



Lights and Perfection, Inc.

Go and make disciples!

E-votional 112

Witness for Christ

1 Thessalonians 1:6-10

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, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 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. 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, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

I just love the examples of other believers that we have been given in Scripture. It is just so amazing when we can get pieces of a clear picture concerning our common faith and salvation. What I mean is that sometimes we can have our views skewed from the world around us and we need simple reminders that define our faith more clearly from time to time. In the case here of the Thessalonians that Paul was writing to we see a great picture of just that being painted.

Let's look further at what Paul was saying here because in this chosen passage of Scripture there are many things to take note of. First, Paul was saying that these believers became imitators of them. I like this because it paints the clear picture that we need by pointing us in the right direction. The right direction, in this case, is that of Paul's witness for Christ and that of the other Churches and what that would look like. Next, Paul fills in that blank by saying that, "*you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.*"

The affliction Paul was speaking about here needs a little context to fill in this blank. For this, we can look to 1 Thessalonians 2:14-15 (ESV),

For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind.

And for yet, even more, context to paint an even clearer picture look to the very next chapter in 1 Thessalonians 3:4 (ESV),

For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.

Ok, so let's summarize the main points here. When Paul came proclaiming the Gospel to the Thessalonians, he explained clearly what receiving this Gospel would mean for them by way of persecution and affliction. He pulled from this as a definition of what it meant to truly receive the Gospel and pointed out that they were imitators of them and witnesses for Christ because they endured much affliction just as the fellow believers did from the Jews in Judea when the Gospel first sounded forth. The affliction and persecution had to do with the plundering of their homes, rejection from family and neighbors, and yes even death. Yet in all of this, Paul reiterates that they still received this Gospel with, "the joy of the Holy Spirit," so that even in the midst of this they were powerful witnesses to those in Macedonia and Achaia. Praise God!

The example and witness of these Thessalonian believers reached so much longer and wider than just hearing that they received the word in much affliction and even still with joy, but that in the midst of these afflictions we can see and intimate just what they must have gone through just to believe the message that Paul preached. You see it was a very turbulent time for the message of the Gospel and in that day just to be a believer meant exclusion from the town itself. What I mean is that this persecution meant that these new believers, some of them anyhow, would lose their loved ones, their jobs, and yes even their lives, yet even knowing this beforehand and experiencing it afterward these believers joyfully turned completely from idols to serve the Living and True God (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). Hallelujah!

Think about it for just a second. For these believers, it was a matter of life and death in many cases. And at the very least it meant complete rejection and exclusion from the neighbors and loved ones they have grown with and loved. Yet they knew beforehand such trauma would await them and still chose the way of the Gospel and even turned completely away from the way of idol worship that Thessalonica was known for.

Paul, in this same letter later tells of how he was worried that maybe they had

been so tempted by these afflictions that they had left the faith (1 Thessalonians 3:1-10). Yet also expresses how great it was to hear the news that they had been rather steadfast concerning the faith when news returned to Paul about them from Timothy. You see, it was so difficult to be a Christian in those days, yet in the case of the Thessalonians, they stayed true and because of this became a great example just in their reception of the Gospel and their endurance of these afflictions.

This letter has really served me as a reminder of what it means to truly be a Christian. And I dearly want to be an imitator of such faith. But lo, there are surely times I feel I have fallen short of it, as I am sure we all have those moments. Nevertheless, the measuring stick of the Gospel never changes regardless of our hardship or suffering. The Gospel not only tells us that we will encounter such suffering and hardships but tells us we must through these and many more endure and so enter the Kingdom (Acts 14:22). And while we are going through them we are showing the rest of the believers an example of true biblical Christianity and what it means to be a believer.

I really am encouraged by this testimony and witness of the Thessalonians. Because of this radical transformation not only had the word of their faith spread but more importantly, their example shone forth the truth and power of the Gospel. It just goes to show that God's ways are truly higher than our ways. The moral of the story here is that we are to remain true to the Gospel no matter the cost. We are called to be salt and light in this dark and twisted generation. Sooner rather than later, just to say you are a Christian will incur some penalty. What will you do when that time comes?

Lord, give us clean hands and give us pure hearts, let us not lift our souls to another. Thank you Father for the reflection of Your truth in Your Word. Helps us to cling to You and the examples You have given us in the Scriptures. Give us the ability to be the light in the darkest hours and to remain diligent therein, in Jesus name. Amen.

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In Christ's Love,
Chris and Jeanne
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