

THANKFUL FOR THE THESSALONIANS

Introduction

- 1) Paul was a very thankful person (Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3; Col. 3:15)
- 2) The apostle Paul was thankful for the *church of the Thessalonians*
- 3) Paul was thankful for the Thessalonians in two major areas: their *conversion* and *growth*
- 4) The reasons he gives are instructive to New Testament churches today
- 5) Paul gave *all* the thanks to God – God makes *all* things possible for us individuals and the church

I) **CHOSEN FOR SALVATION** (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)

- A) God, from the beginning, chose those who would be saved (the elect – 1 Pet. 1:2)
 - 1) This divine choosing is achieved through *two aspects* of salvation
 - a) Sanctification by the Spirit *and* belief in the truth (action by God and man)
 - 2) Called by the gospel – the truth – to receive this free gift of salvation (cf. Eph. 1:4, 11-13)
 - B) This is not the false doctrine of “Unconditional Election”
 - 1) Condemnation will come upon whoever does not believe or obey (2:12; 1:8)
 - 2) God desires all men to be saved, not just a select few (1 Tim. 2:4)

II) **RECEIVED THE WORD OF GOD** (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

- A) Those who were converted to Christ did so because they *welcomed the word* preached by Paul *as from God* (confirmed by miracles – 1:5)
 - 1) Did not dismiss it as just the word of men, but as from God (cf. Gal. 1:11-12)
 - 2) The word works effectively in those who believe (cf. Rom. 1:16)
- B) The battle for the *inspiration of the Bible* continues today
 - 1) Many dismiss Bible as the word of fallible men reflecting outdated culture and morals
 - 2) We must understand and teach the Bible as the word of God (2 Tim. 3:16)
 - a) Internal and external evidences, miracles, prophecies, etc. (2 Pet. 1:20-21)
 - 3) Bible’s origin demands an investigation and a verdict!

III) **THEIR FAITH, LOVE, AND HOPE** (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)

- A) *Work of faith, labor of love, patience of hope* – their activity and attitude in the truth
 - 1) A wealth of spiritual faith, love, and hope is vital to personal growth and positive influence
 - 2) Pointless to work without faith, labor without love, or endure without hope
- B) They were busy in the Lord’s work day by day – serving while waiting (1 Thess.1:9-10)
 - 1) Are we working or keeping house? Are we laboring or distracted with other things?

IV) **EXCEEDING FAITH AND ABOUNDING LOVE** (2 Thessalonians 1:3-4)

- A) About a year later, Paul thanked God *again* for their faith, love, and patience
 - 1) Now they had grown exceedingly and abounded, *even in face of trials* (2 Cor. 8:1-5)
 - 2) Time and effort brings growth and advancement in spiritual lives
 - 3) Trials often force us to grow and mature in knowledge and action
- B) All Christians should seek to grow; not be satisfied with status quo
 - 1) Seek personal challenges and goals; prepare for life’s challenges

Conclusion

Would Paul be thankful for us for the same reasons? Our conversion and continual growth is to be what God desires in His children. *May we follow the example of the Thessalonians.*