

Birthmarks of a Believer

I Thessalonians 1:1-5

March 17, 2019

I Thessalonians 1:1-5 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

INTRODUCTION Paul commences his letter by simply pouring out thanks for the divine gift of their saving faith. Paul goes to great length to point out what happens in believer's lives that give evidence of genuine salvation. At Thessalonica, the believers

displayed many characteristics that vividly identify the Christ followers.

Verse 1-2 are Paul's words of greeting for his encouraging friends. Paul addresses them as the "church" (Ekklesia) – to call out; Paul felt certain these were among God's Family because he had seen the evidence of their transformation. Paul taught that believers do not simply believe facts about Jesus, but that they are in Him.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Paul's teaching magnified that God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit live within the believer and the believer lives in them is a sharing of divine and eternal life.

Significant Truth

“God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” – with a single preposition “in” emphasizing the equality of essence between Father and Son.

“Grace to you and peace” – grace always precedes peace; His undeserved favor, complete forgiveness of sin, and granting eternal life, results in amazing peace.

These people were living for the honor of Christ and it brought much thanksgiving to Paul’s life.

I. CHRIST EFFECTS ON THEIR LIVES v3

Presently

A. Work of Faith

Foundational spiritual qualities in verse 3. A true saving belief in Jesus Christ will always result in a mighty work of God that produces change in one’s nature or disposition. This “work” is action representative of the transforming power of salvation. These are holy righteous deeds to the honor of God. “work” refers to the deed, achievement, or function itself. “Faith” is the authentic saving and sanctifying gift from God, is was producing righteous deeds in their lives.

This New Testament passage stresses the active sides of faith, salvation will necessarily produce holy conduct. This truth reminds us that works flow from saving faith.

Romans 2:6-7 who will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality.

This does not mean people can earn salvation because of their good works, but rather that those works verify the reality of their faith.

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

The reason believers perform good works is because God is at work in them.

The half-brother of our Lord Jesus, James, also taught that good works must be present in the lives

of those who profess faith in Christ, otherwise that profession is not genuine.

NOTE – James 2:18-22, 26 But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Believers will sometimes disobey God’s commands and fail to do His will, but they will always long to obey and will manifest some true spiritual fruit of obedience. Genuine saving faith is by definition powerfully inclined toward obedience to God which leads eventually to the work of faith.

B. Labor of Love

True ministers display their Christian love by a love motivated by God.

Loving even one's enemies is an expression of the power of salvation.

John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

Love is part of the fruit of the spirit produced in you.

“Labor” done to the point of exhaustion. Work focuses on the deed itself. Labor looks at the effort expending in accomplishing a particular deed. It is an effort that strains all of one's energies to the maximum level.

Authentic Christianity has always been defined by loving Christ. II Corinthians 5:14 “The love of Christ compels (controls) us.”

In I Corinthians 16:22 “If anyone does not love the Lord, He is to be accursed.”

C. Patience of Hope

Speaks of a persevering anticipation of seeing His future glory and receiving our eternal inheritance. Salvation instructs believers in that hope.

Titus 2: 11-13 for the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age. Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

You can teach others of this hope because you are as confident of it in your own life.

In I Peter 1:3-7 the scriptures called it “a living hope”, “an inheritance in Heaven for you”, “protected by the power of God”.

Patience is a word for perseverance or endurance or steadfastness; staying under pressure. Christians will hold fast to their hope until the end.

For believers, true hope is a strong longing and groaning to be at home with the Lord.

II Corinthians 5:8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

Note the security of this hope.

Hebrews 6:18-20 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, bot sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil. where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

True steadfastness of those who have been given hope fulfills Jesus' promise.

Matthew 24:13 “but he who endures to the end shall be saved”

Parallels with;

Proverbs 4:18 But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

The spiritual path of the righteous does not go from light to darkness; it goes from dim light to full light.

It became ever brighter as the person's "work of faith", "labor of love", "patience of hope", increases, intensifies and perseveres more and more.

Note God's promise:

Hebrews 6: 10-11 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end.

II. Election's Perception v4.

Verse 4 stands before the present effects of grace in the Thessalonians' lives and the Jesus of their past conversion in verse 5 following.

“Knowing” seeing or perceiving. Paul used this passage to explain his perception of the Thessalonians' genuineness.

“Beloved brethren” reality that Christians are recipients of the sovereign love of God.

“Your election” His choice of you. Salvation is of the Lord. The Thessalonians were God’s elect along with all who have believed throughout history.

I Thessalonians 1: 6 & 9 man’s will participates in conversion in response to God’s promptings.

III. Christ’s Effect on Their Lives verse 5 following Past

V.5 Paul describes the Thessalonians experience when they declared the saving news in their city. A 4th indicator from the Thessalonians conversion that attested to the genuineness of their salvation was the divine power revealed in the preaching of the gospel to others.

