

A devotional study of 1 Thessalonians: New International Version
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...before our God and Father your work produced by faith, you labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (1:3) Is any work done in the Father's name and furthers his purpose in our own mind necessarily work honoring the Father? Sometimes we lose track of our direction, and instead of acting in the Spirit, we impose our own values or judgment on a situation. We, as Jesus' Church, need to be prayerfully aware and continuously hopeful that each of our actions and even our intentions glorify the Father's name. With a true faith, which by the grace of God has been given to each of us in Christ Jesus' name, we can endure any hardship with an optimism that only the Spirit dwelling within us can inspire.

...He has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction (1:5) What an awesome reality! That each of us was hand selected by God, not through our own conviction, but with His. Certainly he gave each of us freewill to choose to accept this gift, in essence to ask for Jesus Christ to be the essential part of our life, but he created us for His purpose... and with that purpose comes power. This power is a responsibility – the greatest responsibility that we will ever know – it is time for each of us to stand for God's will and no other. In today's society, we have seen power misused widely, whether it's the false idols portrayed in the entertainment business or world leaders who use their authority strictly for personal gain. In the end, it is the individual's choice to stand for what they believe in...to stand and be counted for what truly matters – and that truth is Jesus!

We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts (2:4) God continually tests us – with possessions, with relationships, with trials, with joy, with every thing we encounter and with every thought we have. Each moment is a possibility and because we are Spirit filled, there is no failure. The war is won and every so-called “battle” is merely a growth opportunity in which God is purposefully molding His “clay” into the creation we were meant to be. How else can he prepare us for an eternity serving Him in all of his glory?

We are not looking for praise from men (2:6) Each of us falls into the trap of personal pride from time to time, some more than others. Our human nature often leads us into taking credit for talents that God has provided. God gave us these gifts for a purpose and it is in this purpose that we are truly free. Each of us should lift all of our accomplishments to God in the glory that is only His. Each of us has gifts, none greater than the next. Comparing oneself to another or lifting oneself above another can only lead to hardship. Instead, we should lift each other up, always seeing our fellow man through the eyes of God. We should look for the positive traits in our neighbor and openly and consistently praise them for their strengths and not belittle them for their weaknesses. We need to be honest and forthright with each other, but in a building, not destroying way...*encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you*

into his kingdom and glory (2:12)

We sent Timothy...who is God's fellow worker...to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials (3:2-3) We can not walk as a Christian in these times without a strong network of Christians to support us through our trials. Church sermons and reading the Bible teach us how to walk, but only with daily fellowship with other Christians can we be assured that we stay steadfast with God's purposes in our life. Daily temptations can arise anywhere our path takes us – newspapers, magazines, television, billboards, the radio, conversations with co-workers...the list is endless and solidifies the need to keep in close contact with other believers that you can turn to during times of trial. We often fear the act of sharing our sinful thoughts and actions with others though not revealing our secrets can lead to further hurt and disappointment in our lives. Sharing our trials and thoughts and seeking advice and counsel from our brother and sisters in Christ strengthens our commitment to His purpose in our lives. How can we seek powerfully specific prayer without sharing uncomfortable secrets? Secrets can lead to more secrets, and a sinful cycle could possibly develop. Keeping one's life as an open book with fellow believers ensures that you do not walk alone.

Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith (3:10) developing a rock solid faith takes a lifetime. Our faith is always being tested and each of us has room to grow in our faith. We should remain hopeful that through life's ebbs and flows, a dance if you will, that our progress is always upwards in keeping true to God's purpose for our lives. With the insurmountable trust that the Holy Spirit instills in us, we as a Church can be assured that even when our faith is being tested that Lord Jesus is with us every step of the way. He suffered for us and stays true to His promise that he will never abandon us. The good Lord feels every emotion we experience whether it is confusion, fear, joy, or love. We are not alone in our doubts – God guides us through each of our wilderness periods and we need to remain clear that He will not let us fail.

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you (3:12) His greatest commandment – to love each other. Love is commitment, love is purpose, and love is time. We each should take a close look at what we do each day, how we spend our time. In our society today, more and more individuals spend more and more time in front of the TV or getting lost in movies or losing themselves in a myriad of other activities. Are we staying steadfast in God's purpose when we as a society promote activities that isolate us from real fellowship, worship and prayer? God certainly wants us to rest and enjoy ourselves. We can only imagine how some of the time spent in these so-called "restful" activities is affecting our minds, body, and spirit. We should each spend more time in thoughtful reflection, meditation, and prayer on how we love each other.