
GENUINELY CHOSEN & CHANGED BY GOD

STUDY NOTES FOR CARE GROUPS – 1 THESSALONIANS 1:2-10

The following are resource questions that you can use with your Care Group for discussion. They are based on the sermon preached on Sunday, October 25, 2009, by Pastor Arnold Wong at the Grace Baptist Church, Singapore. The sermon is available at <http://www.gracebap.org.sg/worship/series.html>.

October 25, 2009

Introduction and Background

The Thessalonian letters of the Apostle Paul were written to a young church that was situated in an extremely dangerous world. Within twenty years of their writing, the whole of the ancient East was convulsed in warfare and rebellion. In 70 AD, the armies of Titus surrounded the city of Jerusalem. Following a bloody siege, the city was overrun, the temple destroyed, and the Jews taken captive. The movements that culminated in these events had already begun when this first letter was written. Thus it is clear that the Thessalonian Christians were facing extremely perilous times.

Right here is the glory of the gospel for the gospel changes men and women. Paul's letters to the young church at Thessalonica were written because people there had found, in the good news about Jesus, a way to be changed in themselves. The focus and purpose of their lives had been drastically altered and redone. That is what these letters clearly reflect. How did Jesus treat her? Why is this significant? How should you and I treat those who are not of the same faith as we are, i.e. should we avoid them, ignore them?

1. Faith, Hope and Love working in our lives, I Thessalonians 1:1-3

It is faith which works, a love which labors, and a hope which endures. Paul puts it that way so that we may see these as the great motives of the Christian life. If you have true faith; if you have love, born of the Spirit; and if you have hope in the coming of Christ, you will be motivated to live as you ought today. That is the point he is making, as we shall see throughout this letter.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

What is the difference between work produced by faith and labor produced by love?

And what is characteristic of people who may have faith and love, but not hope?

2. *People chosen by God, vs. 4*

Note the first thing, "beloved by God." Everything starts with God's love for us. The world at large conceives of God as perpetually angry with them. Paul goes on to detail the steps necessary to God's call. First, "our gospel came to you in word." The Scriptures were preached, the truth was declared.

The second factor in God's call is the power of God, the gospel came "in power." It is real, compelling, gripping. The gospel has the ability to compel. Also, says Paul, the gospel came "by the Holy Spirit." Behind the power was the reality of God himself. His Spirit could touch the human spirit. He could actually minister to the deepest needs in human lives. The Spirit of God fills the human spirit.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

How did Paul know that they were chosen by God?

How do you know whether you have been chosen by God?

3. *People changed by God, vs. 5-10*

That describes love at work. It involves three specific steps. Here is the first sign of love at work. It changed the attitude of the Thessalonians toward their afflictions. Instead of wearisome complaints there was "joy inspired by the Spirit." But, says Paul, they had learned to see these afflictions in a new way. The result was joy, joy inspired by the Holy Spirit. They were responding to God's love by loving him in return and welcoming the opportunities to bear suffering for his name's sake.

The second mark of love's labor was that they shared the good news throughout Macedonia and Achaia. They simply shared with their neighbors and friends what God had done in their lives. They explained the new joy and peace that had come into their hearts.

The third activity by which love's labor was evident among these Thessalonian believers was the way they displayed a daily trust in God's care. ***"Your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we do not need to say anything,"*** says Paul. That simple faith had become very evident in their lives.

The Thessalonians had acted as relay runners by passing the gospel they had heard on to farther places. They were a missionary church. They were so effective at this that Paul felt his ministry of pioneer evangelism was no longer necessary in that area.

The spiritual power and conviction with which the message was received matched the spiritual power and conviction with which it was delivered.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Describe how the gospel may be delivered and received in word only?

What other attributes did the messengers and recipients demonstrate with respect to the gospel message that Paul considered important? v. 5

What kind of severe suffering is implied in verse? v. 6

Do you consider the quality of your faith and lifestyle to be a model for other believers? In other words, if you led someone to Christ, would you feel good if they became like you? v. 7

How do you suppose their faith came to be known everywhere? v. 8

How did becoming a Christian affect your lifestyle?

What kind of changes would you expect to see in one's life if they become a believer? v. 9