

Birthmarks of a Believer II

I Thessalonians 1:4-10

March 31, 2019

I Thessalonians 1:4-10 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. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. 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, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to 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, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

INTRODUCTION There is a great exchange that takes place when a person places their faith in Jesus Christ. The old way of living is replaced with living for the Lord. Their old way of thinking is replaced with thinking on the truth of Jesus. Their old way of speaking is replaced with speech that is sprinkled with the grace of God. The old has passed, the new had come.

The life of Christ becomes the life of the follower of Christ. No longer are we lead down the dead-end road of unrighteousness, but we are set free to journey down the less traveled road of righteousness. We give up what we could not keep, our life on earth, in exchange for what we can keep, eternal life in heaven.

Colossians 3:1-4 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on the things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Last sermon we looked at:

I. CHRIST EFFECTS ON THEIR LIVES 3 Presently

A. Work of Faith

B. Labor of Love

C. Patience of Hope

II. Election's Perception 4

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 5 following Past

A. The Power of the Gospel

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.

Paul spoke of the power revealed because the message did not travel alone. As the truth of the gospel was spoken it was accompanied by the power of God. As the gospel empowered by God enters the prepared soul, the gospel truth saves.

Peter 1:23-25. Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through

the word of God which lives and abides forever. Because “all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, But the Word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word by which the gospel was preached to you.

Genuine soul-transforming power accompanying gospel preaching is the work of the Holy Spirit energizing both the preacher and the hearer.

Their preaching bore divine power because of the “much assurance” (conviction) they had as they delivered it. This is the result of the Holy Spirit working with believers. They held the assurance in their own hearts that, they were preaching, the power of God was at work. The spirit working a work of grace.

Paul and his fellow preachers were Spirit empowered, confident, assured and bold men who depended on God’s power working through them and in their hearers to effect salvation.

“as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake” – the Thessalonians not only heard the gospel preached, they had seen it lived out in lives that were rich examples of the power of the gospel.

B. Imitators “followers” of us and the Lord 6

Mimics – this transforming work occurred at the moment of salvation. Patterns of holy living immediately began replacing the old sinful ones.

Ephesians 4:22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.

Ephesians 4:24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness

Salvation starts the work of sanctification.

Romans 6:3-4 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

At salvation we participate with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. These new believers started becoming far different from their past. They had become imitators of Jesus Christ.

Paul told the Corinthians that it was a progressive sanctification by the Holy Spirit that moved them upward to increasing levels of glory, more and more into the image of Christ.

II Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

C. They had Joy in the Midst of Suffering and Hardships 6

“Having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit”

Difficult circumstances will come yet true believers do not lose their ultimate joy.

Note they “received the word” – welcomed and believed the gospel.

ILLUSTRATION Pat Welty’s last journal referenced the hope she possessed because of the Cross.

“Affliction” – intense pressure; the genuineness of their salvation transcended that affliction so that they never lost their joy. The joy of the Lord was their strength.

Joy is the divine benefit of a Spirit filled Christian. It’s one of the spiritual blessings; as in Fruit of the Spirit and we are to pursue greater joy. (Phil 4:4)

D. They were Examples to Follow 7

“so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe” – exemplary conduct; their lives were worthy of imitation.

Example: exact reproduction; like blueprints for others to build their lives on.

Macedonia was a region that contained Thessalonica. The Thessalonians were models of living and giving (II Cor 8:1-5)

E. They faithfully proclaimed the Gospel 8-9a

To blast forth or to send forth very intensely. Indicates the church’s bold, continual trumpeting of the gospel message. Speaks of a constant sound, increasing and echoing into a wider and wider circle as the church made the most of a strategic location from which to proclaim the truth.

Speaks of their influence. So powerful and so convincing, 9 “for they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you.”

F. Repentance and Transformation 9b

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

A sure evidence of salvation was that they submitted to a new Master. Salvation meant a decisive break with pagan religion and a redirecting of ones’ life.

“Turned” – the fact that in the sinners’ conversion there is a turning in absolute opposite direction; repentance; a complete reversal of allegiance, from idols to serve a living and true God.

Serve – as a bond-slave.

G. Living in Light of His Return 10

When you love Christ you anticipate His return.

The resurrection established the grounds for the return of Christ.

“wait” – expectant waiting, trusting waiting.

“Delivers us” – rescues us that were headed for divine judgment and eternal punishment.

“wrath” – describes god’s settled opposition to and displeasure with sin.