

**Show Your Spirit/ 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 (Oct 18, 2020)**

**(Slide 1)** Before I begin my preaching today, I would like to share my joy with all the packer's fans! Also, I know here at the sanctuary are some of the biggest Packers fans. Though we have won all games so far this season, today we are hoping to win against the Buccaneers! Go – Packers!!!! Whenever we have a game, I can see many people wearing Packers an or Bears team jerseys everywhere (some Bears, the reason is we are living near the IL boarder line); church, street, gas station, and marketplace. Actually, they are not only wearing outfits, but also having various team items such as earrings, t-shirts, hats, socks, cups and so on. My little original packer's fan - Caleb also has lots of Packers things already: onesie, hat, bib, training cup, and socks! Also, Christine will join soon like her brother!

**(Slide 2)** I really like this fan-culture, because it shows their spirit. Every school has a mascot and symbolic color to show who they are. Brodhead is a Cardinals and red. When it is their game day, choir concert, or home coming, we can easily see many red people walking around the town. And this is fan-culture showing their spirit, which is whom they support and who they are. From this fan-culture we see team spirit, which means the feelings of camaraderie among the members of a group, enabling them to cooperate and work well together. In this case, the “spirit” means to show our passion for what we really like and support such as our school, our football, and basketball teams. We show our spirit by dressing in certain symbolic colors, and wearing the uniforms, and never getting discouraged even though we may lose to a team later. It is true that sometimes defeat makes us stronger and as one team in the spirit. It is the team spirit.

**(Slide 3)** In today's scripture, we see great team spirit from the Thessalonians. Indeed, they showed very well what a real faith community looks like. The Thessalonians stood firm in the Lord, and they showed strongly their work of faith, labor of love and steadfastness of hope in Christ Jesus. Therefore, they not only could become imitators of the Lord but also became an example to all believers. 1 Thessalonians is the oldest letter among the existent letters of the Apostle Paul. If you read Acts 17, you can have more information about Paul's mission work in Thessalonica. In the early church era, Thessalonica was one of the very important cities for trading. As Paul and Silas arrived in Thessalonica, Paul went to a Jewish synagogue, argued with them from the

scriptures, explaining and proving who Jesus Christ was. They only spent 3 sabbath days, which means about 3 weeks in Thessalonica to spread the gospel, because the Jews became jealous, so they attacked Paul and Silas with the help of ruffians. Although 3 sabbath days was a short period of time, a lot of people joined Paul and Silas, and many of God's amazing works were started. Since Paul was no longer able to come back to Thessalonica, he was very much concerned about the people there who had just started to believe, so he sent Timothy to take a look at their situation. And Timothy came back bringing the good news that Thessalonians keep their faith well and stood firm in the Lord. Although they became sheep without a shepherd and came under great persecution, they were not shaken nor scattered, rather they tried to do their best to keep their faith by themselves. Therefore, not only to comfort and encourage them but also help them to have conviction of faith based on the firm foundation of the Word of God, Paul wrote a letter to them, that we now refer to as 1 and 2 Thessalonians. The Thessalonians did not have a long history of faith. They did not even have a faith leader. After Paul left, they got more hardship and pressure from the Jews, but they overcame all the persecution and became an example to all the churches. Outwardly, they were just a small and weak church, but inwardly, they were the most powerful and strong church. Paul found faith with real actions, love with sincerity, and hope with patience and endurance from the Thessalonians.

**(Slide 4)** In 1Corinthian 13, as Paul addressed love, he wrote that three things abide, which is faith, hope, and love, and the Thessalonian church truly has all of them. Today, many churches are in danger. Many churches are losing their members. Although there are some growing churches, but their growth is not based on the growth of new believers. Most of the new members moved from other churches, and it is very hard to see the new believers. Also, many churches are closed. We see some churches in our neighborhood that closed, and those buildings were changed to other facilities. Although most of churches in town have a long history of faith, many of them barely keep their own existence. To be honest with you, our church is not really different from the churches that were getting down sized and ended up closing. However, I strongly believe that the future of this church is really up to us right now. And the keys to the bright future of the church can be found in the example of the Thessalonian church.

First, we should strive for works of faith. James 2:14 challenged, "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have

works? Can faith save you?” As I already emphasized many times, no action means no faith. If you think that faith is coming to church just once a week, sorry to say it, but it is dead faith. Faith is alive only if you live it out through your daily lives. Since the Thessalonians tried to live out their faith in their daily lives, they could keep their church admits suffering without a leader, so their faith finally saved them. Secondly, we should make an effort for labor of love. 1 John 3:18 encouraged, “Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.” No one thinks that love is just an emotion or feeling. Love also needs action. If you love someone, you can find yourself doing something for that person. No one thinks that just clicking “like button” on Facebook is all about our true love. Since Thessalonians love Jesus Christ and their church, they tried to make every effort to keep their faith and church under a great persecution. Love for Christ and church became a power to overcome all their difficulties. Thirdly, we should work toward keeping steadfastness of hope. Romans 8:24-25 addressed, “For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” Since we cannot see it now, we hope for it. We need to wait with patience and endurance until we see what we truly hope for. Since the Thessalonians steadfastly stayed in hope, they could be remembered as a good model of a faith community not only by Paul but also by all the believers. Fourthly, we should change our attitude about the gospel message. Paul spoke that he proclaims the word of God not in word only, but also in power, and it shows how our attitude about the gospel should be. How do you read the Bible? How do you hear the sermon? How do you accept the word of God? We should accept the gospel message not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. If you don’t receive the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, it cannot make you really alive. It cannot give you true joy and freedom. It cannot save your very soul. Only if we accept the gospel as living words, we can live in its power. Fifthly, we should imitate our Lord Jesus Christ. It should be our final goal of life, and we should consistently pursue it throughout our whole life. Today, many people leave the church by saying, “I am spiritual, but not religious.” But, after they leave the church, no one really makes an effort to be spiritual and be holy. They just thought that they can be connected to God in various ways without the church community. Right!! Church is not the only way to be connected to God, but a faith community helps us not to lose our direction toward Jesus Christ.

Today, so many things make us far away from our faith in God. Although

we no longer live under religious persecution, but rather more things make us not to keep Jesus Christ as our foremost priority, not to worship God but many other idols that we are pursuing in this world and keep us from imitating Jesus Christ. This may be our last opportunity to rebuild our faith, renew our relationship with God, retrain our next generation, and revive our church. We are small and weak, and we are struggling with financial difficulties along with other problems, which are that it's hard to find new leaders of the church and we lost some members while not adding new believers.

**(Slide 5)** However, still I clearly see hope in us. We have many faithful church members who have worked for the church for a long time. One good example was we had a "Work Day," which is the fall cleaning in/outside church" last Saturday. Because of the chilly morning weather and Covid-19, only a few people joined and worked for several hours at the church. Additionally, one person came to the parsonage during the week for spraying and fertilizing the parsonage yard to prepare it for the upcoming year. I think that this picture shows very well how our church is maintained and survives thanks to the work of unsung faithful members during this difficult time.

**(Slide 6)** Also, we have children, youth, young adults, and young families in church, also many of them in our town around the church. This Church was built by the precious blood of Christ Jesus and countless payers and support of our ancestors. Our God never gives up, so we should never give up this church. Although it is hard and tough, if we consistently keep our faith and work for love, not losing hope, we will revive our church again as imitators of our Lord Christ Jesus and we can be a good example to all believers. The Thessalonians made it through without a leader even under great persecution. See, we have good leaders and there is no persecution. Don't make the message of the gospel dead, make it vividly alive. When we accept it not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction, our hope for this church is no longer a dream but a reality. This is our true spirit. Show your Christian spirit by receiving the word with joy and living it out with thanksgiving. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is a living word enables us to be truly alive in the Spirit of God, will work before us, behind us, and with us always. Let us show the Christian spirit! Our spirit is not dead, but vividly alive as we walk together in God's love, grace, and power.

Praise God! Amen.