



CG Guide - 1 Thessalonians 1

Series Outline

In September-October, we are looking at 1 Thessalonians on Sundays and also discussing it in our CG's. We're doing 5 sermons but with guest speakers, prayer meeting and retreat it is a bit inconsistent, with some sermons discussed afterwards, some beforehand. Passages are

- Ch.1 (after sermon)
- Chs. 2-3 (after sermon)
- 4:1-12 (after sermon)
- 4:13-5:11 (before sermon)
- 5:12-28 (before sermon)

You may remember the situation from this week's sermon, or you can read through 2:17-3:13, or maybe you read it in the reading plan over the summer. Paul and his colleagues come to Thessalonica and plant a church (Acts 17:1-9). But persecution comes quickly and after three weeks they are forced to leave. As they travel, they are worried about the young church, send Timothy on a mission, who comes back and reports that the church is doing well (though they could do with some encouragement, some reminders and are confused about Jesus' return). So Paul writes this letter to them.

This study

The reminders and additional teaching come in chs.4-5, but in chs.1-3 Paul is mainly encouraging. Particularly in ch.1 he wants to encourage the Thessalonians that God is genuinely at work in them, this is the real thing, so that they will press on in the Christian life.

The study is meant to make sure people grasp that main point of God being at work in us and hopefully is mainly encouraging.

Questions

1. Anything that struck you from last Sunday's sermon?

Just open sharing as people like to do.

2. Remember the Thessalonians' situation. The guys who planted the church left after 3 weeks and haven't been back. Lots of persecution. How would you feel if you were the Thessalonians?



Good to set the context. As Kevin explained from Acts 17:1-9, Paul, Silas and Timothy planted the church, but the Jews responded badly. Due to the persecution the believers sent them away but it's been tough and Paul hasn't been back for a while. They must be wondering if this was all real or just a scam.

3. What is Paul's main encouragement for them in these chapters?

I think it's good to have some kind of main point for people to go away with. Paul is pointing out how God has been and is at work in them. V4 - we know God has chosen you because... That's how they know this is genuine.

Some people may remember it from the sermon, but otherwise the next question will help. So if people don't get there, move to question 4 as two sub-questions rather than give the answer.

4. What kind of things does Paul point to in their lives? Where do these come from?

Various things that were Kevin's three points

- *Their response when the gospel came (4-5) - not just words but power, conviction and a clear work of the Spirit*
- *Fruit in their lives of faith, hope and love (2-3), further explained in 9-10, and enduring persecution*
- *God, working through them. Others have heard of it - they have become an example to other churches around the region (7-8)*

5. What do we learn about how God works? What implications might this have for us?

Good to see. You can notice an emphasis on the Word (the gospel came (4), they received the Word (6), the Word sounded forth (8). At the same time, clearly the Spirit worked through the Word (5, 6) to produce conviction and joy. Finally you could say it is supported by the example of others, whether of Paul and his colleagues to the Thessalonians (5-6) or their example to others (7-8).

It is why we as a church want the Word to be central to all our meetings, including CG's. It is why we need to pray for the Spirit to work. And finally these are best done in communities where we can learn from the example of others.



6. (If we don't see much fruit in our lives, what might be possible reasons?)

I've put this between brackets as the chapter is supposed to be encouraging, which is the next question. However, depending on your group you may also want to challenge them a bit, so you can ask this. I've put this first so that the study doesn't end on a downer.

7. How have you seen the gospel at work in other members of your CG? Be specific and encourage them with how you see God at work in their lives.

The passage is supposed to be encouraging, so good to spend time doing that. Maybe go round the group and people encourage each person with ways they see God at work.

8. How would the Thessalonians feel after reading this passage? How would they want to respond? For each of us, what might that look like for us?

They would be encouraged in their faith, and as a result, press on. "More and more" as Paul says later (4:1). Could be enduring suffering, loving others, sharing the gospel, living holy lives... The last subquestion is meant to make this more personal. Not just press on, but maybe a particular area of the Christian life where a member is struggling but now has renewed conviction.

Prayer points (from the prayer time after the sermon)

- Thank God for the gospel, by which we can be saved.
- Ask God for his gospel Word to be at work in our church.
- Help us to imitate Christ and embrace suffering for the gospel.
- Pray that our faith may also "sound forth" across Asia.
- For those whose faith is struggling, to be assured of His grace.