GOSPEL MISUNDERSTANDINGS #27

THESSALONICA UNDER A MICROSCOPE

We are going to put Thessalonica under a microscope using a list a verses from First Thessalonians and Acts specifically. In the Bible, the Lord has uniquely done that for us with Thessalonica. We will go through this list of verses, comparing these spiritual scriptures with spiritual. I hope our focus will be brought onto things that we may have overlooked before. I know that I saw things I had not seen before.

We will read, with comments, consecutively in two places: Acts chapter 17, and First Thessalonians chapters 2, and 3. Let’s start in Acts chapter 17, verse 1.

**Acts 17:1**  Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

**Acts 17:2**  And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

**Acts 17:3**  Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

**Acts 17:4**  And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

We see in **Acts 17, verse 2**, it says Paul “reasoned with them out of the scriptures”. Often people may come to you and say, “let’s reason about the Bible”. What they usually mean by that is to argue against what is written in the Bible. They say, “Well, he didn’t mean that. What he really meant is this.”

When Paul used that term “reasoning”, he went on to define it. In **Acts 17, verse 3**, Paul defines “reasoning” as “opening and alleging”, opening the word of God and claiming what it means. Paul used the word of God to confirm and explain the word of God.

**Hebrews 6:13**  For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself,

That is what Paul did. He used what God had said as the greatest possible proof. And, what was it that Paul showed them from the open scriptures? Paul showed from the scriptures the identity of Jesus Christ. “Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.” Jesus Christ is the resurrected Messiah.

That is the “gospel of God”. You can line up **Romans 1, verses 3, and 4**, with **Acts 17, verse 3,** and they are almost identical. And, **Romans 1, verse 1** says that **verses 3, and 4,** are the “gospel of God”. Paul was saying that he presented to them the “gospel of God”, who Jesus is, the identity of Jesus. Before Paul told them anything about who needs to be saved, or how to be saved, or what is the gospel of salvation, he told them who Jesus is.

**Acts 17, verse 4**, says that “some of them believed, and consorted with Paul”. He would not **DUMP** them. He would start **MEETINGS** with them. That was what Christ sent him to do in **First Corinthians 9, verses 12, and 16, through 18**. Paul was commissioned to preach to the Jews and Greeks the “gospel of Christ” in a dispensation of the gospel. Paul would meet together with them. As we will see, not only did some believe, but some of “the Jews which believed not, moved with envy” … “set all the city on an uproar”. We find out as we go through this microscope process that Paul had to commit those believers’ meetings to Timothy to establish because Paul was forced out of Thessalonica.

That was not the end of it. God had a plan to put that whole Thessalonica situation in slow motion so that, as if through a microscope, we could see what actually happened in those synagogues when Paul would come to a town such as Antioch, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, or Ephesus, or wherever he went in that dispensing of the gospel.

Let’s go on to some other verses that tell what happened next. When we were reading in **Acts 17, verses 1, through 4**, Paul was in Thessalonica. We will look next at what Paul later wrote back to the Thessalonians in the Acts 18 time period. By this time, Paul had learned about most of the things that he normally would have found out if he had been able to stay there in Thessalonica.

**1 Thessalonians 2:1**  For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

**1 Thessalonians 2:2**  But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi,

Do you remember the phrase, and the incident: “the Philippian jailor”? Paul and Silas had been thrown into jail in Philippi.

**1 Thessalonians 2:2**  But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak **UNTO YOU** the gospel of God with much contention.

So, there in Thessalonica, there was much contention. There was the tribulation of suffering that he was willing to go through to preach the “gospel of God” that he was separated unto. Nevertheless, Paul was faithful to speak unto them the “gospel of God”, the Bible facts about who Jesus is. Speaking it boldly, in spite of much contention, Paul would certainly know and report exactly the right name of the gospel he preached there at that time. Paul preached the name, or identity of Jesus, that He is the Messiah, resurrected from the dead.

**1 Thessalonians 2:3**  For our exhortation …

To exhort is to call near, or to urge compliance. So exhortation is calling them near to the truth, to abide by the truth, to believe the truth, calling them into action.

**1 Thessalonians 2:3**  For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

**1 Thessalonians 2:4**  But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel,

And, that is the gospel that Paul has been talking about here, the “gospel of God”, he hasn’t jumped ahead.

**1 Thessalonians 2:4**  But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

Paul was put in trust with the gospel. That is **Romans 1, verse 1,** “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God”,

**1 Thessalonians 2:5**  For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

A cloke of covetousness would be covering up the fact that we want your money.

**1 Thessalonians 2:6**  Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

Who is Paul talking about as the plural apostles of Christ. Take a look at the **first verse in First Thessalonians.**

**1 Thessalonians 1:1**Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, Paul was talking about himself, Timotheus, and Silvanus as apostles of Christ. Neither Silvanus, nor Timotheus were designated by Christ as apostles of the Gentiles. Only Paul was the singular, “THE APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES”, and we have his inspired scripture that we follow today, because Paul is our apostle. Silvanus and Timotheus were sent out ones, apostles in a more generic sense. They were sent with Paul on this apostolic trip. They had responsibility. They were going out, preaching the gospel, making people aware of the “gospel of God”, and the “gospel of Christ”.

**1 Thessalonians 2:7**  But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

Paul was going through contention, tribulation, and suffering to get the “gospel of God” to them. And yet, he was gentle among them, as a nurse cherisheth her children, not on his last good nerve.

**1 Thessalonians 2:8**  So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only …

Right away, when you hear Paul telling of a sequence that follows the “gospel of God”, you start thinking that Paul might be going to say “not the gospel of God only, but next, we imparted to you, the gospel of Christ about how to be saved”. Yes, that was the next step in Paul’s manner, his mode of operation. But in this context, I don’t think that is what Paul is leading into. I think here, Paul is talking about the affliction he went through to get the gospel to us.

**1 Thessalonians 2:8**  So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

**1 Thessalonians 2:9**  For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

By this time, Paul has still not reported beyond the “gospel of God”, those same facts about who Jesus is, that He is the Messiah, resurrected from the dead.

Let’s see what happened next. For that, we need to go back to **Acts 17, verses 5, through 16**. Here we see Paul’s report of the affliction, tribulation, and suffering he went through.

**Acts 17:4** And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

It is notable that there was a great multitude that believed.

**Acts 17:5**But the Jews which believed not

Just like in **Acts 14, verses 1,and 2**, Here you can see four categories of people: Jews that believed, Jews that did not believe, Gentiles that believed (often called Greeks), and Gentiles that did not believe (aliens that have their own gods in **Ephesians 2, verse 12**).

**Acts 17:5**But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

Can you imagine the contention and the suffering of affliction?

**Acts 17:6**And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

The believing little flock had already made an impact and reputation. People knew about them.

**Acts 17:7**Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

You can see that they are trying to couch their words to get the government on their side.

**Acts 17:8**And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

**Acts 17:9**And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

**Acts 17:10**And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea:

Being at night, it was being done covertly.

**Acts 17:10**And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

They did not have the privilege to indulge any shyness. They were doing hard-to-do things, things that the Lord wanted them to do, and they stepped out, and did it.

You and I would have trouble doing those things but knowing that the Lord wants us to do whatever He has said for us to do, we too, would step out, and do it.

By the way, there are things that we are to do: love others, be edified by studying the word of God, things like that. We that have believed by grace through faith need to get to doing.

**Acts 17:11**These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they **RECEIVED THE WORD** with all readiness of mind,

Please make the distinction between “openness of mind”, being willing to accept anything, and “readiness of mind” being willing to challenge their own preconceived ideas with the truth, not with somebody elses Idea, but with the truth.

**Acts 17:11**These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they **RECEIVED THE WORD** with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Some people have commented, complained, and argued that: “well, if they searched the scriptures, then it wasn’t a mystery”. But there was a previously unrevealed gospel and program that God had, that He did reveal to Paul. It had been a mystery. But this is NOT that mystery. This was in the Old Testament. Paul was still teaching the “gospel of God”.

Try to remember before the Lord went to the cross, when He gathered His apostles at Caesarea Philippi in **Matthew 16, verse 13**, and He said to them, “Who do men say that I the Son of man am?” Then He said, “But whom say ye that I am?” And Peter said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”. Saying Jesus is the Christ, professes the Messiahship and the Sonship of Jesus. Then, five verses later, the Lord added the other element, that He would “be raised again the third day”. Christ’s resurrection is the other part of the “gospel of God”.

So, the facts about Jesus were there. They were in Psalms 2, Psalms 16, Psalms 110, Isaiah 7, Isaiah 9, Isaiah 53, Isaiah 60, and 61. They were found many places in the scriptures. They were foretold. These facts were prophesied. But, not the mystery part about those facts. Before Christ revealed the mystery to Paul, it was unknown that you would be saved by believing that Christ died for your sins. That part was mystery, untold, and unknown before the revelation of the mystery to Paul. That was and is the only way an unforgivable person could be saved.

Next, we will see what was going on in Paul’s trip to Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. We are trying to find out, from these two sources, what was the sequence of events, and what was Paul’s mode of operation. We are comparing First Thessalonians 2 and 3 with Acts 17.

**Acts 17:12**  Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

So, those Berea Jews and Greeks “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” that Paul was preaching about the “gospel of God”. They believed, so they must have found that they were so. What does it say that they believed then? Did they believe the mystery “gospel of Christ” crucified for their sins?

If they searched the scriptures to find it, and then believed it, then what they were searching for was what Paul preached, the scriptural facts about who Jesus is, the “gospel of God”, NOT the mystery. They searched, found, and believed that Jesus is the resurrected Messiah.

So, when it says here in **Acts 17, verse 12**, that many of them believed, don’t say or think “great, we had a lot of people come into the ‘body of Christ’ then”. They were NOT in the “body of Christ” yet. They were believers that Jesus is the Messiah, resurrected from the dead. That alone does NOT save anybody.

**Acts 17:13**  But when the Jews of Thessalonica …

There they are again. Trouble makers aren’t they? Or, at least, trying to be.

**Acts 17:13**  But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

**Acts 17:14**  And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea …

That sounds a little surreptitious, doesn’t it, a little covert. In other words, look like you are going down to the docks.

**Acts 17:14**  And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

So, now we come to the next verse, **Acts 17, verse 15**, and there is also something strange about the way this verse is written.

**Acts 17:15**  And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: …

That **Acts 17, verse 15** statement ends with a colon. It is as if Paul had said, “they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens, and here is how it happened”. That is very similar to what Luke says in describing Paul’s trip to Jerusalem in **Acts 18, verses 18, through 22**. In **Acts 18, verse 18**, Luke said that Paul … “took his leave of the brethren and sailed thence into Syria”. Was Paul then in Syria? Paul was going to go through Syria to get to Jerusalem. But then in the next verse, **Acts 18, verse 19**, you see that Paul made stops along the way before he got to Syria, at least in Ephesus, before he was actually in Syria or Jerusalem.

In **Acts 17, verse 15**, Paul was preparing to leave Berea, going to Athens. Berea is north of Athens near the coast of the Aegean Sea. Since Paul was avoiding those docks, he apparently was going to go to Athens on a land route being led by “they that conducted Paul”.

**Acts 17:15**  And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

With all that in mind, Paul gave the command for “they that conducted” him to give to Timothy before any of them had actually left Berea. All three of Paul, Silas, and Timothy were leaving Berea and all three were meeting next in Athens, but Paul would get there first, and the route that Silas and Timothy took would include the command in **First Thessalonians 3, verses 1, and 2.**

“They that conducted Paul” “receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed”. The command was to Silas and Timothy. In that group, who was in a position to give commands? PAUL! Paul gave a command to those who conducted him for them to give to Silas and Timothy telling Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed.

They were all starting from Berea, and they were all going to Athens, so why wouldn’t Silas and Timothy be traveling side by side with Paul on the route from Berea to Athens? And, why did Paul have to tell them to hurry up and he would wait for them at Athens?

Timothy had been given a responsibility to accomplish before meeting Paul at Athens. So, Timothy had somewhere else he had to go before arriving at Athens. Let us preview that charge that Paul gave Timothy in **First Thessalonians 3, verses 1, and 2.**

**1 Thessalonians 3:1**Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

**1 Thessalonians 3:2**And **SENT** Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

So, after giving that command, Paul was led to Athens by they that conducted Paul. They departed.

By the way, the Bible said nothing about the doctrine of those who conducted Paul in **Acts 17, verse 15**, but they had to be trustworthy. They could well have been some of those who were in Christ, the Vine, before Paul was in Christ, the body of Christ. That gives confirming proof to disarm people who claim that God misspoke by calling those “in Christ”, who were in Christ, the Vine, (calling them) the same as those who are “in Christ”, being in the body of Christ. They are not in the same group and so God gave the groups different names. Israel and the little flock are never said to be in a body.

**Acts 17:16**  Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

Now, we will go to First Thessalonians to see Paul’s comments as he looks back at those situations from the time period of Acts 18. By the time that Paul had written **First Thessalonians 1, verse 1,** he had already learned the information of what had happened and had been reported, as late as First Thessalonians, chapter 5. The things that Paul talks about throughout the epistle, he had already learned all that information by the time that he began to write **First Thessalonians 1, verse 1.** Especially, he knew about the Thessalonians reception of Timothy’s ministering to them the “gospel of Christ” crucified for our sins. Paul knew about their response of faith to the salvation gospel that Timothy went back to preach to them.

Let’s go on to **First Thessalonians 2, verse 13, through 18.**

**1 Thessalonians 2:13**  For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

There is a great principle to remember, whether you are in this study or another. If you are saved and want to grow and come to the knowledge of the truth, receiving the word of God causes it to work effectually in you as you believe it, as it was written, and as applying to whom it was written.

**1 Thessalonians 2:14**  For ye, brethren, became followers ….

When Paul wrote **First Thessalonians 2, verse 14**, he already knew what happened in First Thessalonians chapter 3, that they received the gospel of Christ for salvation with Christ as their only Saviour. You can see a hint of it here. Paul said that “ye received … the word of God … which effectually worketh also in you that believe”. They were believers, but he would not have known that until he got the information he received in **First Thessalonians 3, verses 1, through 7.**

**1 Thessalonians 2:14**  For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus ….

Now, don’t get thrown here as some people do. The “churches of God” were the scattered “little flock”. Paul is NOT saying that you became part of the little flock. He’s NOT saying that. Yes, the churches of God were in Christ Jesus. But, as we showed before, they were in Christ, the Vine. They were NOT in the body of Christ.

**1 Thessalonians 2:14**  For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:

This is the manner in which they were followers of the churches of God in Judaea which are in Christ Jesus. “Ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews”. You see, its two parallel situations there. Paul was saying that the Jews, the little flock in Judaea suffered of the disbelieving Jews in Judaea. LIKEWISE, you believers suffered like-type things from **your own countrymen** which would have been those disbelieving Jews and all the city around Thessalonica, according to **Acts 17, verse 5**. So, don’t let that throw you. With all that in mind, let us read again **First Thessalonians 2, verse 14**.

**1 Thessalonians 2:14**  For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:

**1 Thessalonians 2:15**  Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

That is a pretty heavy statement. But, that is what they were. That was the Jew’s last generation of rebels before being cast away at the end of Acts. Paul went on to elucidate on some of what he meant by that heavy statement:

**1 Thessalonians 2:16**  Forbidding us to speak to **the Gentiles** that they **might be saved ….**

Well, what Gentiles were there in Thessalonica, in the synagogue, that the unbelieving Jews forbade Paul to speak the “gospel of Christ” to that they might be saved? They tried to prevent Paul from preaching further to those Greeks in the synagogue in **Acts 17, verses 4, through 10**. Those Greeks were the only Gentiles in this context that the Jews forbade Paul from preaching to.

Some people try to twist or over apply the wording, in order to maintain their own opinions. At first reading, and if you expect it to mean “to all the Gentiles”, you would hear it as saying “to all the Gentiles”, when all it says is “to the Gentiles”, meaning “the Gentiles already in the account”. If you expect Paul to be going to all the Gentiles this early, even without any sending yet to the “far off” Gentiles, then to you, it would sound like the whole world was the target audience. But that is NOT what it says or means. Paul was only talking about the Gentiles that were present in that synagogue that we read about in **Acts 17, verses 4, through 10**.

Those Gentiles would have all been Greeks, NOT Greeks by nationality, but seekers, like the Greek empire was known for. They would have been Gentiles seekers, seeking the wisdom and knowledge of God, coming into the places where the wisdom and knowledge of God was kept as the SCRIPTURES, in the synagogues.

Those seeker Gentiles, called Greeks, came to the synagogues to hear the scriptures and learned of God’s covenants with Israel, and so they blessed Israel as the scriptures said to do, by being there, and by bringing their tithes to the synagogues.

That is how the Greeks got to hear Paul first. Paul went to the synagogues as he was sent to do, “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” He went to the synagogues where the scriptures were kept, and he preached the “gospel of God”. Three times in **First Thessalonians chapter 2**, Paul clarified in **verses 2, and 8, and 9**, that he had preached the “gospel of God” to them. Paul identified that Jesus is the resurrected Messiah.

In Thessalonica, Paul suffered things to get the gospel to the Gentiles, as the churches of God in Judaea did. They forbade Paul, and tried to keep him from speaking to the Gentiles in the synagogue in Thessalonica after a great multitude of the Greeks believed the “gospel of God” in **Acts 17, verse 4.**

That is one place that the Greeks show up. There they are. What is there duty? Why are the Greeks being singled out as being preached to? According to **Romans 11, verse 11**, it is so that they will provoke Israel to jealousy. I want what they’ve got. They get life now. They don’t have to wait, and endure to the end to be saved.

As Paul would go from synagogue to synagogue, those that believed the foundational “gospel of God” that Paul preached about **who Jesus is**, (they) consorted with Paul, meeting with him to hear Paul preach the “gospel of Christ” about **what Christ did** for them. And, they could be saved by believing that Christ died for their sins.

It was written in Isaiah that Christ would die for Israel’s sins. But, it did not say how Israel could appropriate that. It didn’t say, believe on the coming Righteous Servant’s sacrifice to be forgiven and saved. It said that His sin offering would redeem them, but how? They had to keep the covenants, and the commandments, and the circumcision, and the Sabbath, and all those things. That was Israel’s lot.

These people that Paul preached to were being saved differently. It was a new pattern that Christ started with unforgivable Saul of Tarsus being saved on the road to Damascus.

Under the microscope of Thessalonica, that process got interrupted. Paul did not leave them in the lurch, so to speak. According to **First Thessalonians 2, verse 18**, Paul twice tried returning to Thessalonica, but Satan hindered him. Instead of Paul immediately preaching salvation to those that believed the “gospel of God”, in First Thessalonians chapter 3, Paul had to send his “fellowlabourer in the **gospel of Christ**”, Timothy, to minister to them the “gospel of Christ”, the gospel of salvation to establish them as we saw likely happened right there in **Acts 17, verses 14, through 16**.

It is quite interesting the way that this whole process in Thessalonica was stretched out over time to reveal to us what was the order of God. Paul’s mode of operation was to preach the “gospel of God”, and not yet to preach the “gospel of Christ”, the gospel of salvation, until people had first believed the “gospel of God”.

Now, we want to continue reading the **First Thessalonians 2** passage at **verse 16**.

**1 Thessalonians 2:16**  Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might **be saved**

It said “be saved”. That is not about the “gospel of God” is it? That is about the “gospel of Christ”, the gospel of salvation.

**1 Thessalonians 2:16**  Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

So, those disbelieving Jews had past of point of being able to return. Those Jews had passed up multiple mercies of God chances to believe Paul and “Paul’s gospel”. Those Jews were being broken off Israel’s olive tree.

Next, let’s look in **First Corinthians 7, verses 17, 18, and 20**.

**1 Corinthians 7:17**  But as God **hath distributed** to every man, as the Lord **hath called** every one, so **let** him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

**1 Corinthians 7:18**  Is any man **called** being circumcised? **let** him not become uncircumcised. Is any **called** in uncircumcision? **let** him not be circumcised.

**1 Corinthians 7:20**  **Let** every man abide in **the same calling** wherein **he was called**.

That was only given for a dispensation of the gospel, not for our later dispensation. You can see there were some Jews and Greeks from the synagogue in **Acts 18, verse 4**, that had already heard the “gospel of the circumcision”, and as late as Acts 19, they were still being **called** into the “little flock”, the circumcision group in **First Corinthians 7, verses 17, 18, and 20.** They were part of Israel’s prophetic remnant, even though the nation of Israel already had fallen, and even though Paul was already preaching the “gospel of Christ” to the Jews and Greeks.

In the Bible, a remnant always refers to those few FROM ISRAEL that believe what God told them, while the majority of Israel, Jacob, was going astray. This prophetic remnant is referred to in **Romans 11, verses 7, and 8.**

**Romans 11:7, and 11:8,**  What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

Additionally, there were some Jews and Greeks in Corinth’s synagogue in **Acts 18, verse 4**, that when they heard Paul preach the “gospel of the uncircumcision”, the “gospel of Christ”, they were being **called** into that uncircumcision group, the “body of Christ”. In **Romans 11, verses 5, and 6**, Paul referred to that grace remnant as Jew and Greek believers from Israel that chose, or elected, to receive God’s grace dispensed by Paul as the “gospel of Christ” at that time.

**Romans 11:5, and 11:6,**  Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

**2 Thessalonians 2:14**  Whereunto **he called you by our gospel**, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As late as Acts 19, when Paul wrote that Corinthian epistle, Paul was saying that those who had previously been **called** into the “little flock”, circumcision group could still receive and abide in that **calling**. But also, there was a grace remnant that God knew was being **called** into the “body of Christ” by Paul’s “gospel of Christ”, Look at these verses regarding God’s calling.

**Romans 8:30**  Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also **called**: and whom he **called**, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

**1 Corinthians 1:9**  God is faithful, by whom **ye were called** unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let’s continue reading at **First Thessalonians 2, verse 17.**

**1 Thessalonians 2:17**  But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

**1 Thessalonians 2:18**  Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

**1 Thessalonians 2:19**  For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

**1 Thessalonians 2:20**  For ye are our glory and joy.

As we get into First Thessalonians 3, let us be reminded that Paul did not write this epistle until all these events had happened. He was telling what happened being fully aware of the comforting and joyful outcome. What Paul is going to report here in chapter 3, he knew back in chapter 2 when he wrote three times about preaching the “gospel of God” to them, and going through the conflict and the contention.

**1 Thessalonians 3:1**  Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

That was when Paul got sent away from Berea, surreptitiously, to escape the rogue Jews coming from Thessalonica. They made it look like he was going down to the docks, but instead they that conducted Paul brought him to Athens, apparently by land.

**1 Thessalonians 3:2**  And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our **fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ** …

Underline that. That is why Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica. Timothy was Paul’s fellowlabourer in the “gospel of Christ”. Timothy was sent out to Thessalonica to minister unto them the “gospel of Christ”, “my gospel”, to establish them.

**1 Thessalonians 3:2**  And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our **fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ**, to **establish** you …

Paul knew that when he sent Timothy to minister the “gospel of Christ” to them, that it would establish those who believe. It will make them stable, sealed in Christ.

Just knowing that Jesus is the risen Messiah, as Paul had been able to preach there, does not establish you. It is the foundation upon which the “gospel of Christ” is preached. It is the foundation upon which the body of Christ is built. That is a reason why Paul always preached the “gospel of God” first, and then the “gospel of Christ”.

**1 Thessalonians 3:1**  Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

**1 Thessalonians 3:2**  And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our **fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ**, to **establish** you, and to comfort you **concerning your faith:**

Paul said “**concerning your FAITH**”…. Do you have FAITH in this, or not. Paul was concerned about them, he was uncomfortable because he had to leave Thessalonica having preached to them the “gospel of God” about who Jesus is, but had NOT had the chance to give them the “gospel of Christ” about what Christ did to save them. They did NOT know yet. They were positive. They did believe the “gospel of God”. But Paul was eager to hear their response to the “gospel of Christ” that he sent his fellowlabourer Timothy, to minister to them.

**1 Thessalonians 3:3**  That no man should be moved by these afflictions …

Paul was writing back and saying, “They treated me terribly, and they are treating you terribly.” Remember Jason who got beaten and dragged before the officials?

**1 Thessalonians 3:3**  That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

**1 Thessalonians 3:4**  For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

Now, don’t get thrown off course here either. Paul said, “we should suffer tribulation”. I thought we were delivered from the tribulation.

The tribulation Paul was talking about there, he said “even as it came to pass”. It was already PASSED, had already occurred. It was the tribulation that those unbelieving Jews gave him, and was giving to the “gospel of God” believing Thessalonians. They were rebel rousing the whole city, and suborning those lewd fellows of the baser sort, and all that tribulation that Satan was behind.

**1 Thessalonians 3:4**For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

**1 Thessalonians 3:5**For this cause,

Now, we are getting right down to the point of all this. If you have been sleeping, or day dreaming, or double dipping, LISTEN UP! This is it.

**1 Thessalonians 3:5**For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith

In other words, Paul was saying, “I was very eager to hear about your FAITH”. Their FAITH was what Paul was so concerned about back there in verse 2.

**1 Thessalonians 3:5**For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

In other words, they were NOT secure yet. They were NOT saved yet. They were NOT sealed yet by the “gospel of God” that they heard and believed in Thessalonica.

They had needed to hear and believe the gospel of salvation, the “gospel of Christ”, that Christ died for their sins, that He was buried, and that He was resurrected the third day. But those are merely the facts of that mystery gospel of what Christ did to make salvation available to us. But, our part is in the two verses before that, that you individually have to receive it to your own condition as a sinner in need to be saved. Let’s look at those salvation verses there in:

**1 Corinthians 15:1**  Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

**1 Corinthians 15:2**  By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

**1 Corinthians 15:3**  For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

**1 Corinthians 15:4**  And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

Twice in those four verses, it mentions to RECEIVE it, that Paul RECEIVED it, and that that is what they are to do, to RECEIVE it.

**1 Thessalonians 3:6**  But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your **FAITH** and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:

**1 Thessalonians 3:7**  Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your **FAITH**:

That is the heart of the matter. That is what it was all about, **THEIR FAITH**. Paul had to find out whether they **BELIEVED** or not. Paul was quite concerned that he had to leave them with the good news about who Jesus is, but did NOT get to tell them how to be saved.

**1 Thessalonians 3:7**  Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your **FAITH**:

**1 Thessalonians 3:8**  For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

And they do. Paul had found out that they did have FAITH in the “gospel of Christ that Timothy had ministered to them in verse 2. That is the point here. That is why verse 8 is connected to verse 7 by a colon, and not by a period, because they go together. Now, we go on to verse 9.

**1 Thessalonians 3:9**For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

**1 Thessalonians 3:10**  Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your **FAITH**?

Now what would that be? What would be lacking in their FAITH? By the time that Paul wrote that statement, he already knew that they are saved. So It is not about what is lacking in their position. They are saved. They are sealed. They are made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Christ is in them. They are no longer lacking in their position, but rather, in their **FAITH**.

Faith is active. It purposely leans on, and relies on the object of their faith. They had faith that God had saved them from condemnation. But they needed to know how to grow in their daily walk. That has to do with the other part of God’s will, “to come unto the **KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH**”.

**1 Timothy 2:4**  Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

They needed to be made aware of their new position in Christ, with all its benefits. That growth to completeness in faith is taught here in at least these six areas.

(1) STUDY THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE REVEALED MYSTERY OF JESUS CHRIST:

(2) HOLINESS:

(3) LOVE:

(4) EDIFY:

(5) KNOW AND ESTEEM THE WORKERS:

(6) HEAVENLY FUTURE.

(1) STUDY THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE REVEALED MYSTERY OF JESUS CHRIST:

**1 Thessalonians 3:10**  Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might **PERFECT** that which is lacking in your **FAITH**?

(**Romans 16:25-26**).

Coming to the knowledge of the truth. (**1Timothy 2:4**),

Stablished by preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery. (**Romans 16:25-26).**

Receiving the word of God through frequent direct intake. (**1 Thessalonians 2:13, Acts 20:32**).

Study the word of God. (**2 Timothy 2:15**).

Rightly dividing. (**2 Timothy 2:15**).

Applying scripture to our daily walk. (**Romans 6 and 7**),

Mark and avoid deceivers contrary to Paul’s doctrine. (**Romans 16:17-18**).

(2) HOLINESS:

**1 Thessalonians 4:7**  For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto **HOLINESS**.

(**Colossians 2:6**).

(3) LOVE:

**1 Thessalonians 4:9**  But as touching brotherly **LOVE** ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to **LOVE** one another.

(**1 Thessalonians 3:12, Colossians 2:13-19**).

(4) EDIFY:

**1 Thessalonians 5:11**  Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and **EDIFY** one another, even as also ye do.

(**Romans 14:19, Acts 20:32**).

(5) KNOW AND ESTEEM THE WORKERS:

**1 Thessalonians 5:12**And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

**1 Thessalonians 5:13**  And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

(Philippians 3:17).

**1 Thessalonians 3:10**  Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might **PERFECT** that which is lacking in your **FAITH**?

**1 Thessalonians 3:11**  Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

**1 Thessalonians 3:12**  And the Lord make you to increase and abound in **love** one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

**1 Thessalonians 3:13**  To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

Remember that “saints” are sanctified ones, set apart ones, not necessarily human. In fact, **Matthew 25, verse 31**, tells us that those saints are holy, or set apart angels that accompany Christ in His return to earth.

**Matthew 25:31**  When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and **all the holy ANGELS** with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

(6) HEAVENLY FUTURE.

The sixth growth attribute that we will cover here in this passage is that by the time of the Lord’s return to earth, we will have already been caught up to be with the Lord unblameable in holiness.

Later, in **Second Thessalonians 1, verses 6, and 7**, Paul again confirms that by the time of seven years after the body of Christ is caught up to be with the Lord, we will be **resting** with Paul where the Lord and the body of Christ is, not fighting, not in tribulation, but **RESTING**.

**2 Thessalonians 1:6**  Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

**2 Thessalonians 1:7**  And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels

When the Lord is revealed with His mighty angels is NOT the catching up. Those in the body of Christ will have already been caught up, and it says they are at rest with Paul and the Lord, since we are caught up to be with the Lord. So, at the time of Christ’s second coming to earth, at least seven years after our catching up to heaven, we are going to be at rest with Paul and the other believers as **“THE BODY OF CHRIST.”**

Now that we have an understanding of what happened in Thessalonica, let’s go back and observe Paul’s greeting of encouragement, the first chapter of First Thessalonians. Much of this beginning chapter of this epistle is as you would expect it to be. Paul told who it was from, to whom it was written, a greeting, and a brief outline of what the situation is, before he headed into the main part of the epistle.

**1 Thessalonians 1:1**Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Although First Thessalonians was written in Acts 18, just briefly after Paul’s visit to Thessalonica in Acts 17, he addressed this epistle to the “church of the Thessalonians”, not to the synagogue of Thessalonica where he had visited and preached the “gospel of God”, and the believers CONSORTED with Paul, and formed a group, a meeting. So when Paul wrote back to them, he wrote to that meeting of believers that CONSORTED together.

**1 Thessalonians 1:2**  We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

**1 Thessalonians 1:3**  Remembering without ceasing your **WORK OF FAITH**, and **LABOUR OF LOVE**, and **PATIENCE OF HOPE** in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

Paul remembered those things in his prayers. He said “making mention of you in our prayers;

remembering without ceasing your **WORK OF FAITH**, and **LABOUR OF LOVE**, and **PATIENCE OF HOPE** in our Lord Jesus Christ….” That means that when Paul prayed, he prayed about eternal things in the lives of the believers, not about temporal things regarding our flesh. Notice that he prayed about their faith, love, and hope. Aren’t faith, hope, and charity the three things that Paul was inspired to tell us will abide forever? They are eternal things, not temporal. Let’s keep that in mind as we place importance on prayer about our spiritual growth and that of other believers.

Notice also that for believers, each of those three characteristics entail some doing, some effort to achieve. They did not just have FAITH, but that faith produced a “WORK OF FAITH”. They did not just have LOVE, but that love produced a “LABOUR OF LOVE”. They did not just have HOPE, but that hope produced a longsuffering, a “PATIENCE OF HOPE”.

We are saved by faith alone in the grace alone of God, without our works. But, after we are saved, we are in a flow-through relationship in which God’s character and will is made known on earth.

**Titus 3:8**This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

**1 Thessalonians 1:4**  Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

Remember that the dictionary says that a synonym for “TO ELECT” is “TO CHOOSE”, so “ELECTION” means “CHOICE”. So it is as if Paul was saying “Knowing, brethren beloved, your CHOICE of God.” And, the next two verses, verses 5, and 6, go on to describe the CHOICE that those Thessalonians had CHOSEN.

But, before reading **First Thessalonians 1, verses 5, and 6**, let’s review what we discovered about what Paul knew when he wrote his first epistle to the Thessalonians. When Paul sat down to start writing this epistle in Acts 18, he already had received back the comforting, joyful news from Timothy, that the “gospel of God” believing Thessalonians had now received the saving “gospel of Christ”. Paul was combining the events of his visit to Thessalonica in **Acts 17, verses 1, through 8**, with the events of Timothy’s mission/apostleship to Thessalonica that Paul later wrote about in the third chapter of this epistle.

**1 Thessalonians 1:5**  For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

**1 Thessalonians 1:6**  And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

The gospel that Paul talked about in **First Thessalonians 1, verse 5**, is the answer to what they chose or elected in **verse 4**. That gospel came to them in “power” to save, as Paul said that the gospel of Christ did in a dispensation of the gospel to the Jew first and also to the Greek in **Romans 1, verse 16.**

In First Corinthians 11, verse 1, Paul said “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” To see a great ensample of that, look at **First Thessalonians 1, verse 6.** In much affliction, they received the word (the “gospel of Christ”), becoming followers of Paul.

**1 Thessalonians 1:7**  So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

**1 Thessalonians 1:8**  For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

**1 Thessalonians 1:9**  For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols….

**I D O L S !!!**

Did they have IDOLS in the synagogue in Thessalonica???

Yes, they had IDOLS in the synagogue in Thessalonica!!!

That was NOT something new either. Look at what Ezekiel grieved about in **Ezekiel 8, verse 16.**

**Ezekiel 8:6**  He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the **great abominations** that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should **go far off from my sanctuary**? but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see **greater abominations**.

**Ezekiel 8:7**  And he brought me to the door of **the court**; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall.

**Ezekiel 8:8**  Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door.

**Ezekiel 8:9**  And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the **wicked abominations** that they do here.

**Ezekiel 8:10**  So I went in and saw; and behold every form of **creeping things**, and **abominable beasts**, and **all the IDOLS of the house of Israel**, pourtrayed upon the wall round about.

**Ezekiel 8:11**And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up.

**Ezekiel 8:12**Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.

**Ezekiel 8:13**  He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see **greater abominations** that they do.

**Ezekiel 8:14**  Then he brought me to the door of the gate of **the LORD'S house** which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat **women weeping for Tammuz**.

**Ezekiel 8:15**  Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see **greater abominations** than these.

**Ezekiel 8:16**  And he brought me into the **inner court of the LORD'S house**, and, behold, at the **door of the temple** of the LORD, **between the porch and the altar**, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they **worshipped the sun** toward the east.

**1 Thessalonians 1:9**  For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

**1 Thessalonians 1:10**  And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

The last part of verse 9, and the first part of verse 10, are the combined faith of the Thessalonians toward the “gospel of God”, and the “gospel of Christ”.

**1 Thessalonians 1:9b**  “… ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

**1 Thessalonians 1:10a**  And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus ….”

The remainder of verse 10, is their belief in the “gospel of Christ”.

**1 Thessalonians 1:10b**  “… even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

**1 Thessalonians 1:9**  For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

**1 Thessalonians 1:10**  And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.