

Last week's emphasis in 1:1-5 was on the three qualities exhibited by the Thessalonians that confirmed God's beloved choice of them through the power of the Gospel: **Working Faith; Laboring Love; Enduring Hope**. This gave them confirmation and credibility that they were chosen, saved, loved, and spiritually empowered for life and godliness.

1 Thess. 1:6-10 includes some unlikely pairs. Suffering and Joy; Imitation and Example; Serving and Waiting. The situation in Thessalonica included much pressure and hostility. Enemies of the Gospel were filled with jealousy and wickedness toward the many new converts, women, and Greek believers. The Christian life contains contrasting opposites which God uses to sanctify and send His church into the world as salt and light.

*What kind of person are you becoming? "For your sake" : What impact and influence are you making on the lives of others? Only the Gospel of Christ enables us to live with :

1. **Suffering and Joy:** Christian suffering has a sanctifying effect
 - a. Much tribulation: 1:6; suffered 2:2; 2:14: tested: what kind of pressure?
 - i. To conform, to fear, intimidation, alienation. 3:3-4; 7
 1. So this is not easy; we will not drift into sanctification and joy
 2. *Pressure is a privilege . . . humility is only a game away*
 - b. With Joy in the Holy Spirit: without his Spirit, it's futile and frustrating;
 - i. Why are you suffering? (v. 6: pressure... tribulation) Enemies hated the Gospel, but the Spirit used this to create Joy in the believers.
 - ii. God uses suffering to produce in us the joy of the Holy Spirit
 - iii. Romans 5:1-5... the heat and pressure of affliction fuels our joy
 - iv. 2 Cor. 6:4-10 also points out the contrasts of the Christian life
 - c. Like the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul, the Gospel came with suffering for the Thessalonian believers. *The Gospel was preached, received, and shared.*
 - i. God's word always comes with a side of suffering
 1. "God had one Son without sin, but no sons without suffering"
 2. Warning: our natural default setting is comfort and safety;
 - d. Suffering works in us to create godliness . . . *Closeness to Christ and Conformity to Christ*. Embrace by faith the transforming power of suffering for Christ
 - i. "If we become bitter over our hardships, we close some parts of our lives to God. If you do this, you will never be complete. Some places in your soul can only be reached by suffering." (Blackaby)
 - ii. Everywhere the Gospel goes, suffering is included. There is an ongoing war with the world, flesh and devil. Yet God uses affliction to empower us with a 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.'
 - iii. No one takes your joy away from you. (John 16:20-22)

2. **Imitation and Example (Impact):** Christian imitation has a multiplying effect
 - a. Imitators of us . . . mimic: imitator; following one's example or teachings
 - b. Imitators of the Lord. *Humble and bold; kind and confident; smart and gracious; funny and sincere . . . all at the same time. They loved Jesus and us. I want to be like them . . . light and salt . . . follow me, and I will make you fishers of men . . .*
 - c. See 1 Cor. 11:1: "Be imitators of me as I also am of Christ."
 - d. An example (typon; model) to all the believers . . .
 - i. An influencer . . . A ringing out indefinitely and progressively
 - ii. What if everyone did as you do . . . would you want others to treat you the way you are treating them? Weigh heavily the ripple effects of your attitudes and actions; your choices and decisions have consequences
 - iii. Actual results... not merely contemplated; ideas versus actions;
 1. v.7 - they had loyalty and consistency over time and space
 - e. Multiplying (Macedonia and Achaia) - a very large area; more & better disciples
 - i. The word sounded forth: the word travels... moves...
 - ii. Their faith was known. Gone forth. . . Message and Messengers . . .
 - iii. "We don't have to say anything"- the critics were attempting to drive a wedge between Paul and his converts
 - f. Dekomai - to receive; to welcome . . .
 - g. Example is tupos; to make an impact - like a typewriter
 - i. Who am I following? Who am I impressing? Influencing?
 - h. Echo: to sound forth: an echoing like thunder; or a sounding out as a trumpet

3. **Serving and Waiting:** Christian hope has an energizing effect: Daniel 11:32
 - a. If I am absolutely secure . . . in Christ; raised with Christ
 - b. If I am chosen, loved, and safe: Christ in you, the hope of glory
 - c. And Jesus is coming to rescue . . . a deliverance from great danger; certain doom
 - d. The future is uncertain and certain: Do I fret or fear? John 16:33
 - i. We look at why Jesus died already, and what this means for judgment.
 - ii. We remember that He rose triumphantly from the dead. Death to life for us.
 - iii. Wrath - God's justice and vengeance is approaching . . . certain and future:
 1. Romans 5:9- Jesus has already absorbed it for me; Rom. 8:1
 2. John 3:36
 - iv. There is no refuge from the King; there is only refuge in the King . . .
 - e. Then I can: sacrifice, speak, give, serve, forgive, endure, with pleasure since I know my redemption and reward 'draweth nigh'
 - i. Work- without putting too much pressure on it
 - ii. Wait - without being lazy and cynical and hopeless
 1. Balanced out in all the right measures
 2. Soldiers, athletes, farmers
 - f. Thy will be done; Thy Kingdom come; Not my will, but thy will be done. . .
 - i. "Into Thy Hands I commit my spirit"

***There is no joy without suffering; there is no example without imitation; no waiting without serving.**

- Working Faith demonstrated:
 - turned from idols - to the Living God: FAITH - repentance, conversion
 - THE, in contrast to their attitude as pagans. He is not just alive, but He is the source of life.
 - "The living God is not just the one who is alive, but one who gives life, both the life of creation and the new life of redemption." (Best)
- Laboring Love demonstrated:
 - They began to serve and love, reception, etc. (each other; Paul, gospel; enemies)
- Enduring Hope demonstrated:
 - They looked ahead to their rescue... I to wait on one who is expected with patience and confidence . . .Delivers us from the wrath to come
 - (Swiss Theologian Emil Brunner: three dimensions of time for Christians - three windows of time)
 - Looking back, the problem of the past is guilt... faith
 - Looking ahead, the problem in the future is death . . . hope
 - Looking around, the problem in the present is alienation... love

"History documents how easily orthodox theology is negated by aberrant ethics. We must live as examples of what we proclaim lest our actions invalidate our message in the minds of our hearers" (Martin)

"The combination of 'serving' and 'waiting' is striking, since the former is actively getting busy for Christ on earth, while the latter is passively looking for him to come to heaven. We must serve, but there are limits to what we can achieve. We must wait, but have no liberty to do so in idleness. Thus 'working' and 'waiting' go together. The need to wait for Christ from heaven will rescue us from the presumption which thinks we can do everything; the need to work for Christ on earth will rescue us from the pessimism which thinks we can do nothing. Only a Christian mind which has developed a biblical perspective can enable a person to preserve this balance." (John Stott)

"Meanwhile, we look at the world as it shows itself to us, with death as the universal obliterator and with evil running riot. The two things are not unrelated. To live in an apparently meaningless world is deeply disillusioning, and the disillusion breeds

destructiveness and despair- the madness of the violent or of the hopelessly withdrawn.” (A. Motyer)

“The Christian must therefore use the means of grace assiduously, hearing, reading, meditating, watching, praying, worshipping; he must animate himself to universal obedience, an all-round, all-day conformity to God’s revealed will; and he must persevere in it with resolution and resilience. Yet he must remember that the power is from God, not himself, and do it all in the spirit of prayerful dependence, or else he will fail.” (J.I. Packer) - on John Owen

The best and the wisest thing in the world is to work as if it all depended upon you, and then trust in God, knowing that it all depends upon him. He will not fail us, but we are not therefore to fold our arms and sit still. (Spurgeon)

Until Then . .Stuart Hamblen

1.

My heart can sing when I pause to remember,
A heartache here is but a stepping stone.
Along a trail, that's winding always upward,
this troubled world, is not my final home.

Refrain

But until then, my heart will go on singing,
Until then, with joy I'll carry on,
Until the day my eyes behold the city,
Until the day God calls me home.

2.

The things of earth will dim and lose their value,
If we recall they're borrowed for a while;
And things of earth that cause the heart to tremble,
Remember there, will only bring a smile.

3

This weary world with all its toil and struggle,
May take its toll of misery and strife;
The soul of man is like a waiting falcon,
When it's released, it's destined for the skies.

But until then, my heart will go on singing
Until with joy I'll carry on
Until the day my eyes behold that city
Until the day God calls me home

