

# Thank God for Church

## 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

### Giving Thanks

This is the first study in an occasional series where we have a look at the way the apostle Paul gives thanks. If you want to do some flicking, you will notice that 'thanksgiving' is the way he starts his letter to the Christian churches in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Colossae, Philippi and also with the church that what we're looking at today – Thessalonica.

Obviously Paul was a man of passion. He was a man deeply moved by the Christian growth and maturity amongst the churches that he had contact with. For Paul, he could not help but be thankful to God and he wanted to encourage these churches by telling *them* of his thankfulness as well. As we come to understand what Paul was thankful for, we'll understand what a growing healthy church looks like, and it will help keep our focus on what we should be aiming for ourselves.

Generally in life, do you think it's easier to express thankfulness or criticism or perhaps even nothing at all?

### Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

<sup>1</sup>Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you.

<sup>2</sup>We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. <sup>3</sup>We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, <sup>5</sup>because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. <sup>6</sup>You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. <sup>7</sup>And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. <sup>8</sup>The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, <sup>9</sup>for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, <sup>10</sup>and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.



## **Background on Paul and Thessalonica**

Read Acts 17:1-15

How would you describe the behaviour of the Jews in Thessalonica?

What do you think it would have been like for the newly established Christian church in Thessalonica under these circumstances?

How does 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 pick up on the background recorded in Acts?

## **Cause and Effect**

In Paul's thankfulness what are the three things that Paul fondly remembers of the Thessalonian Christians?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ produced by \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_ prompted by \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_ inspired by \_\_\_\_\_

Faith, Love and Hope seem to be the motivating forces for these Thessalonian Christians. Explain in your own words why these three things are motivations in the Christian life.

In what ways can wrong motives be at work in the Christian life?

For us at mpc, what will it mean to work, labour and endure?

## **Those who are chosen**

How does Paul know the Thessalonian Christians are loved by God and have been chosen by him v4-5?

What do you think Paul means when he says the gospel message came to them "not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction"? v5

What does verse 10 tell us about the content of the gospel message?

If in Thessalonica, the response to the gospel message was that people “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven”, what is the response we have been called to? What does it mean in practice?

Notice how the Holy Spirit is referred to in verses 5 and 6. The Holy Spirit was active in the delivering of the gospel message and also in the reception of the gospel message. In asking for the Holy Spirit to be at work, how can this inspire us to pray?

### **Copy Cat Copy Cat**

In verse 6 and 7 there is a ‘chain’ of imitating. What is the chain?

Who have they been imitating?

What a turn around for these pagan-god worshippers! They received the gospel message, turned from their idols and imitated both Paul and the Lord Jesus himself. Their lives went through a revolutionary change. And in turn they have become a model for others!

For us today, is there a place for imitation? Who and how?

For us today, is there a place to be a model to others? Who and how?

### **Spreading Outwards**

In verse 8 it’s not only the ‘message’ that rings out from the Thessalonian Christians, but also ‘their faith’. What is the distinction between the two?

For us, how can our message and our faith ring out?

### **Conclusion**

In light of this study, think back over the last 6 months at mpc. What are you thankful for? Be as specific as you can.

Pray that the changes experienced by the Thessalonians would be the sort of changes that are experienced by everyone at mpc.