

Qs 7. *Is there a connection between living lives God's way and being joyful, or are they mutually exclusive?*

3. THE GOSPEL CAUSED A GREAT TRANSFORMATION IN THEM (1:8 – 10)

The gospel had such a transforming effect on the Thessalonians that they didn't even have to say much about it, because their faith in God, seen in their actions, was visible to all (1:8). Their action of turning from idol worship to worshipping the true and living God was a major transformation. Also, the hope in which they were now living, waiting for the return of Jesus, was another evidence of the effect of the gospel upon them.

Qs 8. *Why do you think the apostles were reminding the Thessalonians of the effectiveness of the gospel?*

Qs 9. *What must we do with the gospel, in the light of these evidences? Discuss Romans 1:16*

The 1st Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians

Study One

(April 2010)

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GOSPEL – 1 THESSALONIANS 1

This letter was written by Paul, Silas and Timothy, around A.D. 51, most likely from Corinth. These men had recently completed a visit to Thessalonica (**Acts 17:1-9**) where they had preached the gospel. Few believed (**Acts 17:4**), but the rest forced these apostles out of Thessalonica. They left and after passing through Berea and Athens', came to Corinth where they stayed a couple of years. During this time Timothy returned to Thessalonica and helped establish the church there. He then brought a good report back to Paul (**3:6**) and in response to this report, these apostles wrote to this young church.

1 Thessalonians is a letter written to encourage a young church facing severe opposition (**1:6; 2:14; 3:3, 4**). They also needed guidance in some basic doctrinal issues to build them in faith, love and hope (**5:8**).

Purpose: Paul begins in **chapter 1** by proving to them that the gospel message he and the other apostles brought was genuine. He proves this to them by showing them effect that the gospel has had on them.

Qs 1. *What is the gospel message? (1 Cor 15:1 – 4, Acts 17:3) Write a clear statement in your own words.*

Paul describes the *effect of the gospel message* on them to assure them that what they have come to believe and follow is in fact from God. The gospel had an effect on them in these ways:

1. THE GOSPEL PRODUCED FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE IN THEM (1:3)

The Thessalonians, having received the gospel, were now showing the fruit of its work in them. The three foundational Christian qualities of *faith, love* and *hope* (cf. 5:8; 1 Cor. 13:13; Col. 1:4–5) had given rise to *hard effort* and *endurance* despite an adverse situation.

Qs 2. *Define faith, hope, and love?*

Qs 3. *Why are these characteristics such necessary marks of a Christian?*

2. THE GOSPEL POWERFULLY PERSUADED THEM WHO ARE GOD'S ELECT (1:4, 5)

The way the gospel message came to the Thessalonians made it evident that it was indeed a work of God. First, Paul reminds them that they are loved by God and chosen by Him. From the word translated chosen (*eklogēn*) comes the English “election.” That God has chosen to bless some individuals with eternal life is clearly taught in many places in both the Old and New Testaments (e.g., Deut. 4:37; 7:6-7; Isa. 44:1-2; Rom. 9; Eph. 1:4-6, 11; Col. 3:12; 2 Thes. 2:13). Equally clear is the fact that God holds each individual personally responsible for his or her decision to either trust or not trust in Jesus Christ (cf. John 3:18; Rom. 10:8, 9).

The gospel message was not just a clearly delivered sermon, but came with great power and with conviction that the Holy Spirit brings. They would have felt a burning in their heart (Luke 24:32), a sense of God's love and a deep desire to repent and receive His gift. It had to be God who was speaking to them!

Qs 4. *What was your experience when you first heard the gospel message?*

Qs 5. *What about the gospel persuades you to believe?*

4. THE GOSPEL INSPIRED JOY IN THE MIDST OF TRIBULATION (1:6, 7)

The apostles writing this letter had faced much opposition in Philippi and now in Thessalonica as well, and yet with great joy they were declaring the message of Jesus. Those in Thessalonica, who heard it and received it with faith, were also experiencing great joy despite the trials and tribulations they were facing, so that all the people in neighboring areas had heard of them. Such joy had to be the work of the Holy Spirit in these believers. What an inspiring effect it was having!

Qs 6. *Is joy a necessary characteristic of a Christian? Why or why not?*