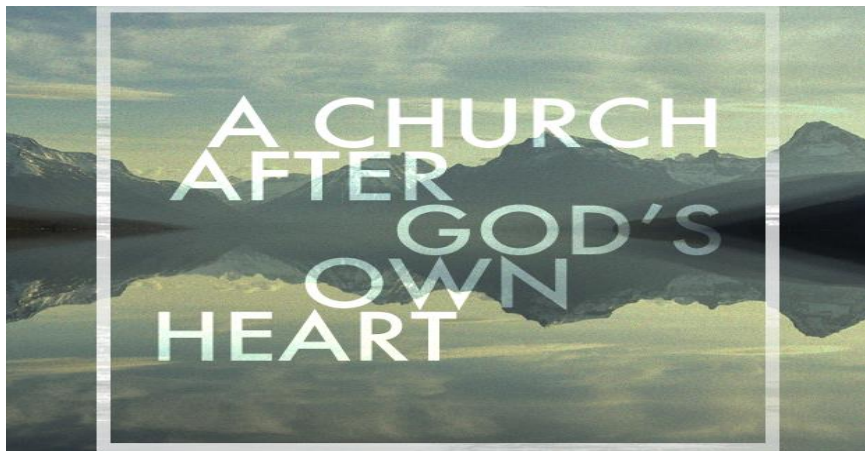


What an Apostle is Most Thankful for In a Church

1 Thessalonians 1.1-10

The new church at Thessalonica, like every church, had problems. But it also had spiritual qualities for which Paul thanked God. In the first chapter of this letter, the apostle cites five things which stand out in the church – qualities to which we should all aspire!

- *The 'faith-hope-love' of the church – their life in Christ! (3)*
- *The 'conviction' of believers – their assurance of salvation (5)*
- *Exemplary lives – serving the Lord enthusiastically (4, 6-7)*
- *Changed lives that draw others to believe (8-9)*
- *Waiting longingly and expectantly for the Lord's coming (10)*



1. The first chapter of 1 Thessalonians is filled with thanksgiving. Timothy has returned from visiting the church in Thessalonica, and brought good news (see 3.6). After an opening greeting (1), Paul takes the rest of the chapter to highlight these good things. He first mentions a ‘trifecta’ of graces (v3), which throughout the New Testament ‘capsulize’ Christian experience (cf. 1 Cor. 13.13; Rom. 5.1-5; Gal. 5.5-6; Col. 1.4-5; Heb. 10.22-24; 1 Pet. 1.21-22). Why are these three traits so essential to our Christian lives? How do they ‘work together’ to maintain spiritual life in a local church? What is ‘work’ of faith and ‘labor’ of love? The Greek word translated *steadfastness* (*hupomonē*) means *patient endurance* or *perseverance*. How does work of faith and labor of love help keep our hope strong – even in trying times?
2. Verse 4 causes unnecessary confusion: The phrase “chosen by God” or “His choice of you” is wrongly interpreted as referring to our ‘getting saved,’ so that Paul is made to say that *he knows the Thessalonians are Christians because of their good works*. This is never articulated or inferred. God ‘chooses’ or ‘elects’ people to *service!* The idea that God ‘chose’ who would go to heaven or hell is not taught in Scripture. In this chapter, what *service* does Paul observe these *believers* are performing (6-10)? What service are you performing for God?
3. Alongside joy in persecution (6), exemplary lives before other Christians (7), sharing the gospel (8), and devotion to God (9), Paul applauds the Thessalonian church because they “wait for His Son from heaven.” Is *waiting* a virtue? This *waiting* is! The Greek word (*anamenō*) means to *wait longingly* or *expectantly*, to *look forward to*. Why is it important? Does it describe you?
4. The last phrase of v10, *who rescues us from the wrath to come*, is often misconstrued. The word translated ‘from’ means to be ‘kept from’ – that is, *we don’t go through it*. The *wrath to come* refers not to hell, but the Great Tribulation (Mt. 24; Rev. 6-19). See Rom. 1.18ff for what causes an outpouring of God’s wrath.