

**Hurst Green**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Jan 20**  
**Changed Lives**  
**1 Thess 1:1-10**

So today at the start of the new year we are going to start a new series – we are going to spend a few weeks looking at these two letters to the Church **of** Thessalonians.

That's how Paul, Silas and Timothy start their letter – not the Church **in** Thessalonica but the Church **of** Thessalonians.

Because he goes on to say

*1 Thessalonians 1:1 (ANIV)*

<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.***

They live in Thessalonica but they are also found in God and Jesus. Two different addresses and it is the last one that is most important – that we are in God and in Jesus. Our physical address is one thing but our permanent address is the one that matters.

Now Thessalonica still exists and is the second largest city in Greece. In the days when Paul was writing it was a great trading city but had a very mixed population of Romans, Greeks and Jews so had a great mix of Gods in a population that was trying to get wealthy off all the trade that was passing through.

It seems to me much like our country today where you find people worshipping many different Gods and yet money seems to be the sole focus as people try and find new ways to get their hands on it through social media as so called influencers etc.

They also lived in volatile times. Rome had brought a semblance of peace although they had just had a civil war and Thessalonica had backed the winning side. People were making the most of the peace but chaos was just around the corner. We are looking at the period just after Jesus death and before the destruction of Israel in AD70.

Again we live in uncertain times. Who knows where the economy is going and events of this last week seem to have lit another fire in the Middle East. We cannot see the future but it could go anywhere.

Given that I am sure these Epistles will have much to say to us over the next few weeks.

Paul had visited Thessalonica in Acts 17. He had stayed for only three Sabbaths teaching them about Jesus and some had believed.

*Acts 17:4 (ANIV)*

<sup>4</sup> *Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a **large** number of God-fearing Greeks and **not a few** prominent women.*

But some had not and started a riot to get rid of Paul, Paul went away to a nearby town of Berea but the trouble makers followed them there as well and also chased them out of that town.

There is an interesting verse about Berea

**Acts 17:11 (ANIV)**

<sup>11</sup> *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

That is an example to us even today to examine the scriptures and ensure that what we receive is true before we let false teaching into our lives. How many of you, having listened for 15 minutes or so here, go and examine your bibles to ensure what you have received is true? There is also the other approach which is far too common which is to listened for 15 minutes and forget it all within 15 minutes – how many take that approach? Those of more noble character examine the word. Noble, of course, means having or showing **fine** personal qualities!!

So Paul knew these people, or at least those that had believed while he was there, and was writing to help them in their faith.

So let's look at the scriptures. I have already made the point about our eternal address but the Epistle goes on:

**1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 (ANIV)**

<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 labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Note the always in verse 2. This is how our prayers should be – we tend to be inconsistent praying about things occasionally when we should be consistent in our prayers. How many of you give thanks to God for this congregation; for this band of saints? We should be always thanking God for one another.

But notice in verse three the three things that Paul remembers before God; their faith, their love and their hope.

I hope that takes you straight to the end of 1 Cor 13:

**1 Corinthians 13:13 (ANIV)**

<sup>13</sup> *And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*

These are the fundamental characteristics of our faith which will never end and the greatest of these is love which is why Jesus summary of the law focusses us on loving God and loving our neighbour as ourselves.

But in mentioning these characteristics Paul does not just mention them but links them to the things they produce

**1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 (ANIV)**

~~<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 labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.~~

Your works, your labour and your endurance. This takes us away from the nice fluffy qualities into the grit of the real world. Because our faith is not something nice to have in reserve for that day of judgement. Our faith is here to make a difference to us today and to make a difference in our world; in the world around us; in the people around us.

Remember that favourite passage of mine from James 2

**James 2:26 (ANIV)**

<sup>26</sup> *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*

And who wants a dead faith because that will do us no good on the day of judgement and will do us no good here today.

Simply believing in God is not enough! James also says

**James 2:19 (ANIV)**

<sup>19</sup> *You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.*

Our faith must go on to make a difference!

So Paul goes on to talk about this work of faith, this labour of love and the endurance of hope so let us see what he says.

First the **work of faith**.

**1 Thessalonians 1:8 (ANIV)**

<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,~~*

Their faith became known everywhere and why? Because they had become imitators of Paul and of the Lord. They had chosen to become more Christ like and so they became a model to all believers in the region.

There is a goal for us – to become a model for all believers in this area. That is a work of faith but remember what it said in verse 8

**1 Thessalonians 1:8 (ANIV)**

<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,~~*

Their work of faith was spreading the Lord's message not in any quiet form but allowing the Lord's message to ring out from them in such a way that the people of the land could not say they had not heard.

It seems appropriate after we have been celebrating the Lord's message ringing out at Christmas so that all the hill country of Judah was talking about it. We want the Lord's message to ring out so that all of this area is talking about it. That is our work of faith.

But what is this work of faith in real practical terms – today's scripture tells us quite clearly

**1 Thessalonians 1:9 (ANIV)**

<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,~~

They had turned from their idols to serve the Lord Jesus.

Now there is something I want you to see in here and, if you can, remember this. They turned from their idols to God.

It is not the other way around. They do not decide to leave their idols and then look around and find the gracious loving Lord Jesus.

First they have to glimpse the glory of our Lord and the mercy of his salvation and then they will turn from their idols.

In the western church we can tend to have this all wrong. We are looking for people who have become uncomfortable with their idols and are looking for somethings else and then we step in and welcome them.

**1 Thessalonians 1:5 (ANIV)**

<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.~~

This is how people hear – they need the words and they also need to see the power of our God and our deep conviction that we know the truth of our message.

Romans tells us right after that passage telling us how we are saved:

**Romans 10:14 (ANIV)**

<sup>14</sup> ~~How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?~~

Secondly we have **the labour of love.**

Of course much of what I have just said about the work of faith could also be listed here as part of the labour of love but the key thing in this is the word “love”.

Love is the core of our message loving our God, each other and our neighbour and calling this “labour of love” acknowledges that sometimes this is not easy. What our society has forgotten or perhaps chooses to forget is that love is an act of the will not a state of the heart. We can choose to love someone or something and it is that act of the will that sees our love through difficult times.

The love for God is one thing because we love because he first loved us. As verse 6 says

**1 Thessalonians 1:6 (ANIV)**

<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.~~

But love for one another and our neighbour at times can be a labour of love. Perhaps because our neighbours are not people we would find lovely in the worldly sense – not our type! But they are still the people God has put us amongst or sent us too.

And love can be a labour because there are times when we do not feel too loving. Time is tight, we are busy, the world is bearing down on us and still we are called to that labour of love – to love all people because Jesus loved them all.

Remember the Church in Acts 2 – how all saw in them the love and God added to their number daily? The Church in Thessalonica is showing that same love and as you read all of the Epistles, particularly those to specific churches. You find their love is key to their message – their love of any sent to them, their love of each other and their love and support for the other churches just as we support Pam and Derrick in the Christians in Kefalonika.

And thirdly a less popular one **the endurance of hope**.

This is referred to in verse 6

**1 Thessalonians 1:6 (ANIV)**

<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.

The Thessalonians were having a very hard time. We saw how there had been a riot and Paul was chased from the city and then from Beira. This Church was planted in some difficult ground and was not welcome and so the Thessalonians who were in God and in Jesus were also having a hard time.

Now here the epistle to the Thessalonians has a key message for us – they were waiting for the second coming of the Lord and they expected it!

There will be references to this throughout the book so try to remember this.

**1 Thessalonians 1:10 (ANIV)**

<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.

They believed the angels who said he would return in the same manner. We have lost that expectation and would do well to regain it.

It is a great driver for us and is part of our sure and certain hope, whether we shall see or whether we will have “fallen asleep” does not matter we should be expecting that second coming with a longing.

We endure whatever the present day throws at us because of our sure and certain hope.

Whatever is going on in your life remember that Jesus said

**John 14:23 (ANIV)**

<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

And

**Matthew 28:20 (ANIV)**

<sup>20</sup> ~~and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.~~ And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

So there you have three things from Thessalonica as well as the reminder that your address should be in the Living God not in Hurst Green.

Those three things that should be part of your daily lives:

The work of faith, the labour of love and the endurance of hope

Think on these things.