have taken away hope. The hope to find truth, we've taken that away. So we've got to give them some kind of hope. And this is where your existentialism comes in.

So the lower story is a reality that truth doesn't exist, but that's despair. You can't live in that. So they talk about the necessity of taking a leap of faith into the upper story. And hopefully when you land, there will be something to land on. In other words, you'll find something that satisfies you, hopefully as you take this leap of faith into what they called, non-reasoned, religious experiences. And that's why the door was opened to the New Age movement. This is why the door was opened to Hinduism and to meditation. You notice they talk about a sense of oneness with the universe. They talk about these non-reasoned religious experiences. In other words, they can't give you a reason why they feel comfortable, and they feel this sensation of oneness with a flower that you're looking at. I have sort of entered in and become one, you know. It's a non-reasoned religious experience.

But the Bible says (Isaiah 1:18), come now, let us reason together saith the Lord. The Lord doesn't ask you to take a leap of faith into an upper story and hope that you will find something. He gives you a solid hope. He declares, look, I love you. I've come to redeem you from your sins that you might be Mine, that you live with Me. And He gives us a reason for our hope! We have that glorious hope. We have the peace of Christ, which passes understanding, but I can give you a reason for the hope that I have within me.

The Bible exhorts us to be able to give a reason for the hope that we have. And the reason is that God so loved the world, He sent His only Begotten Son. He died for my sins. He's cleansed me from all unrighteousness and He has made me His child. He is going to come. And He is going to rule and reign. And I will live and reign with Him in His Kingdom! That is a glorious hope! So their hope, their patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our hope isn't in the Republican Party. It isn't in the Democratic Party. It isn't in the Independent party. Our hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ in His Kingdom that He will establish.

I am convinced that there is no political party that has the answers to man's dilemma, that there is no political party that can solve our problems. Now the President may say that the state of union is wonderful. We're in better shape than we've ever been before. How long do you think that's going to last? Can you really put your hope, oh my, we finally have it you know. Of course the Republicans will say, well it's a control Republican house, how can the President take credit for that when we control the House and the Senate? It's the Republican's program that done it. And yet, Clinton will say, no, I've done it, you know. But who can you really hope in? God help you if you are hoping in man to be able solve his own problems.

Right now look at the crises that we are in. The news every night is filled with, you know, ready to attack Iraq, you know. We're trying now to just get enough allies to sort of bolster and support us for we're going to go in and teach Sadaam a lesson, and all of this, you know. We're on the brink of another confrontation.

Where is your hope? Our hope is in our Lord Jesus Christ! Oh yes, *in the sight of God and our Father;*
⁴*Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.* Jesus said to His disciples, one day, you have not chosen Me, I've chosen you and ordained that you should be My disciples and that you should bring forth fruit. Knowing your election of God, God has chosen you!

Now there are people that have problems with that. I don't really fully understand their problems, but I know that a lot of people are problemed over the fact that God chooses who He wants to spend eternity with. But don't you feel He has a right to make those choices? Would you want someone to choose who you were going to spend the rest of your life with? If you know, you had to go, when you wanted to get married, you had to go and the girls line up on one side of the room and the boys line up on the other, and so you draw numbers. Then you have to go find the number that matches yours. And boy all the time you are hoping, you know, oooh, oh, I hope it's not that one, you know. Aren't you glad you had a choice? Don't you feel that it's right that you should be able to choose? After all, you are going to spend the rest of your life with them, you want to make sure there is some kind of compatibility, some kind of attraction and compatibility.

But what if you were choosing your eternal partner? Wouldn't you want some kind of a say in it? So if we feel that we have the right to make a choice with whom we are going to spend our life with, surely God has the right to choose who He is going to spend eternity with.

Now I don't have any problem with that because He chose me. So I'm not going to argue with that one. You say, but, I don't know if He chose me or not. And it's not fair for God to choose, because I don't know if He chose me or not. I'll say, well, you can find out.

All you have to do is ask Jesus Christ to be the Lord of your life. Turn your life over to Him. You'll discover that He chose you! He'll say, you have not chosen Me, but I'm have chosen you and ordained that you should be My disciple.

You say, oh, maybe I don't want to. Well, maybe He didn't choose you then. But you see, you can't blame Him. You say, well, He didn't choose me. Well, you don't know until you accept Him. And then when you do, you find out that He did. So the ball is in your court.

The Bible says choose you this day whom you will serve. But because God is God, and knows all things He knows who is going to chose Jesus Christ as the Lord of their life. He knows that because He is God. And He is omniscient. He knows all things. Known unto Him are all things from the beginning. He's always known them. If He knows all things, He can't learn anything, can he? He can't learn anything new.

When you get to heaven, He won't say, how did you get here? I don't see your name on the list. He won't be surprised because He chose you. I find that a very comforting thing to realize that God loves me and God chose me and ordained me to be His disciple so I should bring forth fruit and that the fruit should remain. What a joy! What a glory!

Now God has given to us also the capacity of choice. God has created us in Him image. God is self-determinate. He has made me self-determinate. I can chose. That's a great part of being, is the capacity of choice. But for choice to be valid, there has to be something to chose. If there is nothing to chose, what value is choice?

Why do you like to go to Thirty-One Flavors? There are lots of choices. You are not too apt to go to an ice cream shop that just has vanilla. You might want vanilla, but you like to see the others and realize that you can choose whatever you want. Thus, for the choice to be valid there has to be something to choose.

God had to put the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the garden and put the prohibition on it, so that there would be a choice. Of all the trees in the Garden you can freely eat, wonderful! No choice. Except the tree that's in the middle of the Garden. You are not to eat of that. Because if you do you will surely die! Ooh, now there's choice. Do I obey God and not eat of that tree? Or do I disobey God? I have a choice because the tree is there. If the tree wasn't there I would have no choice.

For choice to really be valid, the alternate must be attractive. I'm certain that the tree in the middle of the Garden had the most luscious looking fruit that you ever saw in your life. What it was I don't know. But, I'm certain that it looked absolutely delicious, that you could hardly wait to sink you teeth into it. It looked so good! It had to be attractive. If it were smelly, if when you came close to it, you just, yuck, you felt like throwing up because it was just such a horrible smell. You would say, wait, not me, I'm not going to get close to it. Oh it smells terrible! It had to be attractive to really be valid. How would God really know that you loved Him? How would He really know that you wanted to obey Him because of your love for Him unless it was very attractive, very enticing?

You see, the world is very attractive, very enticing. Your choice for Jesus becomes very valid because the alternative is very attractive. It promises immediately fulfillment. It promises excitement. It promises, you know, thrills and sensations and all. It's very attractive. But it's still deadly. Like the tree in the Garden, it's still deadly.

For the choice to be valid there has to then be the honoring of the choice that you make. In other words, when Adam and Eve chose to eat of the tree. When Adam reached to pick it. I don't know if he picked it or she picked it, but when she took, God didn't come down and pop her hand and knock the fruit out of it, saying I told you not to do that. The choice had to be honored. God will honor the choice that you make, even if it is to your own destruction. God will honor it. So that's an awesome thing to have my eternity in my hand. I can choose to follow Jesus and receive eternal life. Or I can choose to reject Jesus and

experience the death of sin.

So knowing your election of God. Once you have made your choice, then you discover God elected you all the while. Isn't that wonderful? But He elected you because He knew in advance, knowing all things, that you were going to make the right choices and thus elect of God. But I don't know that, you see, so it's up to me to make my choice.

⁵*For our gospel* (That is the gospel we preach, this the good news that we preach to you.) *came not unto you in word only*, It wasn't just that I declared it to you.

but also in power, (the *dunamis*. Jesus said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And that's the word, *dunamis*. And here that word is used again. The word came in power—*dunamis*.) and *in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake*. So as they preached there was that demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit, working in their lives and through their lives in the ministry.

Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians, said that he came not with the enticing words of man's wisdom. He didn't want their faith to be established in the wisdom of man, but it was the power and the demonstration of the Holy Spirit. We need more of that kind of preaching. Preaching that is the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit. And we need more of those marvelous works of the Holy Spirit as an affirmation to the truth of the gospel, the good news that we proclaim. The gospel didn't come just in word, but in power—*dunamis*—and through the works of the Holy Spirit, with much assurance.

⁶*And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord*, Paul said, follow me even as I follow Jesus Christ. Again life is an example. Paul said to Timothy, be thou an example unto the believers. And surely those who minister the Word of God should live exemplary lives for we would be able to declare follow me even as I follow Jesus Christ.

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, *having received the word in much affliction*, This is true. They grabbed Justus and threw him in jail. There was a lot of persecution against the ministry of Paul there in Thessalonica. There was quite an uproar in his ministry there.

So they received the word in much affliction, *with joy of the Holy Ghost*: Even in the midst of affliction, when the disciples were beaten, they went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer persecution for the sake of Jesus Christ! Much joy!

⁷*So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia*. The believers there, they became then examples also. The joy in the Lord, the joy of the Holy Spirit, it became an example for all around. Oh, may God help our church to be an example of what it is to have joy in the Holy Spirit. And make people see the power of God working in our midst that we become exemplary. Surely, we may have persecution or tribulation or whatever, much affliction, but oh, may it never rob us of that joy in the Holy Spirit and may that be a real witness and example to all!

⁸*For from you sounded out the word of the Lord* They received it but then, from them, it went out. And this is the way Paul did work. Wherever he would establish a work, it would become the base for reaching the communities around there.

I've observed with much fascination how that has happened with the Calvary Chapels. Wherever they go and plant a Calvary Chapel, it seems that from there the word sounds out and it goes out and it begins to reach many other communities.

Mike McIntosh went to San Diego. From his church there are over twenty-five churches now in San Diego County that came out of Mike's church, as from his church sounded out the gospel to the reaches around.

From Jon Courson, I don't know how many churches, maybe fifty or more up in Oregon that have sprung out of Jon Courson's church.

I don't know how many have sprung out of Skip Heitzek's in Albuquerque, but there are many, many churches that have come out of Skip.

From New York, Bil Gallatin is spreading churches all over the place. From Atlanta, where we were last week, there are so many new churches just springing up all around in Georgia, North Carolina and all, that

are the result of the ministry there. So it is, wherever it's planted, it becomes the base and the center for reaching out into the area round about. So it was true with the church in Thessalonica.

For from you sounded out the word of the Lord *not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.* I mean your reputation, what God has done! It's just spread abroad. We don't have to talk about it. People already know what God is doing there. And what a glorious thing that is. What a powerful witness.

⁹*For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;* People knew how that you used to be serving idols and you forsook those idols to serve the living God.

It's tragic that sometimes it goes the other direction. It did with the nation of Israel. God's complaint concerning the nation of Israel, was that that they turned from Him, the living God, until idols. They have forsaken Me, God said, the fountain of living water. They have hewn out cisterns, cisterns that can hold no water. It's a tragic thing and it was in the nation of Israel, when they turned from the true and the living God and they began to worship and serve idols.

Here the opposite is so! With the gospel coming to them, they turned from their idols to serve the true and the living God. Now we see many times within the church this reverse process. This is the process we want to see. We want to see men turn from serving idols to serve the true and the living God, but unfortunately in many places, we see idolatry coming into the church. We see idolatrous forms of worship coming into the church. They have gone from the simplicity in Christ and they have begun to establish altars and forms of idolatry, right in the church. They turn from the true and the living God unto idolatrous forms of worship.

John in his first epistle, in his very last verse, he said, little children, keep yourselves from idols. That is not just to be cast aside lightly. There is that tendency if you are not going forward, you are going to be sliding backwards. There is just no place of sort of standing still. You are going in one direction or another. Let's move on. Let's move forward in the things of Christ.

Let's not try to rest in the past laurels. Will God do this? Oh my I can remember when, you know, oh no, no, no! What God is doing now is what is important and what's vital. What is God doing in your life today? What has God done this past week? What is your relationship right now? And if your relationship, right now, is not richer, fuller and more marvelous than it's every been in your life, then you are in a back-slidden condition. You are moving in the wrong direction. Let's move on. Let's move forward in the things of the Lord.

But they turned their idols to serve the living God ¹⁰*And to wait (So here again the second coming.)for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.* So we've turned to God and now waiting patiently for the hope, waiting for the return of Jesus Christ, whom will come from heaven, whom God raised from the dead and who has delivered from the wrath to come.

Now the Bible tells us that God's wrath is going to be poured out on the world, against all ungodliness and unrighteous of men who hold the truth of God in unrighteousness. The Bible says that there is going to come a Great Tribulation such as the world has never seen before or will ever see again. And this period of Great Tribulation is described quite graphically in the Book of Revelation, beginning with chapter six, a graphic description of the wrath of God that is going to be poured out on the world. And we read there that men will be hiding. They will call to the rocks to fall on us and to hide us from the face of the Lamb for the day of His wrath has come. Who shall be able to stand as God pours out His judgment on this world that is deserving the judgment of God because they have turned their back on God? They are living in immorality. They have forsaken the ways of the Lord. They are living after the flesh. God's wrath is going to be poured out.

But, thank God, Jesus has saved us from the wrath to come. And before the wrath of God is poured out, He is going to take His church out of the world, because He has not appointed us unto wrath. Jesus is talking about this period of the wrath of God that is going to come, in Luke twenty-one, that pray always that you will be accounted worthy to escape these things, that is the Great Tribulation, and to stand before the Son of Man.

So this teaching of Paul of the coming of Jesus was a very predominate part of his ministry. Would to

God, that it would become really a dominant theme in the church again, that we would establish the hope of the coming of Jesus Christ in the hearts of the people, because that has, first of all, a great impetus in getting the gospel out. It gives an urgency to our giving gospel out. It gives an urgency to our letting go of the things of the world, not getting so deeply involved in the worldly things.

Paul said, let your every contact with the world be as light as possible. It helps to keep us pure. I want to be watching and I want to be ready when Jesus comes for His church. I surely don't want to be left behind to face the wrath of God! And so it gives that incentive for purity.

So we declare to you, Jesus is coming very soon. The world is getting ready for the antichrist. The technology has been developed to go to a new system of exchange where you no longer will be using money or even credit cards. But you'll receive an implant in your right hand or in your forehead. And all your buying and your selling will be done with that implant. We're moving towards that very rapidly. The technology does exist.

We are moving toward an one-world government. Even in the state of the Union, over and over again, President Clinton was talking about the global economy, the global community. You know, the necessity of seeing the global society. We are moving towards it as the Bible said. And Jesus is coming soon.

There are now problems in the Middle East once more. Who knows whether or not this will flare up into Ezekiel thirty-eight? It could very easily, this whole thing could explode into the thirty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel. We're close. We're on the border. And as Paul said, it is high time that we awake out of our sleep for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

God help us that we might be watching, waiting and ready!

Father, we thank You for this wonderful exhortation of Paul to the church in Thessalonica, which is also so applicable to us here as we wait patiently for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ for His church. We thank You, Lord, that You have not appointed us unto wrath and that You have saved us from the wrath to come. Lord we appreciate so much all that You have done for us and all that You are doing for us. We ask Lord, that You will continue Your work in Your church, purifying us and preparing us as the bride to meet the groom when He comes. May we be ready. May we be watching. In Jesus' name. Amen.