

NOTES FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY IN THE BOOK OF I THESSALONIANS - CHAPTER ONE

Paul's greeting - grace and peace - combined both the Greek and the Jewish greetings but also summed up the gospel. Grace is God's unlimited giving, first in the cross by which we have peace with God, and secondly in putting His life into us.

Paul's prayer started with thanks - note the connection between 'eucharisteo', thanks, and 'charis', grace. It was also wholehearted - 'always', 'for all of you', 'constantly'. He remembered 3 features of the Thessalonian Christians

- their work of faith; they had a faith in God which worked.(Jas.2:1-26)
- their labour of love; they had a love for each other which laboured, 'kopos' means 'work to weariness', not burn out, only possible in His mighty energy.(Col.1:29)
- their steadfastness of hope; they had a rock solid certainty about Christ which kept them stable in hard times. Steadfastness, 'hupomone', means 'a remaining behind', like the captain on a sinking ship. My favourite example is Sir Ernest Shackleton who saved his entire crew of 27 men by his outstanding, sacrificial leadership when their ship was crushed in Antarctic ice in 1914-15. When God starts something, He does not give up until He completes what He set out to do. However tough it looks we only have to stick with Him.

These three qualities are the key to both letters to the Thessalonians. Compare also I Cor.13:13, 'faith, hope and love'.

The source of these qualities is in one simple word, 'in'. Note

- 1:1 'in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ',
- 1:3 'in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father',
- 1:5 'in the Holy Spirit'

The process of these qualities developing was a series of steps:

- 1:5 the gospel came - in word, power, the Holy Spirit producing full conviction
 - in example from Paul, Silvanus and Timothy
- 1:6 it was received - in much tribulation,
 - in the joy of the Holy Spirit
- 1:6-7 it produced - an imitation of them and the Lord
 - an example to others
- 1:8 it led on to - a sounding forth of the Word, first in their own country
 - then all over the world
 - so that Paul's teaching was readily received
- 1:9,10 the end result was that
 - they turned to God from idols
 - they served the living and true God

- they waited for the risen Jesus to come from heaven and deliver them from the wrath to come

After describing the impact of the gospel preached in Thessalonica in chapter one, Paul goes on to describe 10 essential features of effective ministry in this next chapter.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER TWO

2:1,2 Q.1. What should we expect will happen to us if we faithfully preach Christ?(v.14-16) What forms does this take today? Who is behind these pressures?(v.18) How does it help to remember this?

2:2 Q.2 What should be the manner of our approach to those to whom God sends us?(v.9,10) Does this mean we should be 'in your face'?

2:3 Q.3 How are we to bring about a response to the message we preach? What are we warned to avoid in our preaching? What forms do these mistakes take in modern preaching?

2:4 Q.4 Who is our mission director as we reach out to others? How should we regard our position as God's messengers? To whom should we therefore look for support?(Acts 13:3,4) To whom should we go first if we have a problem in ministry?

2:5 Q.5 Who is to check on our progress? Should we be accountable to one another in ministry?(Gal.1:11-17; 2:1,2) What are the dangers in this?

2:6 Q.6 What will motivate faithful ministry? How should the approval or disapproval of others affect our way of serving?

2:6 Q.7 What right do we have to open our mouths as Christians?(Matt.28:18-20) Why were the crowds so amazed when they heard Jesus preach?(Matt.7:27,28)

2:7 Q.8 What picture does Paul now use to describe our relationship with those to whom we minister?(Gal.4:19) How does this contrast with the previous verse?

2:8 Q.9 What was the one word Paul repeatedly used to describe the content of his message?(v.2) Why is it so important always to have this emphasis first? Where will we find this message?(v.13)

2:9 Q.10 Where does money fit into Christian ministry?(Phil.4:15-19; I Cor.9:8-18)