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1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, Acts 17:1-15 Fellowship Bible Church; Woodbridge, NJ

Introduction: The Apostle Paul, along with Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy, arrived in the coastal Macedonian town of Thessalonica on the heels of their imprisonment and miraculous release in Philippi, along with the dramatic conversion of the jailer and his whole household there. Paul followed his usual ministry pattern by going to the Jews in the synagogue there, using the Old Testament scriptures to show that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. He made many converts and the Thessalonian church was born. He also made some enemies, and those enemies stirred up many in the city to drive Paul away. He ended up moving to Berea where he had similar fruitful results, only to find that the detractors from Thessalonica came there and caused similar trouble, ultimately driving Paul to Athens and eventually Corinth. It is while in Corinth that Paul writes this letter to the Thessalonians; apparently he only had a short time in Thessalonica, so his concern for that church is obvious. Based on news he received from Timothy, who had been dispatched from Athens to see how things were in Thessalonica, he writes this letter, perhaps giving them instructions he had no time to while there. In particular, later in the letter he communicates to them prophetic events related to the return of Jesus Christ; this becomes a wealth of instruction for Christians of all time. This first chapter of the letter is devoted to *thanking God* for His work in the Thessalonians and *encouraging the Thessalonians* regarding that work which God had done - it is a delightful chapter.

1. Acts 17:1-15 - Some Historical Background: The Gospel Preached at Thessalonica and Berea

- vv.1-4 - As was typical for Paul, he came to the city, found the **synagogue of the Jews**, and went to work declaring to them that **Jesus** was the **Christ** (Messiah), explaining the details of Christ's death and resurrection using the Old Testament **Scriptures**. Some of the Jews **were persuaded**, and many men and women of the **Greeks** joined too. So a mixed Jewish-Gentile congregation of Christians was born.

- **three Sabbaths** - probably their initial evangelistic time in the synagogue; likely they spent a little more time than that outside the synagogue too, but not much.

- vv.5-9 - They made some enemies too; the **Jews** from the synagogue who **were not persuaded** took dramatic steps to halt the work, stirring up a mob to attack **Jason** (supposing he had sheltered them).

- v.10a - **sent... away by night to Berea** - indicative of the danger they were in.

- vv.10b-12 - The ministry at Berea followed the same pattern, starting in the synagogue. This was a more noble group than at Thessalonica, for they diligently **searched the Old Testament Scriptures daily** to verify the things Paul and Silas taught. Many believed from among the Jews, and again some Greeks joined them too.

- vv.13-15 - Though the ministry among the more noble folks of Berea produced no internal tumult, the non-believing Thessalonian Jews came to Berea and **stirred up the crowds** like they had in their own town. Paul was **immediately** sent away (likely for his own safety) to Athens, where he sent back word for Silas and Timothy to join him.

- NOTE: a lesson about suffering. It was tough for Paul to be driven so hastily from these towns. But it was just that that ultimately led to the writing of 1 and 2 Thessalonians and the invaluable doctrine they contain. If he had more time at Thessalonica, he may have taught in person the things in the letters instead of writing them. As a result of the need to write, we have these priceless letters in the New Testament. *God knows best - His ways are perfect.*

2. Verses 1-4 (1 Thessalonians 1) - Thanksgiving to God for His Work in the Thessalonians

- v.1 - Paul must have been overjoyed to learn that the Thessalonian church, with which he had so little time, was still OK.

- vv.2-4 - Paul thanked and praised God for all He had done *through* them - **work of faith, labor of love, patience** (endurance) **of hope**; and for what God had done *in* them - their **election by God**. God is the one who ultimately woos man to repentance and saves the believing. The free will of man is a response to the sovereign calling of God. Though man responds of his will, it is God who elects and initiates the reconciliation with man.

3. Verse 5 - The Gospel at Work in the Thessalonians

- This is a great picture of biblical evangelism: 1) **not... word only** The preaching of the gospel is a message of words, but not *just* that; 2) **power... Holy Spirit** It is the power of the Holy Spirit that enables the preacher to preach (Acts 1:8) and the hearer to repent (John 16:8); 3) **much assurance** confidence, conviction; 4) what kind of men... How Paul, Silas and Timothy lived among the Thessalonians further buttressed the word of the gospel (Paul elaborates on this in Chapter 2). So good evangelism has those four elements: the preached message (words), Holy Spirit power, full commitment of the preacher, and good testimony of the preacher.

4. Verses 6-10 - The Fruit of the Gospel at Work in the Thessalonians

- v.6a - **followers of us and of the Lord** Inasmuch as Paul & Co. followed Christ, so the Thessalonian believers mimicked that.

- vv.6b-10 - A tremendous list of things the gospel produced in the Thessalonians: 1) **affliction** they endured persecution; 2) **joy** a fruit of the **Holy Spirit**; 3) **became examples** all of the surrounding towns benefitted from the example these Christians set; 4) evangelism **in every place**; 5) the change - they turned **from idols to serve the living and true God**; and 6) their eyes were on **heaven**, from which Jesus will return and save them **from the wrath to come**.

Conclusion: Pray that the Lord would bring forth all of these fruits in you, and in your church.