

Dear FBC family,

Please re-read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 a few more times.

A few words about Paul's epistles. The Pauline epistles form one of the greatest treasures for the Christian church. Serious and prolonged *personal* study of them only increases one's appreciation of their matchless value for the body of Christ and the individual believer. There simply is nothing like the epistles of Paul. They compress more ideas in fewer words than any other writings. They discuss the highest themes which can challenge the mind. And all this before humble little societies of poor, uncultured artisans, freedmen and slaves! And yet they are of more real power and great value to the church than all of the modern preaching filled with all kinds of human gimmicks, formulas, sermonizing, man-centeredness, religiosity, problem-solving/utility mantras, moralizing, and cheap and greedy "spiritual" psychobabble found throughout the modern church in one form or another.

Having read the first chapter of 1 Thessalonians several times, you should have a pretty good feel for its content. With an understanding of its basic content, further exegesis and philosophical study will only enhance, not undermine or change, that understanding and open up more glorious and inexhaustible truths. However, first it is important for you to understand the basic thrust of the chapter. It is important for you to understand the basic content for its own sake without just going to it to solve a problem.

From your own reading of 1 Thessalonians 1, I would like for you to consider Paul's attitude toward these Thessalonians. Note the character of his thanksgiving for them (vs. 2) and the grounds for the thanksgiving (vss. 3-10). Note their virtues in verses 3-10. With some philosophical understanding of virtue, you should be able to really appreciate the virtue that these young believers gained. How many virtues can you list?

Next time, I will discuss more about the background of Paul's very first epistle. But, for now, note how much truth one can glean from noting Paul's thanksgiving and the power of the Word of God to transform young believers and give them the virtues that alone lead to glorification of Christ and indescribable blessedness. Amazing!

In 'Ehyeh,

Pastor Don