

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
1 Thessalonians: Discipling Afflicted New Christians
Part I: Encouraging Afflicted New Believers In Recalling God's Work In Them
(1 Thessalonians 1:1-10)

I. Introduction

- A. When people trust in Christ as Savior, they come fresh out of a troublesome world often with problems from their backgrounds, and they stand in need of much direction, encouragement and wisdom.
- B. Our first responsibility in ministering to them is to settle and strengthen such folk by encouraging them to recall what God is already achieving in their lives, a ministry Paul did in 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10:

II. Encouraging Afflicted New Believers In Recalling God's Work In Them, 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10.

- A. Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonian believers was penned to afflicted new believers in Christ:
 - 1. After arriving in Thessalonica and leading people there to trust in Christ, Paul faced such strong persecution that the new converts had him leave the city, and he went down to Athens, Acts 17:1-15.
 - 2. Paul had sent Timothy back to Thessalonica while he was in Athens to see how they fared (1 Thess. 3:1-2, 5), especially as they lacked established leaders; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., p. 1697.
- B. 1 Thessalonians was then written when Paul heard Timothy report on their evident faith, and the opening section shows Paul encouraging them by reminding them of God's work in them, 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10:
 - 1. In his salutation, Paul referred to the Thessalonian converts as spiritually being in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Thess. 1:1a,b. "The description of God as Father connotes security, love, and strength" (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 690), and "the Lord Jesus Christ" depicts Christ as **God** (Lord) and **Savior** ("Jesus" in Matthew 1:21), the **Messiah** (Christ), terms that demonstrate the stability and magnitude of their salvation and hope in Christ's coming Kingdom. These titles of their Lord would impress new converts to rest and relax in the Almighty God in whom they were spiritually situated!
 - 2. Paul's greetings of "grace and peace" in verse 1 also unite Gentile and Jewish expressions: "Grace" was "the common Greek salutation meaning greetings' or rejoice' where "peace is equivalent to the Hebrew" word *shalom* that means "favor, 'prosperity,' and well-being," Ibid. Paul ministered to saved Jews and Gentiles, and as "God's grace is the basis for and leads to man's peace," he often put these words together in the greeting section of his letters to edify His believing readers, Ibid.
 - 3. Paul then focused on the spiritual blessings these new converts already enjoyed in their brief walk with God, noting his ministry team always thanked God for them, making mention of them in their prayers in behalf of their needs, 1 Thessalonians 1:2.
 - 4. Also, Paul added he always recalled their work of faith in God, their labor of love for other believers and patient hope in their coming participation in the Kingdom of Christ regardless of current trials, a witness of their changed walk that gave evidence of the validity of their conversion, 1 Thess. 2:3, 4.
 - 5. Paul explained why their lives had changed this way in 1 Thessalonians 1:5: his gospel had come not only in word, but in evidential power in the Holy Spirit, which brought with it much assurance verified by the exemplary godliness of Paul and his ministry team that had been evident to Paul's readers.
 - 6. Because of these forces, the Thessalonians followed Paul and his team in faith and life with the joy of the Holy Spirit even though they had received the Gospel in great affliction, 1 Thess. 1:6; Acts 17:1-10.
 - 7. In fact, these new converts became examples to all the Christians throughout Macedonia and Achaia, places like Berea, Athens and Corinth where significant Churches were located, 1 Thessalonians 1:7; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., Map 13: "The Missionary Journeys of Paul."
 - 8. Indeed, the word of God sounded forth from them in every place Christians heard about them: believers all over the Roman Empire knew of their commitment to Christ in that (a) they knew they had turned to God from idols to serve the living God and (b) to wait for His Son from heaven Whom God raised from the dead in their hope of escaping the Great Tribulation to come, 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10; 5:9.

Lesson: Paul's first step in encouraging new believers under trial was to testify of God's work in them.

Application: May we similarly minister to new believers under trial by expressing our appreciation of God's work in them, for it will cause them to focus on the reality of their salvation, encouraging them.