



Main Passage: 1 Thessalonians 1

Theological Theme

Paul celebrated and encouraged the church at Thessalonica for their faithful stand and commitment to spread the gospel despite hardships or persecution they experienced.

Introduction

- ❓ What comes to mind when you think about an echo?
- ❓ How does the idea of an echo connect with how Christians are to spread the gospel?

1. Reason to be Thankful (1 Thessalonians 1:1-4)

This letter was written by Paul to the church at Thessalonica that he helped to establish during his second missionary journey. The account of this church's beginning is recorded in Acts 17 and although Paul was only in this area for a short time, he had deep concern for this young body of believers. Enemies of the gospel forced Paul to leave suddenly and after being chased away by an angry mob, Paul continued to struggle with opposition toward his missionary efforts.

- ❓ How did the report of this church confirm that it was God who sustained them and not their own efforts and strength?
- ❓ How should faith in Christ affect or change the way you work to fulfill God's calling in your life?
- ❓ Application: How has your hope in Christ motivated you toward greater effort in serving Him and spreading the gospel? How is this different than working in your own strength?

2. Gospel Changes (1 Thessalonians 1:5-7)

Paul said that the gospel had come to the church not only in word but also in power. If we are not careful in the church, the focus can shift to information or entertainment to the point that our message becomes mere words. People can pride themselves on the knowledge they develop about the gospel and miss out on the power that

should accompany it. The difference is found in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit at work, our message will only be words instead of the transforming power of God at work in and through us to the glory of God.

- ❓ What are some ways we might rely on our words over God's Word and God's power in our lives?
- ❓ When was a time you witnessed another person's joy in Jesus despite hardship? What impact did this have on you?
- ❓ Application: How are you seeking to live as an example for other believers? Why should you?

3. The Word Goes Forth (1 Thessalonians 1:8-10)

Continuing his encouragement of the faithful in Thessalonica, Paul described their lives as sounding forth the word to far reaching places. The phrase "sounding forth" pictures a loud ringing noise like a trumpet blast. People noticed what happened in the Thessalonians' lives and took notice. Their influence for the kingdom of God was felt near and far.

- ❓ How are our words and lives to "sound forth" for Jesus today?
- ❓ Where do you need to focus—the message of the gospel or the faith to share it with others? How can you do that?
- ❓ Application: How is God calling you to move towards greater faithfulness to Him this week? How will you respond?

Conclusion

- ❓ How have you been challenged or encouraged by today's lesson?
- ❓ How can we as a group encourage one another toward greater faithfulness to Jesus?
- ❓ Who is God calling you to "sound forth" the gospel message to this week?