

## 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

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Sunday Morning  
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### 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10 ESV

**The Measure of a Ministry: The Work of Faith – Labor of Love – Steadfastness of Hope**

The verses we are going to cover have a very special place in my heart because they were used by the Lord in the planting of this fellowship. I was teaching on this very section of 1 Thessalonians in November of 2003 at Calvary Chapel Grass Valley (CCGV)

- We had been doing the Monday night study for just over a year and were only weeks away from holding our first Sunday service as an outreach of CCGV. As I look at your faces this morning I am so thankful for how the Lord directed us to be studying this specific book of the Bible at that specific time. As we study verses 2-10 this morning we will get a look into God's heart concerning the Measure of a Ministry. And along the way I hope you will get a little look into my heart and Valerie's heart concerning Metro.



### 1 Thessalonians 1:2

*We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,*

We is a reference to the men introduced in Verse 1 Paul, Silvanus and Timothy. Those must have been some amazing prayer meetings - Imagine getting alone with Paul and these guys for prayer. They got together and THANKED God for what He had done in the lives of the believers in Thessalonica and PRAYED for them.

### 1 Thessalonians 1:3

*remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**NOTE: FAITH, HOPE and LOVE --- This is before 1 Cor 13:13**

### 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5

*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.*

### KEY OBSERVATION:

The PRESENCE and POWER of God was so noticeably present in Thessalonica that Paul and his team were ASSURED that God was beginning a great work there.

May that ALWAYS be true of the ministry of Metro. May we never look for or desire anything less than The PRESENCE and POWER of God in the ministry of the Word.

## KEY QUESTIONS:

WHAT IS THE MEASURE of effective ministry?

HOW do you KNOW that what you are seeing in a given church or ministry is truly the work of God?

## CRUCIAL INSIGHT:

Wherever the Word of God is ministered in the POWER of the Holy Spirit, You will ALWAYS see the same results that Paul witnessed in Thessalonica.

Here the Scriptures show us the measure of a ministry --

The things by which we can KNOW that ministry is being undertaken by the presence and power of the Lord.

Work of Faith

Labor of Love

Steadfastness of Hope

## I. THE WORK OF FAITH

### KEY QUESTION:

WHAT is the work of faith?

### Remember:

The Bible is the best COMMENTARY on the Bible.

The work of faith is defined for us in verse 9 - *how you turned to God from idols*. Paul KNEW that his preaching was accompanied by the PRESENCE and POWER of the Lord because these men and women had turned away from idols and turned to the True and living God.

### KEY INSIGHT:

Genuine faith ALWAYS produces THAT WORK in a persons life.

Basic definition of an idol > Any Master Passion other than the True and Living God. When God plants faith into the heart of a man or woman -- That faith ALWAYS makes Jesus the master passion of your life. When God works in the heart of a man or woman -- that work ALWAYS produces a life that is TRUSTING in Christ -- CLINGING to Christ -- RELYING upon Christ ONLY the POWER of the Holy Spirit can do that!

NOTE WELL: Those that have truly believed Christ for forgiveness will LIVE by faith.

*Rom 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.... 17For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

*Gal 2:20 NLT I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me. So I live my life in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

## II. LABOR OF LOVE

This is defined for us in Verse 9 as well - to serve the living and true God

Paul KNEW that his preaching was accompanied by the PRESENCE and POWER of the Lord BECAUSE these believers were SERVING the living and true God.

### KEY INSIGHT:

labor of love = labor to point of exhaustion.

When the Spirit of God works in your life you WANT to SERVE Him -- And you DO serve Him -- Even to the point of exhaustion!

You aren't doing it to WIN His love - you are doing it BECAUSE of His love!

You aren't doing it FOR acceptance -- you are doing it FROM acceptance.

(2 Cor 5:14-15 NLT) Whatever we do, it is because Christ's love controls us. .... {15} He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live to please themselves. Instead, they will live to please Christ, who died and was raised for them.

BEFORE God worked in our hearts through the preaching of the Gospel -- we used to serve other master passions

And we gladly served them to the point of exhaustion

We were never too tired to

*Party*

*More money*

*Accumulate more stuff*

*Get up for a round of golf. (L.O.P. Night of the Living Golf Carts)*

But NOW we serve a NEW MASTER PASSION - JESUS!

The One who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood.

There is a LABOR attached to loving Jesus! A labor to the point of exhaustion -

Listen -

*IF God IS LOVE*

*IF we are His children*

*IF the greatest commandment is to love Him with all of our heart soul mind and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves*

### KEY QUESTION:

*Has the Word of God done THAT in your hearts?*

When we first began the Monday Night Bible Study in our home here in Roseville people constantly asked me

one question – but they might ask it with a different emphasis “Why are you doing Metro?”

Some placed the emphasis of the question on WHY -- WHY are you doing Metro?

Some placed the emphasis of the question on YOU - “Why are YOU doing Metro?”

Here is how I answered them

WHY am I doing Metro -

It’s NOT because I’m bored or tired of you. It’s because there are a lot of sheep starving for the Word of God.

Why am I doing Metro -

Because the Holy Spirit has impressed upon my heart the love of Jesus for me in such a fresh and powerful way that I love Jesus more today than I did 30 years ago - and the result of loving Jesus more is this LABOR of love called Metro Calvary.

#### ILLUSTRATION:

Whitefield Biography -  
His diary -- Dallimore’s conclusion

WHY YOU, Richard?

I KNEW that Jesus didn’t ask me to ask someone else to do it. Left to my self I could have sat there week after week, enjoying my time of preparation, and enjoying my time of teaching, and not be bothered to labor one minute more.

But God did not leave me to myself - Jesus was filling my heart with a desire to FEED His sheep in this area, a desire that felt like, and still feels like, it was crushing me. I personally could NOT comfortably sit there knowing that so many in this area had so little of the Word. The same was true for Valerie! She not only led the women’s ministry at CCGV, She was ministering to the ladies on Monday PM at Metro. She started a neighborhood Bible Bus study that had NOTHING to do with ANY church - and was instrumental in giving them a vision for doing the Bible Bus. She started the women’s ministry at Metro.

I told the flock at CCGV this, And I want to tell YOU this. I am to shepherd this flock, and lead this flock by example. If the love of Jesus for me had not touched my heart in such a way, my life and my ministry would be defined by the “status quo” of modern church life in America, or by what pastor so and so is like.

#### NOTE WELL:

If the status quo defines my life and ministry it will end up defining your lives and your ministries.

I want the love of Jesus, for me, to define:

*my life,*

*what I live for,*

*what I breathe for,*

*what I do for Him!*

I want Jesus to be MY shepherd. I want to FOLLOW Him. I want to LABOR for Him. And I want you to follow THAT example. ALL OF US need to understand that this is agape love. It is NOT a feeling love. It is a DECISION. It is a COMMITMENT, to lay down our lives for one another, to live and love sacrificially for Jesus.

Paul looked at these believers and said, I KNOW God has worked here BECAUSE I see in you the WORK of faith and the LABOR of love.

### III. STEADFASTNESS OF HOPE

This is defined in 1 Thessalonians 1:10

*10and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*

#### KEY INSIGHT:

This word steadfastness (KJV - patience) does not mean to merely wait around.

Steadfastness = hypomone, hoop-om-on-ay'; cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy:-enduring, patience, patient continuance (waiting).

Comes from the Greek word, to bear up under the weight of something.

#### ILLUSTRATION:

It's one thing to wait at a bus stop. It's another to do it when it's hailing down golf balls and people are driving by, splashing the slush all over you - and you are still cheerful.

THAT is this word "patience." It is the way one deals with the pressure of this present world BECAUSE of your HOPE.

WHAT is YOUR hope?

Listen - Jesus can come at any moment!

WHAT is YOUR hope?

A girl friend? A car? A house?

#### Check this out!

John Lennon once claimed the Beatles were more popular than Jesus. Now President Obama has evidence that he's more popular than both. Obama topped a new Harris interactive poll that asked 2,634 Americans who they admire enough to call a hero. Jesus came in second.

Is YOUR hope really built on the fact that Christ might come at any moment? And what should that look like if our kids are watching us? Do our sons and daughters see that the reason we put up with this is because Christ is coming? Do they see that we do all of this because we KNOW the end of the story - that Christ is coming? Imagine watching the news today if you didn't know what we know this morning about the return of Christ!! Without the hope of His return, what does this world hold for our kids and grand kids?

But we KNOW what the future holds for us and for them as believers - the hope of heaven with them! THAT is as good as it gets in this world! What a hope!

## KEY INSIGHT:

THIS hope should have a PROFOUND effect upon the way that we live.

1 John 3:3

*5And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

## NOTE WELL:

You know - if you are living a life of compromise this morning - if you are living a life centered on self

You CAN'T say - Lord come quickly! Lord come this morning!

## KEY APPLICATION:

The ONLY way to really live life is to live it in such a way that you CAN say - COME QUICKLY LORD JESUS!

That life looks like Paul's description of the Thessalonians

Work of faith, Labor of love, steadfastness of hope!

Paul said that FAITH, HOPE and LOVE were prominent in this church and he is excited about that!

He gives thanks constantly as he hears about it.

4For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,

I like that - I don't have any problem with election because I KNOW that I am elected.

I don't understand it all -- But I know that He chose me!

I don't understand WHY He did -- But I KNOW He did and I am GLAD about it!

## KEY INSIGHT:

Paul says that God chose you and me

Genesis tells us that we were created in the image and likeness of God

Think about this -- WE appreciate choice don't we?

Imagine ladies - if before you were married - you were in a room full of guys

some of them smart and handsome and desirable in your eyes

and others not so smart and not so desirable to you

And someone said -- "O.K. - we're going to play musical chairs until one guy is left -- and THAT is going to be your husband!

Somebody's thinking - "Dang! THAT what happened to me and that's why I'm in the mess I'm in!"

## KEY POINT:

WE appreciate choice!

God gave you that capacity because God enjoys that capacity.

He looked down and He chose YOU and He chose ME! That is so wonderful!

Paul - from his perspective - was sure of their election - WHY?

5because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

Paul said - I REMEMBER the work of God there

I SAW what happened

It wasn't some "religious experience -

It was JESUS and it was POWERFUL!

You were CONVERTED - your lives were CHANGED!

I believe that this stands in stark contrast to what happened when Paul was in Athens on Mars Hill

There he tried to engage them intellectually and philosophically

He NEVER looked back on THAT moment in the way he looks back on this one.

IN FACT -- THIS is what Paul was thinking when he left Athens and was travelling to Corinth

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

*1And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. 2For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, 4and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*

This is so relevant to us as we stand here this morning!

How many people go through program after program hoping to find some way of changing their lives

And they are far too many times none the better

And far too many times all the worse - and poorer (like yesterdays Bible Bus -- the woman with the issue of blood.)

I KNOW THIS -

Without the power of God -- not a single life will ever change!

It so important for EVERYONE here this morning to know that

He LOVES us

And has the POWER to change us through the truth of His Word and the work of His Holy Spirit -

ANY life!

As He transforms us - He can hold us up to the world as an example of how Jesus saves -

1 Tim 1:15-16 NLT

*15This is a true saying, and everyone should believe it: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – and I was the worst of them all. 16But that is why God had mercy on me, so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life.*

If God loved THIS guy He can love anyone!

You and I can tell people that they don't need This program or that program, 40 days of this or 12 steps to that. All you need to tell them is that JESUS IS RISEN and He is ALIVE and He is POWERFUL, And He meets with you, And He changes your life, And He has given you FAITH and LOVE and HOPE and a FUTURE! He has done in you and me what NO human wisdom could have ever accomplished. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

**NOTE WELL:**

Yes, He used people - but it has been the work of God. Paul said - When we saw it, we KNEW it was God. But Paul also says to them, YOU knew that it wasn't US who changed you, because you saw what we looked like when we got there - battered and beaten!

1 Thessalonians 1:6

*6And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,*

I don't know about you, but these two terms just don't always go together very well in my life - AFFLICTION and JOY! I think of them as being at opposite ends of the human experience. I have a lot of trouble making them come together -

“O great! Hit me again!”

“Gossip about me one more time!”

REALITY – Quite often affliction is God's means of working things out in our lives.

But they had HOPE. They ENDURED UNDER the pressure of life BECAUSE of Hope - and that was with much joy!

1 Thessalonians 1:7

*7so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.*

**KEY INSIGHT:**

It is so important for us to be EXAMPLES - Not just be professing something - but to be DEMONSTRATING something.

*8For 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.*

**CRUCIAL OBSERVATION:**

Paul said that in that whole area he and his team didn't have to do a thing because the Word spread abroad through the Thessalonians!

Wait a minute - What program did they use?

Did they use the Willow Creek model or was it the Saddleback Valley model! Surely they must have had a 5 year plan and a 10 year plan. Surely they must have had church planting seminars with an emphasis on Demographics, Marketing, Understanding a post-modern world!

There was NONE OF THIS!

It was LIVES transformed by the power of Jesus and the Word of God - the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, literally - the Word of the Lord was ESCAPING from them. It couldn't be contained within them. Like a carbonated drink that is shaken.

THAT is what happens when THE WORD OF GOD is received by hearts that were transformed by the POWER and LOVE of God.

I don't know about you -- But I love the Word of God more than ever! I want to SPEND my LIFE proclaiming it and explaining it! It is the ONLY plan that God has, and for a reason that is beyond me, He actually wants you and me to be a part of that work.

*9For 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, 10and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*

**CRUCIAL INSIGHT:**

THAT should be the description of EVERY Christians life TURNING - SERVING - WAITING.

Is that YOU?

**CRUCIAL INSIGHT:**

When you turn, you turn FROM something TO something! Some say - This is so NOT relevant to a post-modern culture. We don't worship idols today! Yes we do - We just have different names for them.

The goddess Eshtart was all about sex! She was worshipped by orgies. People who worshipped Eshtart would have loved the internet. Putting sexual pleasure before the true and living God.

Bacchus was worshipped by getting drunk. Paul used the word sorcery - pharmacia - the use of mind altering substances in pagan worship. Today people open their minds to the occult through mind altering substances.

Mammon - money and possessions. We have witnessed a near collapse of the global economy because of

greed and the love of money

WHAT IS NEEDED IS A TURNING!

KEY INSIGHT:

You turn to Him to serve HIM!

People spend their lives looking for the right master! They get mastered by money or drugs or sex. NONE of those masters GIVE to you. They only TAKE from you and in the end they STRIP you of the humanity that God intended for you to experience.

TURNING and SERVING

By the way - You can't say "Lord" without serving!

WAITING - for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

I do NOT believe that we have been appointed to wrath. I am non-negotiable on the subject BECAUSE I am non-negotiable on what transpired on the cross of Christ. The Bible PLAINLY declares that ALL of the wrath of God that you and I deserve was laid upon Jesus at the cross.

Romans 3:25

*25whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood*

Propitiation = wrath appeasing sacrifice.

God is not going to punish us along with a Christ rejecting world! When you read the book of Revelation we are told in CH. 6 that in ONE HOUR, One Fourth of the world population is destroyed. That is the equivalent of all of South America, Central America, the U.S., Canada, and Europe. GONE in an hour.

We have no idea what a post-rapture world is going to be like. We are told that for the first 3 ½ years the two prophets tormented the WHOLE earth. God has NOT appointed us to that - he has delivered us from the wrath to come. We might go through some hard things. Jesus said that in this world we would have tribulation. But we are NOT going to go through THAT.

There are those who say - Every generation of the church has experienced tribulation. Why should the last generation escape tribulation?

They have that inverted.

Every generation of the Church has escaped the wrath of the Lamb - Why should the last generation be under the wrath of the Lamb?

It is an impossibility.

HE COULD COME FOR US AT ANY TIME.

I've been talking about this for 30+ years.

I don't ever want to live any other way than LOOKING for His return.

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