



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V25 N3 January 15, 2023

NOT HOME YET

“Proof of Life”

1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Faithfulness

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

“Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.”

Proverbs 3:3-4



Has God
chosen you?

The Thessalonians' faith is proven genuine by their response to the gospel that Paul preached to them. About them, he writes: “For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you *for salvation* because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction” (1Th 1:4-5a). His words raise a thorny question regarding the relationship of faith and works—a question over which much ink has been spilt by commentators over the centuries. It's a question that the apostle James asks in various ways in chapter two of his letter. First he writes: “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? And then after issuing the challenge, “Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds” (v. 18), he declares, “You see that a person is *considered* righteous by what they do and not by faith alone” (v. 24). Apparently, Paul and James agree that faith is made evident by works. The first is confident that the Thessalonians are “chosen” given their response to the gospel (1Th 1:3), and the second confident that one's righteous deeds are proof of a genuine profession of faith (Jas 2:18). Since justification is by faith alone and not by works at all, good deeds in and of themselves apart from a profession of faith in Jesus Christ are not evidence of justification.

Consider this comment on James' meaning: “James is not saying that a person is saved by works and not by genuine faith. Rather, he is saying, to use Martin Luther's words, that people are justified (declared righteous before God) by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. Genuine faith will produce good deeds, but only faith in Christ saves” (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Jas 2:14-16). Put differently, one theologian writes: “Every Christian will bear spiritual fruit. Somewhere, sometime, somehow. Otherwise that person is not a believer.

Every born-again individual will be fruitful. Not to be fruitful is to be faithless, without faith, and therefore without salvation” (Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, 41). However, the same author adds three caveats making it clear that concluding a person's profession of faith is not genuine, and hence that they are unsaved, based on their works is a risky business and to be avoided. Inferring from someone's deeds that their profession of faith in Christ is genuine is one thing, but inferring from a person's deeds that their profession of faith in Christ is not genuine is quite another.

Once you read Ryrie's three caveats, you will understand why. Having said that faith results in “spiritual fruit,” he notes that some caveats, or cautions, are in order. He writes: “First, this does not mean that a believer will *always* be fruitful. Certainly we can admit that if there can be hours and days when a believer can be unfruitful, then why may there not also be months and even years when he can be in that same condition [cf. Tit 3:14; 2Pe 1:8] . . . Second, this does not mean that a certain person's fruit will necessarily be outwardly evident. Even if I know the person and have some regular contact with him, I still may not see his fruit. Indeed, I might even have legitimate grounds for wondering if he is a believer because I have not seen fruit. His fruit may be very private or erratic, but the fact that I do not see it does not mean it is not there . . . Third, my understanding of what fruit is and therefore what I expect others to bear may be faulty and/or incomplete. It is all too easy to have a mental list of spiritual fruit and to conclude that if someone does not produce what is on my list that he or she is not a believer. But the reality is that most lists that we humans devise are too short, too selective, too prejudiced, and often extrabiblical” (41-42). After all, saved people are not perfect people; neither are they fully sanctified people.

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

2 We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. 3 We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

4 For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia – your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, 9 for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Read in another translation

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, 3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. 9 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (ESV)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle “we” in v. 2.
- Circle “continually” in v. 2.
- Circle “remember” in v. 3.
- Underline “produced by,” “prompted by,” and “inspired by” in v. 3.
- Circle “chosen” in v. 4.
- Box “because” indicating *reason* in v. 5.
- Box “therefore” indicating *result* in v. 8b.
- Double underline “turned to God,” “to serve,” in v. 9b, and “to wait” in v. 10.
- Circle “coming wrath” in v. 10.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, “This text is about _____.”



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. To whom does “we” refer? And what do you infer from the *plural* pronoun?
2. Explain how Paul knew God had *chosen* the Thessalonians for salvation.
3. Identify the “work” that *faith* produces (see v. 9).
4. Identify the “labor” that *love* prompts (see v. 9).
5. Identify the “endurance” that *hope* inspires (see v. 10).
6. Is it possible to know who is *chosen* for salvation beforehand, i.e., before salvation? Explain.
7. Explain the *contrast* (“but”) in verse 5.
8. *Who* is doing the *reporting* to which Paul refers in verse 9? And *what* do you infer about the Thessalonians from your answer?
9. Verse 10 suggests that Jesus is coming to *rescue* believers from “coming wrath.” Some see a reference here to the *final judgment*, while others think it refers to a *future period of tribulation*. What say you and why?
10. **Discussion:** Do you think a person’s spiritual condition—whether they are *saved* or *unsaved*—can be determined from the way they behave? Talk about it.

Commentary On The Text

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians begins with his customary *opening*—identifying the sender and the recipients of the epistle, followed by the greeting “grace and peace to you”—in verse 1. This customary opening is followed by an expression of thanksgiving—also a customary feature of Paul's letters—for the Thessalonians' response to the gospel, offered in verses 2-10 by the apostle and his two co-workers. Based on the structure of the thanksgiving, it can be divided into two parts. The first part is found in verses 2-5a, which describe the response of the Thessalonians to the gospel Paul preached (see Ac 17:1-9), and in verses 8b-10, which allude to that response to the gospel as reported by others everywhere “the Lord's message rang out” (v. 8). The second part is found in verses 5b-8a, which describe how they became imitators of Paul and then models for others throughout Macedonia and Achaia to imitate. The first part of the thanksgiving will be examined in this issue of *The Scrolls* and the second part in the next issue.

In verse 2, Paul tells his readers that he, Silas, and Timothy regularly pray for them—as they no doubt did for other communities of believers. Then in verse 3, he goes on to give them a thumbnail sketch of the content of their prayers, noting three things, confirming what he has to say about them in verse 4: 1) their “work produced by faith;” 2) their “labor prompted by love;” and 3) their “endurance inspired by hope.” The Greek text literally reads, “work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope” (ESV; cf. NASB, NET). The NIV has interpreted the meaning of the three genitive phrases, “of faith,” “of love,” and “of hope” by rendering them “produced by faith,” “prompted by love,” and “inspired by hope.” One writer explains: “Three characteristics of these Christians stood out to Paul: First, they had turned to Christ in faith. Second, they had served Him out of love. And third, they had borne up under tribulation patiently because of the hope that lay before them. Paul identified the source of each virtue, and each virtue found its object in Jesus Christ as the Thessalonians lived before God (‘in the presence of our God and Father’). They had exercised faith in the past when they first trusted Christ. They were loving Him in the present. And they were hoping for His return in the future (cf. 1 Cor. 13:13)” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 1 Thessalonians,” 2022 ed., 13-14, planbiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/1thessalonians.pdf).

Then in verses 4-5a, Paul explains *what* he and his coworkers know to be true about them and *why*. “We know . . . that he [God] has chosen you.” They know that God has chosen the Thessalonian believers for salvation. And they know this because of how the gospel affected them (see Ac 17:4-9). Their response confirmed their election. The same writer comments: “Paul had not per-

sueded them by clever oratory, but the power (Gr. *dynamei*, dative case) of God through the Holy Spirit's convicting work had brought them to faith in Christ (cf. Rom. 1:16). This Greek word stresses inward power that possessed the missionaries, not necessarily that supernatural manifestations accompanied their preaching, which *dynameis* (miracles, 1 Cor. 12:10; Gal. 3:5) would have emphasized” (Constable, 15). Two simple observations follow from these verses. Those who are chosen by God for salvation are not saved until they believe, and as a result, their election is only evident after the fact—the fact of their salvation. Note too, that salvation is available to “everyone who believes” (Ro 1:16), making salvation contingent upon belief.

The crux of the matter is the basis on which God chooses. Is his choice *conditional*, that is, based on foreknowledge—i.e. those whom he foreknows will believe he chooses—or *unconditional*, that is, not based on foreknowledge—i.e., based only on his fore-choice independent of his foreknowledge? However, this forced choice is misleading. Clear your mind before reading what one theologian writes: “God's election is *neither based on* His foreknowledge of man's free choices *nor exercised independent of it*. As the Scriptures declare, we are ‘elect according to the foreknowledge of God’ (1 Peter 1:2 NKJV). That is to say, there is no chronological or logical priority of election and foreknowledge. As John Walvoord insightfully commented, 1 Peter 1:2, ‘teaches not the logical order of election in relation to foreknowledge but the fact that they are coextensive’ . . . That is whatever God *fore-chooses* cannot be based on what He *foreknows*. Nor can what He *foreknows* be based on what He *fore-chose*. Both must be simultaneous, eternal, and coordinate acts of God” (Norman L. Geisler, *Chosen But Free*, 145; see his full treatment of various views 130-59).

Finally, after describing how the Thessalonians became imitators of Paul and models for other believers to follow in verses 5b-8a, the apostle concludes the thanksgiving by conveying what is being reported concerning the Thessalonians—not only in Macedonia and Achaia but everywhere (v. 8). He writes: “They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead” (v. 9b-10a). What is being reported returns to the content of the prayer of thanksgiving in verse 3. People everywhere reported how the Thessalonians had turned to God from idols, the evidence of their *faith* (v. 3), to serve the living and true God, the evidence of their *love* (v. 3), and to wait for his Son from heaven, evidence of their *hope* (v. 3)—identified as Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath” (v. 10b), referring to the outpouring of God's wrath at the end of the age prior to Christ's return and his rule over Israel and the nations on earth.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 2 *we* I.e., “Paul, Silas, and Timothy” (v. 1). “The plural form implies that all three missionaries were in a real sense joint authors of the letter” (F. F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 45, 1 and 2 *Thessalonians*, 11). “We need not doubt that he [Paul] consulted the others, nor that they endorsed what he wrote. The steady use of ‘we’ may be meant to associate the others more closely with these Epistles than was usually the case with Paul’s collaborators. But Paul was chiefly responsible for the form the letter took” (Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, 47).

v. 2 *continually* Or “constantly” (cf. NET, ESV, HCSB, et al.); “regularly” (CJB). “While Paul is clearly affirming that he and his companions prayed much for the Thessalonians we need not think that he could never pray without bringing in a reference to them. It is not certain whether the word rendered ‘without ceasing’ [“continually” NIV] should be taken with ‘making mention’ [“continually mention” NIV] or with ‘remembering’ [“remembering you constantly” HCSB]. On the whole it seems probably that it goes with the former” (Morris, 50). “‘Constantly’ is hyperbole (overstatement not meant to be taken literally) meaning very often. Obviously Paul did not mean that he spent all of his time praying for the Thessalonians. He prayed for them continually rather than continuously” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 1 Thessalonians,” 2022 ed., 13, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/1thessalonians.pdf).

v. 2 *remember* Cf. “remembering” (ESV). The main clause, “We give thanks” (ESV) has three participial modifiers, as follows: “mentioning” (v. 2), “remembering” (v. 3), “knowing” (v. 4). These participles (see NASB) are variously rendered in our English translations.

v. 4 *chosen* “From the word translated *chosen* (*eklogēn*) comes the English ‘election’ That God has chosen to bless some individuals with eternal life is clearly taught in many places in both the Old and New Testaments (e.g., Deut. 4:37; 7:6-7; Isa. 44:1-2; Rom. 9; Eph. 1:4-6, 11; Col. 3:12; 2 Thes. 2:13). Equally clear is the fact that God holds each individual personally responsible for his decision to trust or not to trust in Jesus Christ (cf. John 3; Rom. 5). The difficulty in putting divine election and human responsibility together is understanding how both can be true” (Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 691).

vv. 8b-9 *Therefore* “Other people were telling Paul what had happened after he had preached the gospel in Thessalonica. The events of his visit had become well known in that part of the world, not because Paul had spread the word, but because of the outspoken Thessalonian believers’ witness. Their boldness should challenge every true child of God” (Constable, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 692).

v. 10 *coming wrath* “When Paul spoke of ‘the wrath to come’ did he have in mind the general outpouring of God’s wrath on unbelievers in eternal damnation? Or did he mean a specific instance of God outpouring His wrath at a particular time in history yet future? . . . If this was the only reference to the wrath to come in this epistle, we might conclude that Paul was probably referring to the outpouring of God’s wrath on unbelievers generally (cf. Col. 3:6). There is no specific reference to a particular judgment here. However later he spent considerable space writing about the outpouring of God’s wrath in the Tribulation (4:13-18; 5:1-11). Therefore it seems to me that this is the first reference to that outpouring of wrath in the epistle (cf. 2:16; 5:9)” (Constable, “Notes,” 20; see also Paul D. Feinberg, “The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position,” in *Three Views on the Rapture*, Counterpoints, 52-63).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

A person's profession of faith is confirmed to be genuine by their faith, love, and hope.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

When I ask my kids about their earliest memories of church, they overwhelmingly speak of people, not things. They might remember a lesson, story or fun environment, but most likely they remember the person involved. They speak fondly of all the faithful leaders who have made a difference in their lives – Ryan, who let my son play upper bunk tag at camp (things I don't want to know...); Ben, who defused a potentially rough situation in small group; Tammy, who explained things in such a way that they just made sense. I'm grateful for the many volunteers who have given their lives to serve the church and our kids, especially since I had a vested interest in their faithful work, labor in love and hopeful endurance. Serving in children's ministry is a little like parenting. There's a lot of stuff you have to wade through to get to the good part. When you do break through and witness a light bulb moment of understanding or watch a child make the decision to trust Christ, your life is forever changed. We're selective about the people involved in children's ministry. We don't want warm bodies that fill a spot. Instead, we invite intentional, committed and faithful friends to partner with us. This year, would you prayerfully consider serving in children's ministry? We're always in need of friends who want to rock babies, greet children or just in general act a little goofy. With your help, we can make a difference in the life of a child. For more information, email kids@wearecentral.org.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4

1. When does Paul remember the Thessalonians?
2. What does Paul remember about them?
3. What did God do for the Thessalonians?

What Do You Think?

Who is at the center of all the faith, love and hope of the Thessalonians?

What Do You Do?

Who in your life shows great faith, love and hope because of Jesus? Pray for them every day this week.

CORE COMPETENCY: Faithfulness

I am loyal to God and others, so they know they can count on me.

MEMORY VERSE: 2 Corinthians 5:17

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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