

WAITING FOR THE LORD'S RETURN, PART 1: "EVIDENCE OF SALVATION"

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

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Personal Introduction

Hi everyone. If you don't know me, I'm Jeff - one of the pastors at HMCC of Jakarta. And it's my privilege to be preaching the Word of God for us today.

Sermon Series Introduction

Last week, we just finished our sermon series on the book of Joel (which is from the Old Testament). And today, we'll be starting a new sermon series on the books of 1 & 2 Thessalonians (which are from the New Testament). Who's excited?!

What we'd like to do is to alternate preaching through books from the Old Testament and the New Testament. And we decided on 1 & 2 Thessalonians because we've never preached through it before, and because Joel and 1 & 2 Thessalonians all share similar themes about "The Day of the Lord."

So this new sermon series is called "Waiting for the Lord's Return" (So how are we to wait and live in light of Jesus' second coming?). And part 1 of this sermon series is titled "Evidence of Salvation."

Before we get started, let me pray for us again...

Sermon Introduction

What I really think is amazing is the birth or the start of something:

- Just think of the birth of a person - one day they don't exist, and then suddenly they're formed in their mother's womb, and then one day they're born into the world!
- Think of the launch of a new startup - one day they don't exist, then the idea is formed in the founders' minds, and then one day the business is launched and now they exist!
- Or think of the formation of a new relationship - one day two people are complete strangers (no relationship), then somehow they can become so close that they become the most important people in each other's lives, and a relationship now exists!
- Now how about the start of a new church? One day, there were no Christians in a city, then some people were converted, then they gathered as a church and a church now exists in that city. Isn't that amazing?!

From non-existence to existence...

But then that leads us to a question - How can we truly know that something now exists? What evidence points to the existence of something that used to not exist?

- What's the evidence that someone has been born? This one's quite easy! There's a physical baby that you can hold. And maybe another evidence is when you visit the family's home, what was once an office room is now a baby room.
- Similarly, what's the evidence that someone has been born again as a Christian? What evidence can we look for that can help us to be more confident that a new believer is truly a Christian? What evidence can help us to be more confident that they're truly saved?

Today, we'll see Apostle Paul giving thanks to God for the evidence of salvation that he sees in the new believers that make up the church in Thessalonica!

The One Thing

Give thanks to God for evidence of salvation that we see in one another.

Scripture Introduction

For the next few months, we'll be going through Apostle Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians.

And just a note here: when we read each of Paul's letters, it's important to understand who he's writing to, and the context of what's going on during that time. That's really gonna help us understand the content of his letters.

And what you can do to better understand the context of Paul's letter is to skim through the letter itself, or you can go through Paul's other letters, and you can also go to the book of Acts.

So before we dive into 1 Thessalonians, let's take a look at **Acts 17**, which briefly describes the birth of the Thessalonian church. You can turn to Acts 17 now if you'd like; I'll be giving a brief summary of what happened...

For context - Thessalonica was one of the cities that Paul visited in his second missionary journey around the year 50 AD (about 20 years after Jesus' ascension).

- In that mission trip, Paul was accompanied by one of his Gospel partners - a man named Silas (Also known as Silvanus).
- And Thessalonica was one of the major cities in Macedonia (which is present-day Greece).
- And since Thessalonica was a large city, it had a Jewish synagogue for the Jewish population there.
 - So when Paul and Silvanus arrived there, they first went to the synagogue (they first went to the Jews and then the Gentiles).
 - And so first, they reasoned with the Jews there, and they taught them Scripture, and then proclaimed how Jesus is the promised Messiah who they've been waiting for!
 - And when Paul shared this, some were convicted and received Jesus as their Lord and Savior - And not only the Jews, but then also a large number of Greeks as well.
 - And this was how the first Christian church in Thessalonica was planted!
 - And Paul and Silvanus then stayed at the house of one of these new believers named Jason.

- But then after only 3 weeks, the unbelieving Jews (those who refused to believe in Jesus) - they formed a mob, and they went to Jason's house. They couldn't find Paul and Silvanus there, so then they dragged Jason (along with some other believers) and took them to the city authorities. They then reported that Jason and the others were going against Caesar because they're saying that there's another king named Jesus!
 - They're then forced to pay bond before they're finally allowed to leave.
- So amidst this hostility, the believers in Thessalonica immediately sent Paul and Silvanus to another city.
 - They're rushed out for Paul's safety.
 - So sadly, they didn't have time to properly say their good-byes to one another.
- And so after only 3 weeks, the Thessalonian church was suddenly left on their own... This was a very young church with new believers. And from the get-go, they're facing persecution.
- At that time, there was no WhatsApp or email. So for some time, contact was lost between Paul and the Thessalonians.
- Then we know from **1 Thessalonians 3** that not too long afterwards, Paul sent Timothy - another one of his Gospel partners - to check up on the Thessalonians.
 - Timothy went to Thessalonica and then returned to Paul with some encouraging news!
 - The Thessalonian church is still standing! They're persevering in their faith in Jesus even amidst much affliction.
 - But since they're a young church, there seems to be confusion and misunderstandings about Jesus' second coming, and how they're supposed to wait and live out their faith in light of Jesus' return.
- And so Paul writes a letter to them (what we now know as the book of 1 Thessalonians). The purpose of Paul's letter here is to encourage them to continue to grow in their faith and in their godliness in light of the hope they have in Jesus' second coming.
 - Again, Jesus' second coming is going to be the theme that we'll see throughout this letter.

And this is going to be so relevant for us today because we're still waiting for the Lord's return, and we're still in need of encouragement to grow in our faith and in godliness, as we wait for his return...

If you have your Bibles with you, please turn now to **1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**...

Imagine that you're the new believers of the church in Thessalonica. It's been months since you heard from Paul and Silvanus. And it's been a short while since Timothy visited you. Then you received this letter. And this is how the letter starts...

Scripture Reading

So let's read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 (ESV)

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.

This is God's Word.

Overview

Why is Paul confident in the Thessalonians' salvation?

Because Paul sees evidence that they've...

- I. Received the true Gospel (vv. 1-5a)**
- II. Imitated joy amidst affliction (vv. 5b-6)**
- III. Exemplified faith to others (vv. 7-10)**

Received, imitated, exemplified...

I. Received the true Gospel (vv. 1-5a)

Verse 1, again, says this:

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace.

So from this greeting, we know that this letter is from the Apostle Paul. And he also listed his Gospel partners - Silvanus and Timothy - as his co-authors. Now, something interesting about this letter is that it's actually one of Paul's earliest - if not his earliest - letter that he wrote.

And we know that this letter is written to the church in Thessalonica - a very young church (less than 1 year old as they're getting this letter)...

Verses 2-3 then say this:

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.

So Paul is so encouraged to hear of the Thessalonians' faith. He'd initially feared that they'd be tempted to succumb to their affliction, and leave their faith behind. But it was so encouraging to him that this young church is still standing, and still persevering!

Isn't that just amazing! Just imagine... You're a new believer... and there's literally a mob of people outside who are going against you. So your life is literally in danger. The city officials are also not happy with you and they've already taken some of your people away. Imagine... How tempting would it be to just leave your faith behind, and pretend like Jesus doesn't exist and that he's not coming back?

But that's not what the Thessalonians did. When Timothy visited them, they're still steadfast in their faith and hope in Christ!

And so as Paul is hearing this report from Timothy, he's overflowing with joy (and maybe relief too), and so he thanks God for the Thessalonians!

<pause>

Look at verse 3 - he thanks God for 3 specific things: their work of faith, their labor of love, and their steadfastness of hope in Jesus Christ.

And you'll see Paul talk about these 3 things (faith, love, and hope) in many of his letters. And that's because these 3 things summarize very nicely what it means to be a Christian. Christians:

- Have faith in God.
- Have love for others.
- And have hope in Jesus' second coming.

And Paul will actually spend more time in this letter to talk about these things (so we won't talk about them in detail just yet). But since he's starting to introduce these things at the start of his letter, we'll talk about it briefly now.

What's interesting here is how Paul phrased these 3 marks of a Christian: work of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope.

- Work of faith - Faith (Faith in God - that you'd think is invisible... It seems like it can actually be seen! And Paul is implying that your invisible faith in God is visibly seen through your work; through your actions!

- What kind of action displays your faith in God?
- A labor of love - love for others is what's produced when your faith is in God. And Paul suggests that loving others is going to require hard work! It's going to require labor! It's not gonna be easy!
- And then steadfastness of hope is the perseverance to continue to work out your faith in God and to continue to labor to love others. Why? Because your hope is in Jesus Christ and his return.
 - So that's what Paul is alluding right now, and it's something that he'll cover more in the rest of his letter to the Thessalonians (we're just getting a small glimpse of it here).

Going back to the text, what we see Paul doing here... by him thanking God for the Thessalonians' faith, love, and hope (the marks of a Christian)... Paul is basically thanking God that the Thessalonians are Christians!

Thank God that they didn't just disperse and leave their faith, which would prove that they're not truly Christians. But thank God that they're Christians!

<pause>

But notice how Paul is thanking GOD for these things. He's not thanking the Thessalonians for their work of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope... but he's thanking GOD.

This is very interesting. Because if you do something for me. I'm going to thank you. I'm not gonna thank another person. Unless... that other person was the major cause or the reason of why I'm thanking you.

Similarly, Paul is thanking God because He's the major cause of what the Thessalonians are doing...

Verse 4 says this:

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

Paul is thanking God... for... because... God is the one who has chosen them.

And by choosing them and empowering them, God's work is the one behind their work, labor, and perseverance. God is the one behind their faith, love, and hope.

This is such an important reminder for the Thessalonians as a group of young believers: Don't forget that it's all because of God that you're Christians and that you're saved!

<pause>

This leads us to a big question: How do we know? How can we be confident that they're truly Christians? How is Paul so confident that the Thessalonians are saved as God's chosen people?

The first part of verse 5 says this:

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

Paul is confident that The Thessalinans are chosen by God because he's confident that the Gospel that's both preached to them and received by them is the true Gospel!

This is key! Because there would be no Christians if there's no Gospel! And there'd be no converts if there's no one to share the Gospel with them!

Paul is confident that the Thessalonians are true converts because the words that he, Silvanus, and Timothy proclaimed is the true Gospel.

<pause>

So let's take a step back - what is this Gospel that Paul is referring to in verse 5? Paul is referring to the Good News of Jesus Christ!

And when Paul first shared the Gospel with them in Thessalonica, I imagine that Paul must've first shared the bad news with them - Imagine Paul telling them... the bad news is that we're all sinners. We've all sinned against the one true and living God. And the just punishment for our sin is eternal punishment in Hell.

- The Jews listening to Paul would be familiar with what he'd be saying.
- And the Greeks would also be somewhat familiar with this because they also believe in some sort of punishment in the afterlife (Though their understanding is quite different).

But both groups seem to understand that in light of this bad news, they're in need of some good news...

So what's the Good News that Paul first shared to the Jews?

- The Good News is that God promised a Savior - the Messiah. And the Messiah is Jesus Christ. He's the one whom they've been waiting for! And Jesus already came, he suffered and died for our sins as our substitute. He took on the punishment that we deserved!
- So those who believe in him as Lord and Savior will not be punished in Hell, but will have eternal life in Heaven! That's the Good News!

And what did Paul share with the Greeks? This Good News is not only for the Jews but also for you! This is for all of God's people who choose to believe in Him!

This is the Gospel that they're holding on to so tightly despite persecution! So how can they now turn their backs on the best news that they've ever heard?! How can the Jews now turn their back on the promised Messiah whom they've been waiting for? How can the Greeks turn their back on the one true and living God who died for them so that they may be saved? They couldn't!

In that moment, as they're listening to Paul's message, the Holy Spirit is working powerfully in their hearts! This is what Paul is referring to in verse 5...

Look at verse 5 - Paul reminded the Thessalonians that he proclaimed this Good News to them *in word* (verbally). But not only in word, but *in power* (because what he's preaching is not the word of man but the Word of God that is powerful and convicts the hearts and pierces through consciences).

And it's the *Holy Spirit* who is working powerfully in their lives, continuing to *convict* and stir their hearts - So those receiving it may be *convicted* that they're hearing the Word of God and not merely the word of man.

And I trust that it's the same Holy Spirit working in our hearts, convicting us, today.

<pause>

So then, how about us? Is this what we believe? Is this the same Gospel that you've received?

Because friends, at this time, I must warn us that there are many false gospels out there...

- There's a false gospel that says that everyone is saved. Or that there's multiple ways on how you can be saved. But that's not true! There's only one true Gospel! Jesus is the only way! And not everyone will be automatically saved... only those who've received Jesus will be saved.
- And there are also other false gospels that promise material blessings - riches, wealth, and good health. But the true Gospel doesn't promise material blessings on Earth. The true Gospel promises far more! The true Gospel promises blessings in Heaven that are eternal! Not merely material blessings on Earth that will not last the test of time.

As you've possibly listened to multiple false gospels throughout your life, I'd encourage you to make sure that you understand the true Gospel. So if you're unsure, ask someone next to you or talk to the pastors, and ask them to point you to God's Word in the Bible. Go directly to God's Word and see for yourself, so that you may also be confident that the Gospel you understand is the true Gospel.

<pause>

This is the first evidence that is making Paul confident that the Thessalonians are Christians. - they've received the true gospel!

Second, Paul sees that they've also...

II. Imitated joy amidst affliction (vv. 5b-6)

The second half of verse 5 to 6 say this:

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,

The second *evidence of salvation* that Paul sees in the Thessalonians is how they *imitated* Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy.

Now, to imitate someone is to copy what someone does. To do what they do.

If you know me, I've watched a good amount of sports. And I've watched many basketball players get interviewed for their games. Sometimes these players are asked if there's any other player that they look up to and who they're modeling their game after? Who are they imitating in the way that they handle and shoot the ball? Michael Jordan? Kobe? LeBron? Stephen Curry? Who are they imitating?

Friends, same question: Who are you imitating?

Because we're all actually imitating someone. If we think of our role-models who we've tried to imitate... maybe we've thought about being more like our parents, or our siblings, or a famous CEO or athlete or a social media influencer...

There's something about them that we'd also want to be like (perhaps due to a variety of reasons).

So this makes me question - There are also other people that the Thessalonians would want to imitate, what makes them want to imitate Paul instead?

For context - the Greek people during that time were very interested in philosophy, in new ideas and different ways of thinking. And so there's many traveling teachers and philosophers during that time who would visit the cities to teach. And they'd gain many fans and followers from their preaching.

So what makes Paul different?

If we go to **Acts 16**, we know that Paul was just imprisoned in Philippi before he came to Thessalonica. Here's a guy who's faced many difficulties and trials before even reaching Thessalonica. But maybe the Thessalonians were surprised at how joyful Paul was even amidst everything that's happened to him. He's being persecuted for this message that he has, yet he's still working day & night to proclaim this message, and he's doing so willingly! And joyfully! Even risking his own life!

I'd imagine that'd get some of the Greeks' attention & get them to question... What's up with this guy? What's his secret? What's his message? Let's hear it...

And we know from earlier that his message is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Paul's hope is in the glory that is to come when Jesus returns - that's what allows him to have joy in the present even amidst affliction!
- It's this great hope - that we just learned about these past few weeks from the book of Joel about the Day of the Lord - that when Christ returns, there will be justice and restoration for God's people.
- Paul's hope is in his eternal future and in the day that he'll finally be with his Lord.
 - That's why he's able to be joyful amidst persecution on Earth - because he knows that this life is not all there is to it and his suffering is only temporary and is nothing compared to the eternal life he'll gain in Heaven...

And this is what the Thessalonians are imitating. And they're not merely imitating what Paul is doing... they're imitating his heart posture! They have joy in the Holy Spirit even amidst affliction; they're able to remain steadfast in their faith even amidst persecution from the unbelieving Jews and the city officials.

<pause>

Now, notice what Paul said, "You became imitators of us and of the Lord." In imitating Paul's joy amidst affliction, the Thessalonians are ultimately imitating Christ - because Paul was actually imitating Christ. They're just imitating Paul as he's imitating Christ!

- Because it's our Lord Jesus himself who first endured suffering at the cross willingly for our sake, not for his own sake.
- And Paul imitated Jesus when he endured persecution for the sake of sharing the Gospel to the Thessalonians (They know what kind of men he proved to be among them for their sake, not his own sake).

And so when the Thessalonians' are imitating Paul's joy amidst affliction, they're ultimately imitating Jesus' joy amidst affliction. And this is why Paul is confident in their faith & salvation.

<pause>

How about us today? Brothers and sisters, are you currently going through a time of affliction? If so, do you evidence this kind of joy amidst affliction?

- Now, I want to be clear that this joy doesn't necessarily mean a feeling of happiness that you need to have all the time. Because to be honest, that feeling of happiness can be temporary and goes up and down all the time.

Notice what Paul did not say... Paul did NOT say, "and you (Thessalonians) became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the Word... [without trouble and without affliction and are always happy]."

No.. Paul didn't say that. He said, "and you (Thessalonians) became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit."

- This is a deeper kind of joy (more than just a feeling of happiness) - This is a constant sense of security in the Lord; a constant satisfaction in Him even in times of suffering and sorrow.
- And this joy comes from your steadfast hope in the Lord and it evidences your genuine faith & salvation.

This is why joy amidst affliction is such a strong evidence of your hope in Christ. Not joy when everything is going smoothly and well. But joy amidst affliction... that's when your faith is really tested.

So what kind of affliction or suffering are you currently going through?

- Perhaps you're having conflict with another church member that's making you question what it means to be part of a church?
- Or maybe a disagreement with a family member, a spouse, or a friend is tempting you to abandon any hope of reconciliation?
- Or maybe something else happened that caused you to question if it's worth it to follow Jesus?
- Perhaps your faith is being tested, and sharpened during this time of affliction.
 - And don't forget that you don't have to go through this alone... for God is with you.
 - And God has also placed other brothers and sisters in your lives to support you...

So let's ask: who is "your Paul"?

- Are there brothers or sisters in our church (who are further along in their walk with Christ) who are currently pouring out their lives to mentor you and disciple you, intentionally helping you to grow in godliness as a follower of Christ?
- If not, think of 1-2 names of someone of the same gender who can help mentor you. Pray about it, and perhaps you can ask that person if you can meet up with them to talk about your walk with Christ, especially in times of affliction.

And let's also ask: who is "your Thessalonians"?

- Who are the brothers or sisters in our church who you're currently discipling and intentionally pointing to Jesus to help them grow in godliness as a follower of Christ?
- We're a relatively young church. So even though you may not see yourself as an "older brother" or "older sister" to others, if you look around, you may very well be those older siblings in the church whom God calls to help your younger siblings.
- Again, perhaps you can also think of 1-2 names of someone of the same gender who you can reach out to. Please pray about it, and then I'd encourage you to talk to them about it.
- And I hope that these discipling relationships will also be genuine friendships.
- And as we imitate one another as we imitate Christ, may God be the one glorified!

So why is Paul thanking God and is confident in the Thessalonians' salvation? Because Paul sees evidence that they've received the true Gospel, that they've imitated joy amidst affliction. And finally, that they've...

III. Exemplified faith to others (vv. 7-10)

Verses 7-10 say this:

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.

What we see here is that the imitators have themselves become an example! As they're imitating Paul imitating Christ, now they're the ones being imitated by others as good examples of how it looks like to live out your faith as Christians.

Whether they knew it or not, news about their faith has now gone out to Macedonia and Achaia (which are the two Greek provinces of the Roman empire). And not only to Macedonia and Achaia but it's gone forth everywhere! Like an echo starting from one area and then traveling and continuing to sound forth to other areas, reverberating - causing others to hear about God's work in Thessalonica (even to those in the regions beyond Macedonia and Achaia). How amazing is that?

Imagine... Paul talking to the other believers from the other churches, "Hey, how are you guys doing?" - And then without Paul needing to share anything about the Thessalonians, people are already saying, "Hey I heard about the church in Thessalonica! Praise the Lord for their faith!"

Paul shared that these other believers were specifically encouraged by 2 things: (1) By how they turned away from their idols to serve the one true God, and (2) by how they're faithfully waiting for Lord Jesus' return.

Let's look at verse 9 - **First**, the other believers were encouraged by how the Thessalonians turned away from their idols to serve the living & true God.

- This was huge! This is specifically referring to the Greeks (the Gentile Christians) who - not too long ago - used to be polytheists who worshiped the pantheon of Greco-Roman gods - like Zeus, Poseidon, Aphrodite, Artemis, along with many other gods.
 - And these gods were thought to have lived on Mt. Olympus - which is quite close to Thessalonica!
 - Their lives used to revolve around trying to please these gods with sacrifices so that they would gain their favor.
 - But since then, their eyes have been opened to the truth - And they saw that these gods were not alive, but dead (merely idols made from stone). And they're not real, but false gods.
 - And they've not only turned away from those idols, but have now turned to faithfully worshiping and serving the one living & true God!
 - Praise God for that!

So then, how about us today? Have we turned away from our idols to serve God alone?

- Maybe we think that we have because we're not praying or making sacrifices to any stone idols or other gods.
- But an idol refers more than to just a statue of a "god." An idol can be anyone or anything that you worship more than the one living & true God.
- Even as Christians, we're still tempted to idolize other things like career, money, sex, beauty, and power...
 - Centering our lives around those things instead of on God.
- And we can even idolize other people, like our parents, spouse, children, or friends.
 - Centering our lives on them instead of on God.
- Even as Christians, we have this sinful tendency to worship these idols, even as we worship God.

And this dishonors God because God is perfectly good and holy - the only one worthy of our praise and worship! The one who has chosen us as His people!

- To idolize someone else or anything else is to say that they're equally or more important than God. And that dishonors our God.

And idolizing these things doesn't only dishonor God, but it actually hurts our lives too! We'll never feel content and always feel like something is missing...

- Because when we idolize our money or possessions, then we may feel like we never have enough!
- Or if we idolize success or our performance, then we may feel like we're never good enough!
- Or if we idolize our appearance or beauty, then we may feel like we never look good enough!
- Or if we idolize pleasure or comfort, then we may feel like we're never happy enough!
- And we'll never be content! We'll never have enough!

But when we turn away from our idols (from these false gods), and put our faith and our hope in the one living and true God, then we may have true contentment - even joy amidst affliction.

- Because we know that our value and worth does not depend on these other things but it wholly depends on God who's already chosen us - not because of how we look or how good we are or what we'll do - but He chose us simply because He loves us and cares for us and values us as His people.
- He loves us so much that Jesus died for us so that we may live (that's how valuable we are).

Brothers and sisters, what idols are we still tempted to worship right now?

It's not easy to turn away from these idols, especially if they've already had a firm grip on us for years. But remember that you don't have to go through this alone. You can go to "your Paul" (your mentor). I trust that there's someone in our church who may be further along than you are in their battle against a similar idol.

- For example, are you struggling with pornography or sexual purity?
 - I encourage you to find a mentor of the same gender who is already further along than you are in their fight against pornography.
 - To be honest, that's what I did when I struggled with pornography.
 - Actually, I thought it was impossible to completely turn away from it. But then I talked to a couple of brothers who have not watched pornography and have not masturbated in years. Their example showed me that it's even possible to turn away from that idol! Honestly, I didn't even know that it was possible!
 - They're both like my Paul and my Thessalonians - who exemplified to me that it's possible to turn away from their idols.
 - And now it's my privilege to talk to and mentor other brothers who are now fighting against pornography.
 - So let's help one another grow in purity and in godliness! Because we're not meant to do this alone! Like the Thessalonian church, we can turn away from our idols together as a spiritual family. And - together - we can choose to serve the one true and living God!

Now, let's look at verse 10 - the other believers were also encouraged by how the Thessalonians were faithfully waiting for Jesus' return.

- This verse alone has huge implications! This implies that...
 - The Thessalonians faithfully believe that Jesus is the Son of God.
 - They believe that Jesus suffered & died for the sins of his people in order to deliver them from the wrath to come (in Hell).
 - They believe that Jesus resurrected from the dead and ascended to Heaven.
 - They believe that Jesus will one day return for them.
 - And that's why they're anticipating and waiting for the day of their Lord's return...
 - That's why they're able to remain steadfast in their hope, having joy amidst affliction.
 - That's why they're persevering in their faith, exemplifying it to others.

And that's why Paul is able to be confident in their faith & salvation.

They're so inspiring! God has definitely used them for His glory! And their example has lasted thousands of years, and here we are now... a church in Indonesia in the year 2024 being inspired by the work that God has done in their lives by the way that they've received, imitated, and exemplified Christ!

<pause>

Church, how awesome would it be if our church can one day be an example of what it looks like to be a healthy, faithful church in Indonesia...

- Where a plurality of elders are faithfully proclaiming the true Gospel, and being model Christians to be imitated by the church members as they themselves imitate Christ.
- Where church members are passionately and joyfully doing ministry - being disciplined AND discipling one another (pointing one another to Christ), and thanking God for the evidence of salvation that they see in one another.
- Where we evangelize together, proclaiming the Gospel to others in Indonesia in word, in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full conviction.
- And where we're influencing other churches - not merely thinking about HMCC of JKT/TGR but thinking of God's universal church and - not our glory - but the glory of the one living & true God.
- And where newer churches can one day look to our church as an example of what it looks like to faithfully wait for our Lord's return.
 - I think that's going to be so beautiful. Let's build up one another and build up our church with this picture in mind! Amen?!

The One Thing

Give thanks to God for evidence of salvation that we see in one another.

Let's pray.