

1Thessalonians 1:1–7

“Ideal Church-Plant Conditions”

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***Why is the apostle so thankful and encouraged as he prays for the Thessalonians and writes to them?*** Pastor leads his family in today's "Hopewell @Home" passage. 1Thessalonians 1:1–7 prepares us for the second serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these seven verses, the Holy Spirit teaches us that when the marks of Spirit-given faith, hope, and love appear in our lives or others' lives, we may take encouragement from a work of the Spirit that was purposed from eternity and will be fulfilled in glory!

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### Thursday, February 24, 2022 • Read 1Thessalonians 1:1–7

Questions from the Scripture text: Who sent this letter (v1a)? To whom (v1b)? In Whom were they a church? With what two things do they greet them (v1c)? From Whom do this grace and peace come? What do they give to Whom for whom (v2)? What do they do in their prayers? What three things do they remember (v3)? In Whom did the Thessalonians have these three things? In Whose sight do Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy remember them? What do they call them in v4? What do they know about them? In what way did their gospel not come to them (v5)? In what way did it in fact come? By Whose help? With what effect? And what do the Thessalonians know about them? Knowing them, of whom did the Thessalonians become followers (v6)? In what conditions had they received the Word? With what affection? And who else followed whom (v7)?

When the Thessalonians received the Word, they were being attacked by unbelieving Jews and other evil men (cf. Acts 17:5). The hostility was so bad that when Paul and Silas moved on to Berea, Jews from Thessalonica went there and stirred up crowds to attack them and drive them away (cf. Acts 17:13–15). But after Paul, Silas, and Timothy had moved on, the new Thessalonian church had to endure the ongoing opposition and affliction in their hometown.

Were these what we might call ideal circumstances for a new church plant? Well, yes they were. Because they were the precise circumstances under which the Lord brought this church into being. By coming into being under such circumstances, it was clear that “the church of the Thessalonians” (v1b) had come about not so much by the wisdom or efforts of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (v1a), but by “God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (v1b). By coming into being under such circumstances, it was clear that the graces of the Thessalonian believers were the fruit of “your election by God” (v4).

This is a powerful encouragement when praying for someone: if there is evidence that God has elected them! And this is powerful encouragement when writing a letter like this one to edify someone: if there is evidence that God has elected them!

When we see evidence of God's grace in others, we should be encouraged as we pray for them and encouraged as we try to build them up in the Lord. And we will be more and more encouraged if “we give thanks to God always” (v2) for such people. Our thanksgiving will not only rise up to God as a right response to Him, but it will also remind our thoughts (v3) that these are people in whom God is at work, because it pleased Him to choose to do so (v4).

So, what does evidence of election look like? There are three things that it looks like in v3. You can't actually see faith, hope, and love; but, you can see work, exertion (labor), and endurance (patience). They're doing things that you can't make sense of, except that they're believers—“work of faith.” They're doing so with an effort that doesn't really come from anything but love—“labor of love.” And they keep on doing it in the face of difficulty, so much so that it's clear that they are certain to come out victorious in the end—“patience of hope.”

The gospel is words, but in faithful preaching and hearing, it doesn't come by itself (v5a). The Holy Spirit comes with it (v5c), exercising His power (v5b) and giving us that assurance (v5d)—that faith and hope and love—that changes the hearer. This is how it was for the Thessalonians, and in the end of v5, the apostle reminds them that this was how it had been for Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy as well.

Not only did it produce the same fruit in the Thessalonians that it had produced in Paul and his companions (v6), but it went on to produce the same fruit in “all who believed” (v7) Philippi (Macedonia) and Corinth (Achaia). The inevitable conclusion is that it ought to produce that fruit in all of us who believe as well.

When you and I see in ourselves, or in others, grace that has no other logical explanation, it gives us cause for thanksgiving, and encouragement in prayer and ministry. For, it is God Who determined to do this in His electing purposes, and it is God Who has proceeded to do this in His almighty power!

What evidences of faith, hope, and love are there in your life? From where could these have come? How should this affect the mindset with which you pray? The mindset with which you pursue growth in Christ? Thinking about someone else for whom you pray, and/or to whom you minister, what evidences do you see in them? How does this affect your mindset toward them?

Sample prayer: Lord, how marvelous is Your free, electing love and Your almighty, saving power! Forgive us for our discouragement about ourselves and other genuine believers. Grant unto us to see the evidence of Your work, and to take our encouragement from the fact that it is You who are doing it—which we ask through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP23B “The Lord's My Shepherd” or TPH427 “I Sought the Lord, and Afterward I Knew”

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**(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)**

First, Thessalonians. One versus one through seven. These are God's words whole Sylvanus and Timothy for the Church of the Thessalonians in God, the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ Grace to you and peace from God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God, always for you all making mention of you in our prayers.

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope. In our Lord Jesus Christ. And the sight of our God and Father Knowing beloved brethren your election by God for or gospel did not come to you in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know, what kind of men we were among you for your sake and you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and achaea who believe So far, the reading of God's inspired and

So as Paul writes this letter to their Thessalonians, he opens with great confidence and thanks because it's not so much Paul and Sylvanus or Silas and Timothy you have planted this church but God who has blamed to this church? Yes. Paul and Silas. And Timothy went and preached. And yes, the Thessalonians heard.

And as we're going to hear about them, they received the preaching as the Word of God, but it was the Holy Spirit, who sustained the preacher and it was the Holy Spirit. Who's sustained? The hearing. And as Paul starts the letter, he takes encouragement in praying for them and encouragement in writing to them.

From the fact that this is a work of God, the Holy Spirit. So it must succeed because if this began from outside of time, in God's election of them verse 4 and it was initiated in time by God's work to plant the church. First one to the Church of the Thessalonians.

In God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Then it is God who is going to supply? Whatever is needed along the way. And so he says, verse 1 Grace to you and peace from God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and he can be sure that. God who planned it from all eternity.

Initiated it in time, started it and sustains. It will finish it. And so it's wonderful. Then to use means that God has appointed in the midst of a work that God is doing. And you can take that as an application for yourself. From of how to think about and benefit from your baptism, remember in the Lord's Day, sermon when the people had cried out, what shall we do?

And he said, repent and be baptized upon the name or according to with the name upon is probably the best because it's into the name. Father, Son and Holy Spirit and he uses the for the preposition. That means into in Matthew 28, but here they use a different verb at P, which is where they're upon, but upon the name of Jesus Christ.

You're a baptized because your hope is not in the house. Sincerely profess to believe your hope is in he who has promised for the promise is for you, and for your children and the power that he exerts as he is faithful to keep those promises. So, very similar, right?

What the what Peter announced to them when they said, what shall we do on the day of Pentecost and Acts do is the same thing. Basically that Paul at the beginning of the letter to the Thessalonians is saying, is his great encouragement. Both when he prays for them, we give thanks to God always for you all making mention of you in our prayers.

Remembering and he names, three things that they remember. That makes him thankful. And then he says, after that verse 3, and we're going to come back to verse 3 in a minute. Knowing beloved brethren your election by God. For our gospel, did not come to you in word only but also empowering in the Holy Spirit and in much service.

So he says, what happened? When we preached showed that it was God, the Holy Spirit who was doing the work, And if it was God, the Holy Spirit is doing the work. Then this is something that began outside of time in God. And we know that God will never give up in time a work that he began outside of time as one.

Pastor loves to say. We know that God will never stop loving us because God never started loving us. His love is from outside of time. That's a wonderful thought, isn't it? God can never stop loving me because there was no start to God's loving me. It's immune to time.

Unchangeable in Jesus rum eternity which of course means Jesus can't be a creature because he's from eternity is creator. So he's excited that they are sure about the Thessalonians election. And this

assurances come not just by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit under whom he is under, which inspiration he is writing the letter.

But there are fruits of that work that the Holy Spirit is doing. So he says remembering without ceasing in verse 3, three things. Your work of faith, your labor of love and your patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father in the Holy Spirit.

If we pull the in the Holy Spirit conditional clause from verse 4. So you hear it's a Trinitarian word. The Holy Spirit doesn't give these spiritual gifts to anyone apart from Christ and he doesn't give these spiritual gifts to anyone apart from God, the Father, loving and choosing from before the foundation of the world and giving Christ for them and giving the spirit to them which is one of the reasons why as we came to the worship portion of our time.

This morning, We pleaded those things and rejoice in those things before. God in prayer But these are the lasting evidences of the work of the Spirit. There were at the initial Apostolic stage. Miraculous. Evidences of the works of the Spirit, signs wonders. Healings tongues new revelation direct words from God.

Yeah. Until the New Testament was completed. But first Corinthians, 12 and 13.

Even during those times were anticipating and ongoing evidence of the real work of the Holy Spirit, until he transitions from signs, that included among them. Some of them miraculous signs that were provisional in the apostolic age to the sign of love, and he calls it the most excellent way.

And he talks about the, this kind of incomplete stage of God's work now. And he says the incompleteness of the the fulfillment of the work of the Holy Spirit and establishing the church, until the scriptures were completed, is comparable to the incompleteness of a Christian until he's perfected. He's already a Christian, but he doesn't rejoice in the process of sanctification more than he will rejoice in the completion of that process.

When he is glorified right? We love getting to know. God better But we don't love it. More than we will. When we have been brought to know God fully. So also it was wonderful that they had signs and wonders and tongues miracles but it wasn't better. Then when the scriptures had been given fully.

And those revelatory gifts and ceased, not because God was withdrawing from his church, but because he had fulfilled and completed, But even when he had done. So there would be three things. That remained faith, hope and love the Spirit, giving the faith, the Spirit, giving the hope the spirit, giving the love.

Now, when it comes to the Thessalonians, it would be encouraging. If the apostle wrote to them, it would be encouraging to you. Perhaps if I or one of the other elders wrote to you and said, I've seen your faith hope and love, but it's not as encouraging as saying I've seen your work of faith, labor of love and patience of hope because faith.

Hope and love are invisible but they do have visible fruit. I've seen your work of faith. I've seen you doing things that only makes sense. Ultimately, if God has made you to believe and accept and embrace the truth about who Jesus is and what he has done. So he says, not just I've seen your faith.

He says, I've seen your work of faith. I've seen the things that you do that show that you have faith. He says, I've seen your labor of love the word labor and work sounds similar. But the work is talking about the actions and labor here is translating a word that talks especially about the effort that is put into those actions.

There's any and you don't just do things that really only makes sense, for believers, you do them with an effort with a zeal with a diligence that shows your responding out of love because you're not doing them as someone who's just trying to get by or just trying to be seen by men or just trying to feel better about yourself.

You're doing them as someone who has been redeemed and has seen how God has loved you, and whom God has brought you to be in love with him. That's the way you're doing it. And we know people who do things in particular ways for particular people, when they fall into romance.

So we won't call up falling into love with others. And, you know, adults who've maybe could exercise a little bit more wisdoms, say things like isn't too cute. They're in love. How do they draw that? Conclusion. Well, it's in part because of the manner in which they're doing this things.

Well there's actually a holy reality to which that's kind of analogous that we want to see in ourselves and when we don't, we ask God, increase my love Lord and we can do that. Why? Because it's the fruit of the Spirit, he's the one who does the work. It's not like, you know, you get forgiven and now you have to produce love for God.

No, he's the one who produces the love in you too. He didn't just love you. He gives you the loving of him and so you can ask him Lord, Help me to do things in such a way that someone who is looking at me with proper wise. Judgment. Like the apostle looked at the Thessalonians would say, that's labor of love.

That's effort that comes from, knowing how God has loved them and loving him because he first loved us. So he's seen the work that has produced by their faith. You seen the labor that was produced by their love. And he's seen their patients or their endurance that they keep doing these things and they they keep doing them with this diligence and zeal and effort even though it's difficult and it is difficult.

We could take the time if you look at Act 17 and the circumstances in which the Thessalonian church was planted, Okay, they come to Thessalonica verse 1. They're preaching on three Sabbaths and when it doesn't say first day Sabbath, which is usually translated in their New Testaments first day of the week.

It's not talking about the Christian Sabbath. The Lord's Day is talking about the Jewish Sabbath the synagogue day when they can go and preach to people who are already familiar with the Old Testament and they're preaching in the Sabbath and some are persuaded but especially a great multitude of the devout Greeks or persuaded and this is partially to be expected in God's providence, according to his promise because this is the age in which he is bringing in the nations and he had told Paul that is bringing in the nations But it's also to be expected because if they were still Greeks, if they're still just God fears and had not been circumcised.

They would feel that they were missing something and the Jews would be telling them all the time, just like we tell those who don't understand. Covenant, baptism. And yeah, when are you gonna get baptized you, you want me to explain, baptism to you again? So, they've been, what are you gonna be circumcised?

You want me explain circumcision to you again and then here comes Paul. He says, circumcision isn't necessary. What you're missing is Jesus those who were circumcised, if they thought they had what they needed, they're missing their circumcision too because what their circumcision said is, what they were missing was Jesus, right?

You can actually conceive of the apostle talking this way and the Greeks rejoicing that he who they were hoping for is all that they need. Anyway, So a bunch of those guys get saved, but there are some Jews who are not persuaded. Actually, the majority of the Jews aren't persuaded and they become envious by the number of conversions.

Here they've had these. These Greek regular attenders to their church for a long time. Not being able to get them to to make the vow and take the sign and join the church and then Paul Silas and Timothy come and preach for three weeks and all the all the Greeks joined the church or at least as far as, you know, the church of the Lord Jesus.

So the Jews become envious and of course, they take evil men from the marketplace and gather a mob and attack Paul and Silas. And and Jason with whom they were staying and Paul and Silas immediately are sent to Maria. And the Thessalonian Jews are. So hostile that even in Berea, when people start getting converted there, the Thessalonians leave Berean Thessalonica and go to Berea to attack, Fallen Paul Silas and Timothy.

Well, you think about this Thessalonian church? They had the apostle for three weeks. The Ephesian Church had the Apostle for three years but they had him for three weeks and in their hometown, They were under the combined violent attack of the unconverted Jews and the unconverted Greeks who could only really agree on one thing is that they hated the converted Jews in Greeks.

Now are those ideal circumstances for planting a church on the answer is. Yes, because those are the circumstances that God chose for them. And when this church continued to produce spiritual fruit, Paul and Silas and Timothy would rejoice. Because the only explanation for that spiritual fruit is the Holy Spirit.

Who produced the fruit. It's so encouraging to pray for someone when you have good confidence that the Holy Spirit is working in them. It's so encouraging to to minister to them and encourage them and be a part of trying to build them up in the faith When you know and have good reason to believe.

Anyway, that the Holy Spirit is working in them. And so that's that's what gives him the encouragement. And he recognizes that they had seen in him things that weren't explainable except by the work of the Holy Spirit. So he says you became and in the Holy Spirit much assurance as you know we're back in first Thessalonians one that's the first five as you know what?

Kind of men. We were a monk you for your sake and you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word and much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit. So, he says, one of the things that Jesus did the most of during his earthly ministry was be attacked.

And yet, they couldn't take away from him. The joy of the Lord, One of the marks of the apostles is that they're repeatedly attacked and yet the attacks cannot take away from them. The joy of the Lord, This

is a mark of the Christian everyone who desires to live a godly life in Christ.

Jesus will be persecuted. Scripture says that if we're not being persecuted, Then we have to wonder and ask God to help us with whether or not we're really living a godly life in Christ Jesus. But although we will be persecuted the fruit of the spirit is love joy. Peace.

Or to use the the threefold summary here, and 1st Corinthians. 13 and elsewhere faith. Hope and love. And so not only had the Lord Jesus been the perfect model of this. And then the apostles you became followers of us but this continues throughout the church verse 7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia.

So, the Philippian church and a chaos. So the Corinthian Church who believe and it's still that way. Today that we in whom the Holy Spirit is genuinely working. We would have a joy that cannot be taken from us. Just as we also looked into produce in us faith. The produces particular actions.

Love that produces particular effort and hope a certainty that we shallot last comment to the fullness of what Christ has earned for us which produces patience and endurance and persistence, even despite affliction, some of the Lord grant to us, to look to him to produce these things in us.

As about as our baptism say he's the one who produces it when he gratitude me and mommy to look to him to produce these things in you and to use his means. Since your baptism say he is the one who's going to produce it to and then when you come to have children and the particular children that God chose for your house are part of the church because they're your children and the sign of his promise is put on them.

Then may you look to the Lord in hope and confidence. And as you see him produce the fruit of faith in your children. Now, you also be much encouraged as you pray for them. And as you use, his means to see him do his work in your children. Amen.

Let's pray and ask him to do that. Our Father in heaven. How we thank you and praise you. For this portion of your word, bless your name, for the amazing work that you did, and Thessalonica. And we thank you that that work took place in the midst of afflictions, so that we might not be discouraged when we are afflicted.

In fact, Lord, we're a bit convicted about how easily we give up how easily our faith falters and our love grows cold. And our hope is shaken. But you O Lord produced that and you are the one to whom we look for our own, So grant that, your spirit would use.

Even this passage and even our time together, worshiping you in, considering it to stir up our faith in you, and our love to you. And our hope in you to produce in our lives, the actions and effort and persistence. That belongs to Christians and grant to us when you do produce it to be able to see it and and ourselves, and when you're producing it in others, to be able to see it in them.

So that we would be the more encouraged as we pray, whether for ourselves or others, and the more encouraged as we labor for the sanctification of ourselves or others, When glorify yourself by bringing to completion. That work that you had purposed in your electing love from all. Eternity for we ask these things in the name of Jesus.

Amen.