

To Wait for His Son from Heaven

1 Thessalonians 1:5 – 10

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~ The only way a lost person can be saved is to hear the Word of God taught in sound doctrine, and then make a decision to believe it. That is an axiom of basic Scriptural truth that will never be altered or changed. Only when one hears the Word of God can we commune with them about God; or decide not to. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. That's the evocation of our witness to the lost man. It creates responsibility, and demands a reaction. That is the perspective from the lost side of salvation.

But it doesn't end there, friends; because the Word of God contains precepts that are frighteningly supernatural, and demand holy attention from the saved person, as well as the lost man who has said in his heart there is no God. The Spirit of God teaches the Bible for a purpose – His purpose. It is essential that the Holy Spirit take the facts and make them real in our hearts. Man could never reach God, nor could man even conceive of God as we know Christ Jesus, without the Bible – impossible. Sometimes that means He performs a miracle to make the blind see. Without the reality of the third Person of the Godhead – the Holy Spirit – Scripture merely culminates into a meaningless collection of subjective words. I know we can express our thoughts and emotions with words to each other; but without the truth of wisdom in our conversational thinking, it's just so much pointless blah. Without Christ, those words become harmful and hurtful to others, too....

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit:

~ I find it interesting that Paul cites himself as an example. Personally, I would not do that. Candidly, I just don't see myself as a good example. But Paul was out in the Roman Empire, traveling from place to place, giving himself as an example; as a living sacrifice. So, Paul's "followers" received the Word in much affliction. There are two things actually further apart than everything and nothing – and that is: suffering and joy. They don't go together. They are diametrically opposed to each other. A person who is suffering and afflicted cannot have joy; according to the natural man's perspective. If you're experiencing great joy in your life, then you aren't suffering. There are many wonderful saints of God enduring extreme affliction and dire hardships around the world. Some of them have the joy of love in their hearts; but some do not. Only those that hold the joy of the Lord in their hearts during their suffering experience genuine triumph, friends.

I don't care what show, or club, or function, or event you are participating in, you cannot suffer and enjoy said function simultaneously. The world will *NEVER* reconcile those two states. Suffering, persecution, heartache, and disappointment can only be overcome by the joy of the Holy Spirit. I call it bittersweet – maybe sweet and sour. That's life. There must be a well-balanced blend of sweetness in our lives full of suffering. That's the recipe by which, in the midst of extreme trouble, we can have Christ's joy by peace that surpasses all understanding. You've never really met the best people until you meet someone who understands that type of experience. That was the example in Thessalonica....

7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

~ There were three results of their work of faith and labor of love in the patience of hope: (1) they turned to God from idols – the work of faith (2)

to serve the Living and True God – labor of love (3) to wait for His Son from Heaven – patience of hope. Paul didn't arrive and give a series of messages on denouncing idolatry. He didn't tell them about the Mosaic Law; because they were all gentiles. Paul totally ignored all of the errors of worshipping Apollo or Venus, and the god and goddess crowd. No, Paul went to Thessalonica and preached the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Period. When that happened, they turned to God from idols. They did *NOT* turn from idols to God. Theological hair splitting? – Yes, because it just happens to make all the difference in the world.

Read carefully: most people preach that repentance is essential to salvation – and it is. However, they say repent *first* and believe later. Repentance is given to the church as an admonition. In Revelation, the Lord Jesus tells each of the churches to repent. Today, the church is telling the outside world to repent. Well, the Philippian jailor asked Paul, “.... *what must I do to be saved?*” Paul answered, “.... *believe and ye shall be saved.*” No mention of repentance by Paul. Jesus said, “*without Me, ye can do nothing.*” So, my conclusion is that *believing* is first in the inextricably intertwined relationship between believing and repentance. Without Christ, you can't repent, even if you wanted to. Believe and repent is the order – not repent and believe. The church has this as backwards as putting the cart before the horse. In fact, many churches have their horse *IN* their cart – so, they're going nowhere. It's usually pretty crowded in that cart going nowhere, too.

You and I, as believers, are the ones who need to repent, my friends; and some of us need to do a great deal of it. Most of us need to get down on our faces before God Almighty and confess all our sins with a vow to repent. Running down the street to tell the unsaved man to repent is an absolute and complete waste of time – and it is not what the Lord commissioned us to do in the Great Commission, either. Paul didn't tell these people how wrong they were for worshipping idols, doing this, or not doing that. Paul preached Christ crucified – period – and the result was that they turned to God from idols!

Turning to God is the work of faith. The work of God is that we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. One cannot turn *TO* Christ without turning *AWAY*

from something; and that something is *S-I-N!* If you don't turn away from your sin, then you haven't turned to Christ; you may be sure. See, we need to lift Christ up High and Holy as our Savior from sin. You are a sinner; and you can deny that, or weep until judgment day, and then weep some more – it won't do any good. I see people crying about their sins and about reaping what they have sown all day long – but they still refuse to turn to Christ and trust Him and *OBEY* Him. They can repent, friends – they're very good at repenting for you in a show. They'll cry you a river as a side dish for their repentance-fest, too. I'm sure many of the people in the church in Thessalonica spent a lot of time weeping over the time they wasted with idols.

So, our Spiritual Safari ends this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God with this church serving God in a labor of love. Jesus said, *"IF IF you love Me keep My commandments."* That's a huge "if!" If you don't love Jesus Christ and exalt Him as God, then don't bother keeping His commandments, and don't bother going out to preach the Gospel, either. Stay home. Rest and remain quiet. We need more love for the cause of Christ in His service today. Serving Him in a labor of love is the only legitimate and genuine service. That entails waiting for the Son from Heaven. I don't like waiting. So, I keep myself busy serving God by bringing the entire world the entire Word of God in sound doctrine. That's how the Lord is telling me to keep busy. Serving you....

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come ~

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