

**Text:** 1 Thessalonians 1:1-8

**Meaning:** Paul commended the Thessalonians for being examples.

**Big Idea:** Be examples of the faith

**Objective:** I want the hearers to exemplify the faith

**Theme:** Characteristics of OUTSTANDING FAITH

## ALL IN CHILI COOKOFF PROMO

### Gold Door Stop

In 1799, Conrad Reed discovered a seventeen-pound rock while fishing in Little Meadow Creek. Not knowing what it was made of, his family used it as a doorstep for three years. In 1802, his father, John Reed, took it to a jeweler who identified it as a lump of gold worth about \$3,600, which is equivalent to \$88,000 in today's economy. That lump of gold, which was used as a doorstep for three years in North Carolina, is one of the biggest gold nuggets ever found east of the Rockies.

That story reminds me of a lot of Christians. The salvation we have in Christ is Pure GOLD! Yet so many believers just use their salvation as a door stop. It is worth more than we can ever fathom, and it is meant to be used as an incredible resource in other people's lives, but we just walk right by it every day. God is calling us to OUTSTANDING FAITH, not a faith that we just use as a prop.

## READ 1 Thessalonians 1:1-8

### Introduction to 1 Thessalonians

Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia, and it was a wealthy city situated on a major Roman highway. As

such the city was also known for all kinds of licentiousness and sexual brokenness. In Acts 17 we see where Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica and preached in a local synagogue there for 3 weeks and there was a group of folks who came to faith in Christ and a church was formed. Soon after however, a group of devout Jews greatly began persecuting the believers there so Paul and Silas abruptly left. He was greatly concerned that the church was fizzle out due to his departure, so he sent Timothy back later. Timothy was overjoyed to find that not only had the church survived, it was thriving! And it was thriving in the midst of continual persecution.

One of the main themes of the book is the second coming of Christ, in fact, if you notice in your reading every chapter ends with Christ's return.

What is the only thing that gives us comfort in this midst of suffering and difficulty – IT IS KNOWING THAT CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN!

BELOVED – THIS WORLD AND ALL ITS TROUBLE IS PASSING AWAY!  
THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS COMING TO EARTH AND CHRIST WILL BE KING!

### IT IS WELL

#### Last verse –

*And Lord Haste the Day when my faith shall be sight  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll  
The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend  
Even so, it is well with my soul!*

The only way it can be well with your soul is if Jesus is your Lord and you await expectantly for His return!

Paul goes on to say throughout this book – CHILDREN OF GOD, IN THE MEAN TIME LET'S GLORIFY JESUS AND CARRY THE GOSPEL TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH!

CHURCH BE ENCOURAGED – THE BEST DAYS ARE ALWAYS IN FRONT OF US! JESUS IS KING OF KINGS AND HE IS COMING AGAIN FOR HIS CHILDREN! HE IS COMING AGAIN TO DELIVER US FROM EVIL!

### **In the meantime let's live with OUTSTANDING FAITH.**

Paul says in Chapter 1 that the Thessalonian believers had exemplary faith. Outstanding Faith.

In today's day and time we must POSSESS A FAITH THAT STANDS OUT.

What stands out about your faith? In school do you stand out for Jesus? In your neighborhood do you stand out for Christ? In your workplace, what stands out about your testimony of faith?

#### **Outstanding faith is characterized by:**

##### **1. PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

Paul starts the letter by saying that He and Silas and Timothy constantly prayed for the church at Thessalonica. Paul and the original Apostles understood that their leading ministry to these new churches was TO PRAY FOR THEM!

In fact, I want to correct a statement we make from time to time. Sometimes we will say "**THE LEAST WE CAN DO IS PRAY FOR YOU.**" Or when someone is facing a loss or a difficult situation we and they say "just pray for us," we respond with "**THAT'S THE LEAST WE CAN DO.**" Although well meaning, the truth is

#### **THE MOST WE DO FOR PEOPLE IS PRAY FOR THEM!**

##### **James 5:16**

*The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working*

#### **Hudson Taylor**

*It is possible to move men, through God, by prayer alone.*

New Testament – Paul lists some powerful prayers that he prayed over the churches of Thessalonica, Philippi, Ephesus, Colossae, and others. We learn how to pray for one another through these prayers, and they are not just "Lord bless so and so" prayers. He prays for their faith to be strengthened, for them to know and do the will of God, for them to be rooted and grounded in love and to show that love to one another. He prays for God's grace and peace to be multiplied to them in Christ. He prays for them to be strengthened through the Holy Spirit, and for their spiritual eyes to be opened to the Lord.

#### **YALL PRAY FOR ME NOW**

An evangelist once told the story of preaching in a small country church and there was one little boy in the service that was being especially bad. He wouldn't sit still and he wouldn't be quiet no matter how much his parents scolded him. Finally the dad had enough and he picked that boy up and started out of that service to address his behavior in private, and on the way out the little boy blurted out with his best southern accent, "Hey, hey, hey - Ya'll pray for me now!"

We need to PRAY for one another!

#### **OUTSTANDING FAITH PRAYS! WHEN A PRAY NEED ARISES – PRAY RIGHT THEN AND THERE OVER THAT REQUEST!**

#### **Secondly, outstanding faith is characterized by:**

##### **2. PERSEVERANCE IN THE WORK**

Paul says in verse 3 there were 3 things about the faith of the Thessalonians that were memorable. Work of Faith, Labor of Love, and Steadfastness of Hope.

**Work** – speaks of that which one normally does, your vocation

**Labor** – refers to engaging in hard work with the implication of difficulty and trouble

As believers we are called to Labor for the Lord, and it is hard and often times unnoticed and unappreciated work. But we are told to be steadfast and immovable always abounding the work of the Lord.

**Galatians 6:9**

*And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*

**Paul says this is a work of FAITH, a labor of LOVE, and steadfastness of HOPE.**

**Faith, Hope, Love** – are to be the supreme motivators for the Christian life. Faith in Christ. Hope in His return. Love for God and man. This should be the driving factors of our lives.

**Faith** – complete trust in Christ. His word is true, and His way is best.

**Hope** – Rock Solid, unshakable belief that Christ will eradicate evil and rescue His children. He will not abandon us or forsake us.

One of the most striking differences between saved people and unsaved people is saved people live looking. They live eagerly anticipating the return of Christ.

**Love** – Benevolent service. It is putting God and others before myself and being glad to do it.

Paul says here they were to be commended for their perseverance in the work. ALL CHILDREN OF GOD ARE CALLED TO SERVE, and it's not easy. I cannot count the number of people I have met throughout my

time in ministry who either quit serving God, or left one church for another, or left one relationship for another, SIMPLY BECAUSE THEIR EXPECTATIONS, PERSONAL OPINIONS, OR THEIR PREFERENCES WERE NOT BEING ACCOMODATED.

**YOU CAN EITHER BE CRITICAL OR SPIRITUAL, BUT YOU CANNOT BE BOTH**

**SIR EARNEST SHACKLETON AD**

The following advertisement once appeared in a London newspaper; "Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful." This advertisement was signed by Sir Ernest Shackleton, Antarctic explorer. Amazingly, the ad drew thousands of respondents, eager to sacrifice everything for the prospect of meaningful adventure.

**Thirdly, outstanding faith is characterized by the:**

**3. POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Paul shares with the church how he knew they genuinely were chosen by God for salvation, how he knew they had authentically come to faith. THE PROOF WAS IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!

The Holy Spirit had come on their lives in such a way that they were completely transformed, as he says later they turned away from their pagan idols and turned to God.

**WHOM GOD CHOOSES GOD CHANGES. Whoever God saves he transforms.**

**SALVATION IS A RESURRECTION** – It is death to life. We are dead in sin apart from Jesus but when we place faith in Christ we are made alive together with Christ.

Only the Spirit of God and the gospel can turn an ALCOHOLIC, or an ADDICT, or an ANGRY CUSS – into a tender affectionate husband, father, and friend.

Only the Spirit of God and the gospel can turn a SELFISH, ANGRY, COMPLAINING, AND CRITICAL woman into a compassionate, servant hearted, wife, mother, and confidant.

**POWER** – dunamis (dynamite). It literally speaks of a dynamic power that is visible and tangible. When God lights the fuse there is an explosion of grace that takes place!

**Dunamis** – is also the same word used to describe the miracles of Jesus. Our God is a miracle working God! He authenticates the true witness of the gospel in a church with signs and wonders to display His glory!

Our God is the one who puts the WOW in our WORSHIP!

#### **FREEZER GOT TURNED OFF**

A few months ago I walked downstairs one day into our basement and there was an awful smell. I thought initially something had died outside or a rat had died in the wall somewhere, but I couldn't find anything dead. But I noticed the closer I got to the freezer we have downstairs the stronger the smell got, and I thought to myself, "Oh dear Lord in heaven, tell me this freezer hasn't gone out." It was full of meat, and the last thing I wanted to do was open that freezer to find all that meat ruined. Well, I opened that freezer the most awful smell ever came flowing out and I knew what had happened. Come to find out someone had simply turned the power off. It hadn't gone out, it was just accidentally turned off.

Beloved, Christians are like freezers. If we are walking in the power of the Holy Spirit our attitude starts to stink and we are useless to the Kingdom of God.

Child of God – TURN THE POWER ON. BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT!

Ephesians 5:18 tells us to BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

#### **Luke 11:13**

*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

#### **4. PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL**

Paul commends the church because not only had the Word of the Lord grown in their local region, but the testimony of their faith had "gone forth everywhere"

OUTSTANDING FAITH IS CHARACTERIZED BY AN OUTSTANDING WITNESS

Paul says every time the Thessalonian church came up in conversation people immediately knew their story. It was so well known that their reports weren't even necessary. They had turned from pagan idols to serve the one true living God!

***THE GREATEST TESTIMONY OF THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL IS A LIFE THAT HAS BEEN CHANGED.***