

**Monday, January 14 - You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. (1**

**Thessalonians 1:6)** The church recognized these men (Paul, Silas and Timothy) as followers of Christ. Men whose lifestyle mirrored the words they spoke. They were choosing to live their lives like these men. We all are likely to "live life" like we have seen modeled. Usually this happens in our family of origin or those who highly influence us at a young age. For this young church, they didn't know what it meant to "live as a follower of Christ" because there wasn't a "history" to look back on. They were making history - actually for our benefit. They not only imitated these men, but also Jesus. If you are a parent, what 'lifestyle' are you modeling for your children? We ALL would do well to imitate the life Christ led. Then anyone who wants to imitate us, would be imitating Jesus.

**Tuesday, January 15 – And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it (1 Thessalonians 1:7-8).** This church not only imitating the way Christ lived his life, they didn't in the midst of severe suffering. In other words, they lived as followers of Christ when it was very difficult to do so. When the majority of the public was against them they chose Jesus. It was evident to everyone in that region (not just the one city) that this church had sold out to Christ. They had placed their faith not in a god of religion, not in a god of rules and regulations, but in the God of Creation and the God of life and death.

**Wednesday, January 16 – They themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell 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 rescues us from the coming wrath. (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)** One of the hardest parts of living as a disciple of Christ is the waiting. Once we profess Christ as Lord and Savior, we know the endgame. We know what will happen when we die and where we will be for eternity. But we still have to live each day. And living FOR today can be exhausting and for this church it was physically painful as well. We live with one foot in this world and one foot in the next. And even though we know are saved from 'eternal' wrath, the struggles in this world can get overwhelming at times. That's why it is good to be reminded we are all 'waiting' which means there is an end in sight. What are you doing while you 'wait'?

**Thursday, January 17 – You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results.2 We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition. (1 Thessalonians 2:1-2)** What is strong opposition for the believer in Christ today? It depends on where you live. In North Korea for instance, you must worship the leader. Belonging to another religion makes you an enemy of the state. In Somalia, Islam is the state religion and being a part of any other one is illegal. (Just do an internet search for the worst places to be a Christian to see a list of other countries). But in the Wiregrass, our opposition will be in the form of "inclusivity." Taken at face value, the church is a place that includes everyone and we strive to be a place that welcomes all. But as the Christmas story just reminded us, "Jesus...will cause the rising and falling of many." The bottom line - you follow Christ or you don't. That in itself causes division. We are challenged daily as 'good citizens' to accept everyone, no matter what. Jesus loved all, but loved them so much, he couldn't leave them as they were.

**Friday, January 18 – For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. (1 Thessalonians 2:3-4)** The statement in verse 3 may be a response to accusations from the Jewish leaders who had stirred up the crowds (see Acts 17:5). Paul did not seek money, fame, or popularity by sharing the gospel. He demonstrated the sincerity of his motives by showing that he and Silas had suffered for sharing the gospel in Philippi. People become involved in ministry for a variety of reasons, not all of them good or pure. When their bad motives are exposed, all of Christ's work suffers. When you get involved in ministry, do so out of love for Christ and others.

**Saturday, January 19 - You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. 6 We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. (1 Thessalonians 2:5-6)** In trying to persuade people, we may be tempted to alter our position just enough to make our message more palatable or to use flattery or praise. Paul never changed his message to make it more acceptable, but he did tailor his methods to each audience. Although our presentation must be altered to be appropriate to the situation, the truth of the gospel must never be compromised. It's disgusting to hear a person "butter up" someone. Flattery is phony and it is a false cover-up for a person's real intentions. Christians should not be flatterers. Those who proclaim God's truth have a special responsibility to be honest. Are you honest and straightforward in your words and actions? Or do you tell people what they want to hear in order to get what you want or to get ahead?