

1 Thessalonians 1:3-12

A Young Church Excels in Faith, Love and Hope

*“Mediocracy inspires no one, but those who pursue their lives with passion and excellence challenge and encourage others to do the same. It’s no small thing then that Paul begins his letter by thanking God for the genuine **commitment** of the Thessalonian **to the gospel** (1:2-3). This church clearly lived for Christ with passion and expectancy. There was **nothing mediocre** about their faith, their love, or their hope. They were an inspiration to Paul and to the churches of Macedonia and Achaia (1:8-9). But despite the excellence of the Thessalonians’ faith, God was ultimately the source behind every good thing that was happening among them. Hiebert makes this point: Paul’s heart was full of praise because of the good news concerning the Thessalonians, but he did not simply congratulate them on the success that had been achieved. He was well aware that the spiritual results evoking his gratitude were due ultimately neither to the preachers nor the converts. **God Himself was the real cause of it all.** To Him belonged the thanks for what had been wrought.” Mark Howell*

- I. God has given us the attributes of faith, love and hope as those chosen to bear witness of him in this life. They are meant to keep us from collapsing under the pressure of living in a fallen world. They also leave us without excuse when it comes to living our faith well. They are what kept the young church in Thessalonica from falling apart after Paul was forced to leave them after only a month of discipleship. I wonder if, In our world, we would have the same kind of resolve they had when facing the persecution they endured as standouts in a culture steeped in polytheism. Their example, meant to inspire us some 2000 years later, shows a resolve to put their faith, love and hope into action in ways that encouraged other believers to do the same. Paul commended the Thessalonians for becoming a model to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Would he have done the same for us as we bear witness of the faith, love and hope we have in Christ to the surrounding communities we live in?

1 Thess. 1:3-8
Acts 17:2b-4
1 Jn. 2:28
1 Cor. 13:13

Rom. 9:10-13
Eph. 1:4-5
Acts 13:48
Rom. 8:30

Rom. 10:12-13
Matt. 28:18-19
Jn. 6:44
Matt. 13:23
Phil. 1:27

ἐκλογή eklogḗ, the act of picking out, choosing, of the act of God's free will by which before the foundation of the world he decreed his blessings to certain persons' the decree made from choice by which he determined to bless certain persons through Christ by grace alone, a thing or person chosen of persons: God's elect. Strong's Concordance

2 Peter 1:3-4 *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*

- II. Should we be concerned about the worship of idols? Do they even exist in today's world? If they do, then are we susceptible to bowing down to them? If we have, then repentance and a turning from them is absolutely essential to living a Spirit filled life. *While few people in contemporary Western society bow down to carved images, the biblical teachings about idolatry remain strikingly relevant. The human tendency to seek ultimate meaning, security, and identity in created things rather than in relationship with the Creator persists across cultural and temporal boundaries. Modern idolatries might include the pursuit of wealth, career success, family, nation, political ideologies, or even religious activities themselves when they become ends rather than means [legalism falls into this category big time]. Technology presents particularly subtle forms of contemporary idolatry, as digital devices and virtual experiences can consume attention, time, and emotional energy in ways that mirror ancient devotion to household gods. Social media platforms can become venues for seeking the affirmation, identity, and sense of community that properly belong in relationship with God and authentic human community [Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, snapchat, ticktock]. The constant connectivity and information overload of modern life can create dependencies that function similarly to the ancient belief that prosperity and security came through proper attention to various deities.* (bibleanalysis.org) Satan is the great deceiver who is very adept at leading believers astray, especially through getting them to put their affections on seemingly harmless idols that are hard to recognize (e.g., A.I.). Therefore, because of the insidiousness of idol worship, we must be self-controlled and alert to keep them from gaining a foothold in our hearts.

1 Thess. 1:9
2 Peter 3:9

1 Jn. 1:8-10
Gal. 5:24-25

“The word repentance in the Bible literally means “the act of changing one’s mind.” True biblical repentance goes beyond remorse, regret, or feeling bad about one’s sin. It involves more than merely turning away from sin. Eerdmans Bible Dictionary includes this definition of repentance: “In its fullest sense it is a term for a complete change of orientation involving a judgment upon the past and a deliberate redirection for the future.” gotquestions.org

μετάνοια metanoia, a change of mind, as it appears to one who repents, of a purpose he has formed or of something he has done.

- III. Paul, in the short time he was with the Thessalonians believers, felt it important to make them aware of Christ's imminent return in the clouds to call believers up to be with Him before the fullness of God's wrath comes upon the inhabitants of this world. Apparently, they took what Paul said to heart as evidenced by their work produced by faith, their labor prompted by love and their endurance inspired by hope. Peter tells us that *the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. 11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (1 Peter 3:10-13).*

1 Thess. 1:10
Rev. 3:10
Rom. 5:9

imminent /ɪm'ə-nənt/ adjective. About to occur; impending. Threatening to occur immediately; near at hand; impending