

January 7. As part of our current series, we will be studying 1 Thessalonians. The church at Thessalonica was very young, having been established only two or three years before this letter was written. This church needed to mature in their faith. There was also a misunderstanding concerning the second coming of Christ. Some thought Christ would return immediately, and thus were confused when their loved ones died because they expected Christ to return before anyone would die. **Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1.** We find right at the first that this wasn't just a letter from Paul alone. Silas and Timothy were included as well. Think for a moment – Paul, the first and greatest missionary never did any of his work alone. In this instance, he had two companions. The Kingdom of God doesn't expand because one solitary person does everything. The church grows when people come together and use the gifts God has given to each. What part will you play?

January 8. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3. As this men mention their fondness for the people of this church, they acknowledge the church wouldn't be where it is without them but let them know they are praying for them. Many times we only pray for people when they tell us a need. It could be medical, relational, mental, etc. And we will pray for healing and restoration. Take this day and week as an opportunity to simple pray for those you know who are a part of the church. They may serve, they may lead, they may simple attend. And when you pray give thanks to God for them – by name. And then take it step further – send a message to them to let them know you “thanked God for them”.

January 9. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:4. Do you believe this? Can you fathom the depth of God's love for you? It doesn't matter if you have been a Christ-follower all your life or just a few days – God loves YOU! He chose you. Did you catch that – **HE** – God the Creator, God the All-Knowing, God the All-Powerful – **CHOSE** – made a conscious, informed decision – **YOU**. He didn't have to, he didn't need to – but he did. It's like when you are getting picked for teams except God chose everyone first – no one was picked last – every one of us is picked at the same time! Walk around with a spring in your step and your head held high today – because God chose you!

January 10. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:5. The Good News came with “power”; it had a powerful effect on the Thessalonians. Whenever the Bible is heard and obeyed, lives are changed! Christianity is more than a collection of interesting facts; it is the power of God to everyone who believes. What has God's power done in your life since you first believed? The Holy Spirit changes people when they believe the Good News. When we tell others about Christ, we must depend on the Holy Spirit to open their eyes and convince them that they need salvation. God's power – not our cleverness or persuasion – changes people. Without the work of the Holy Spirit, our words are meaningless. The Holy Spirit not only convicts people of sin but also assures them of the truth of the Good News. Note the people noticed that Paul, Silas and Timothy were living what they were preaching. What do people notice about your life?

January 11. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:6. The message of salvation, though welcomed with great joy, brought the church severe suffering because it led to persecution. Having believed the Good News and accepted new life in Christ, apparently many in the church believed they would be protected from death until Jesus returned. When believers began to die, some of the Christians started to question their faith. Many of Paul's comments throughout the rest of this letter were addressed to these people, as he explained what happens when believers die.