

Taking New Territory in Troubling Times, Pt. 2

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Review

Thessalonica —major City — Romans, Greeks, Jews; idolatry, debauchery, luxury

Started in troubled atmosphere — Acts 17:1-9 — preaching, teaching, believing, envy, riot, uproar, attacking mob, dragging Jason out of his house. They took new territory in troubling times!

Paul only spent a few weeks with them, and a few months later wrote this letter acknowledging the ingredients and the evidence of the new territory they took!

They serve as a great example to all churches at all times — but especially when the church is facing troubling times and is intent on taking new territory and not retreating!

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Ingredients and evidence of taking new territory

1 Thessalonians 1:1

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- *grace* — charis... divine ability to be and do what God has called us to... not all up to us... not will power... white knuckling. It's by grace that all this new territory was taken. That same grace is available to us today to be and do what God has called us to. We just have to receive it and walk in it and watch God do His thing through us.
- *peace* — *assurance that comes from experiencing God's grace*, not panicking in troubling times — peace, composure, confidence to move forward and not retreat. God will work wonders if we will trust and obey Him!

NEXT...

1 Thessalonians 1:3

Work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ

- three more ingredients of a “new territory-taking church”
- *hold that thought till the end, we'll see it again, help to serve as beautiful bookends with verse 9-10*

NEXT...

1 Thessalonians 1:5

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.

- not just words... not man's ideas, thoughts, philosophies, not just empty religious traditions; came in power of the Holy Spirit, and assurance, conviction!
- came with Holy Spirit power... **they received it, they didn't quench or grieve!**
- *Oh, that all pulpits and all peoples spoke the truth with Holy Spirit power behind it — because that's how lives are changed, kingdom expanded, new territory taken.*

NEXT...

1 Thessalonians 1:6

You became followers of us and of the Lord

- they understood there was a need to follow other Christians as well as the Lord. They understood life together, life accountable, life submissive, partnering with others in the body of Christ.

NEXT...

1 Thessalonians 1:6

You received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.

- they demonstrate receiving the Word and experiencing the Spirit's joy wasn't dependent upon easy outward circumstances. They had depth of character. **No stony, shallow, ground!**

NEXT...

1 Thessalonians 1:8

From you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place.

- God's Word went out from them everywhere, was "trumpeted" by personal sharing of what they knew wherever they went.

- knew their Word, after a few short months, bold enough to share it personally.
- *at some point in our lives it has to stop being okay to say, "I don't know my Bible; I'm scared to share my faith."*
- let's be a people who can say the Word of God is being trumpeted from us all over the place, let's take the Word every place. **We must if taking new territory!**

NEXT...

1 Thessalonians 1:8

Your faith toward God has gone out.

- they were known for **believing God**, not just believing **in** God. Their works of faith made headlines around the world; we're reading about them 2,000 years later.

***Hey — Grace Chapel —
we need to make some faith headlines that leave a legacy for generations!***

NEXT...

1 Thessalonians 1:7,9

You became examples, for they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you.

- Simply put... *the world was talking about* what a change had happened in their lives, and what great examples they were.

Question — *Wouldn't that be something if the world said, "That church over there isn't like other churches... they are different... you sure have changed since you've been going over there..." Positive change in us that is recognized by the world is what being a witness for Christ is all about. May it be said of us! **That's taking new territory in troubling times.***

NEXT...

1 Thessalonians 1:9, 3

vs.9) you turned to God from idols... vs.3) work of faith...

- **no more useless idolatry, getting priorities right, turning to God with your whole heart, nothing else before Him!**

1 Thessalonians 1:9, 3

vs.9) to serve the living and true God... vs. 3) labor of love...

- serving, laboring, getting hands dirty because Jesus cleaned their hearts! **Jesus isn't going to say, "Well done good and faithful student, scholar, church attendee" — YES to SERVANT!**

1 Thessalonians 1:10, 3

vs. 10) to wait for His Son from heaven... vs. 3) patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ...

- means I'm staying the course of successful Christian living, with a happy expectation of a joyful end, the return of the Son of God Who delivers us from hell's wrath and gives us heaven's glory.

These three principles must capture our attention

Friends — *the return of Jesus, judgment, heaven, hell, rewards, eternity...these things must capture our affections, energize our actions, and motivate the taking of new territory — even in troubling times.*

These three principles that are bookends for this chapter, are also bookends for our lives.

- a) we start by turning to God from idols
- b) we continue through life by serving the true and living God with a labor of love
- c) we patiently wait, with joy-filled, hopeful expectation of the glorious return of Jesus, who delivers us from wrath and gives us heaven's glory!

**Every ingredient and evidence we just looked at is required
if we are going to be an individual and a church
that takes new territory in troubling times —
let's do it!**

Discussion Questions

1. What is the purpose of “grace” beyond “God’s unmerited favor”?
2. Are you at the point in your life where you can stop being okay with saying, “I don’t know my Bible; I’m scared to share my faith.”
3. What will you do about it?
4. Discuss, *Jesus isn’t going to say*, “Well done good and faithful student, scholar, church attendee... but only good and faithful SERVANT.”
5. Would someone recognize you as a follower of Christ without your saying a word?
6. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:3. How are these three principles bookends for our lives?

NOTES