

The Distinguishing Marks of the Chosen

Sunday, June 9, 2024 ▪ Nat Porter

The Distinguishing Marks of the Chosen:

1. They _____ the gospel with _____.

2. They _____ idols to serve _____.

3. They _____ about the _____.

4. They _____ their faith _____.

5. They _____ Jesus to _____.

1 Thessalonians 1

^[1] Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

^[2] We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, ^[3] remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ^[4] For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ^[5] because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ^[6] And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ^[7] so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ^[8] For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. ^[9] For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how

you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ^[10] and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (ESV)

Personal Reflection or Group Discussion Questions

Open: If you had to describe yourself in 3 words, what would they be and why?

Read & Discuss: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

1. How does the opening salutation of the letter (v. 1) differ from how we typically begin letters in our context? What do we learn about who Paul is addressing and his intended outcome in writing the letter?
2. What three characteristics does Paul commend in the Thessalonian believers in verses 2-3? Why do you think these were especially noteworthy to Paul and cause for thanksgiving to God? How might we celebrate sanctified attributes like these in the church today without encouraging a culture of false righteousness?
3. What is the basis Paul gives in verse 5 for his conclusion that those he writes to are true believers "loved by God...that he has chosen" (v. 4)? What are some other ways people respond to the message of the gospel? How can we encourage one another in the authenticity of our faith? What impact might such encouragement have?
4. In what way did these believers become an "example to all the believers" (v. 6-7) in their region? What impact did their example have according to verse 8? Why do you think joy in the midst of affliction is such a powerful witness to faith in God? How might joy in suffering (v. 6) connect with the "word of the Lord" spoken of in verse 8? How might we demonstrate our faith in God in ways that speak the gospel to our culture?
5. According to verse 9, what significant change occurred in the lives of the Thessalonians, and what did they turn from and to? What idols would you say our world struggles with that we have been freed from through the gospel?
6. What future event are the Thessalonians eagerly awaiting as mentioned in verse 10, and what does this say about their hope? To what degree does this "hope" influence your outlook on your present circumstance?

Personal Reflection & Application:

1. How does Paul's thanksgiving for the Thessalonians' faith, love, and hope in verses 2-3 encourage you to reflect on your own spiritual walk? In what ways are these evident in and characteristic of you, or not?
2. What are some opportunities our church has to become an example to other believers, as the Thessalonian church was (v. 7-8)? What role could you play in these opportunities?
3. In practical terms, how do you personally aim to "serve" God with your life? What idols or distractions might you need to turn away from today to serve the living and true God more faithfully?

Prayer: Ask God to continue his sanctifying work in you. Ask him to reveal any areas needing transformation where you might be slow to see and or act on. Pray for our testimony corporately as a church family. Pray that we would be a faithful witness to the unsaved world around us as well as an encouragement to other believers whom God gives us relationship with.