The Many Faces of the Gospel

I Thessalonians 1:6-10

Introduction:

I. The Gospel in Person – 1:6-7

A. What they Determined – 1:6

There was no difference between following Paul and following Christ.

1. They Followed Paul

“And ﻿﻿you became followers of me”

The word followers, μιμηταὶ - is the where we get our word mimic, imitate.

Paul had learned how to live for Christ. “for me to live is Christ; (Phil.1.21)

2. Following Paul was Following the Lord

“And {followers} of the Lord,”

Jesus came to make the Father known,

Hebrews 1:3

“who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express ﻿﻿image of His person,

Phil 2:6

“He was in the form of God and equal with the Father.”

John 14:9

“If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father.”

3. Following Paul Brought Persecution

“having received the word in much affliction,”

This was Paul’s experience too. He suffered persecution on the first journey: Antioch (in Pisidia) and Lystra. But, the Thessalonians would be more familiar with his persecutions in Philippi and right there in Thessalonica. When the Jews stormed the house of Jason, Paul had to leave town to protect the church. He went on to Berea.

The Thessalonians experienced persecution first-hand in their hometown.

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4. The Persecution was Eclipsed by Joy of the Holy Spirit

﻿﻿“with joy of the Holy Spirit,”

They found out that what Paul had told them was true: that obedience to the Lord in the face of trouble brings genuine joy. Joy is the second in the list of “fruit of the Spirit” – “love, **joy**, peace” (Gal. 5:22).

Happiness depends on what happens to you. Joy is rooted in God.

We ask, “Was God glorified?” If the answer is, “Yes,” then we have joy of the Holy Spirit. If no answer is discernible and we were in obedience to the Lord, then we still have joy of the Holy Spirit.

B. What they Demonstrated – 1:7

“so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.”

They had become imitators of Paul. Later they learned that Paul was an imitator of Jesus and they followed Him. Now they are examples τύπον to others.

They were a pattern or model of what a believer should be. The cycle starts all over again,

* Believers followed the Thessalonians,
* Then, those believers found out about Paul
* Then, they saw Jesus as the supreme example.

New believers need a human example, but that example should model and lead them to the supreme example.

II. The Gospel in Proclamation – 1:8-9

A. The Realm of their Witness – 1:8a

“For from you the word of the Lord ﻿﻿has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also ﻿﻿in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out,”

The Word “sounded forth” ἐξήχηται”. Our word echo is related to this Greek word. The echo does not change the message, but repeats it.

B. The Reach of their Witness – 1:8b – 9a

1. To All of Greece –

a. Macedonia - Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, ﻿Thessalonica, Berea, Athens.

b. Achaia - Corinth

2. Outside Greece –

“but also ﻿﻿in every place.”

Thessalonica was on the crossroads of the Roman Empire- by land and by sea. The Word (Gospel) and the word (their ministry) would get out. Paul was in Corinth, another crossroad where the word of their ministry would get in.

3. Paul did not have to Tell the News; Others Told him – 1:8c – 9a

“so that we do not need to say anything.﻿ For they themselves declare concerning us ﻿﻿what manner of entry we had to you,”

C. The Results of their Witness – 1:9b

“and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,”

They turned to God from the idols. Not the reverse order. Turning to God involves turning from idols. The idols are lifeless; God is living. Idols are false; God is true.

Don’t get confused here. Many people read only the first half of the verse and wrongly assume that Paul is saying that the Thessalonians turned to God from their idols in order to be saved. The verse explains itself, “they turned to God from idols to serve the true and living God.”

Turning from idols and serving God are not requirements for salvation. They are requirements for discipleship. The Thessalonians were disciples indeed!

III. The Gospel in Prospect – 1:10

A. Rapture – 1:10a

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“to wait for His Son, Jesus, from heaven “His Son” This is Jesus, Son of that true and living God.”

He is going to return for His church. The Rapture of the church is a sign-less event.

God promised Israel deliverance several times in the O.T. Each time He gave them a sign so that they could know when to expect His deliverance. The nation’s leaders paid no attention to the signs, but the believing remnant did. He gave Israel signs for His return to the earth (Matt.24). The church is not Israel in any shape or form.

Jesus said in John 14:3,

“I am going away; and if I go away (future condition), I am coming again (futuristic present) to receive you to myself, that were I am there you may be also.”

No signs, just get ready and stay ready!

Then, why are preachers saying that the Rapture of the Church is near?

Christmas signs in mid-November tell us that Thanksgiving is near, because Thanksgiving comes before Christmas.

Second Coming to the earth signs tell us that the Rapture of the Church is near, because the Rapture of the Church comes before the Second Coming to the earth.,

B. Resurrection – 1:10b

“whom He raised from the dead,”

The one Who is coming is the One Who went away via the resurrection and the ascension. (Acts 1)

This is that “living God” he spoke of earlier.

C. Rescue – 1:10c

“who will deliver us ﻿﻿from the wrath to come. “

“Delivers,” ῥυόμενον, is a present tense, used as a future. (As it is in John 14: 1-3)

The “wrath” in the New Testament refers to earthly, temporal wrath. It does not refer to hell-fire or any other eternal wrath.

The “wrath to come” is a reference to the tribulation.

Conclusion: