

“A Faith that Speaks for Itself”

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

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Rev. Brian T. Smeal; pastorsmeal@gmail.com

All Scripture quoted from ESV unless otherwise noted

1 Thessalonians is a letter, not a text book. Paul wrote a letter to encourage those in Thessalonica for their commitment to their faith.

A faith that speaks for itself is a faith of demonstration (v.2-3). Paul is thankful for the spiritual commitment he sees in the early church. They have shown that their faith in Jesus Christ is more than lip service. Faith is easy to claim, but the question is whether or not you are living it out. *Faith without effect is weak at best and phony at worst.* (James 2:26)

A faith that speaks for itself is a faith of imitation (v.4-6). The people of Thessalonica had seen the power of God at work in the lives of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. A faith that speaks for itself is not a question of just going through the motions; it is *a question of admiration and aspiration; a faith that demonstrates itself to others and inspires them to seek that sort of faith in their own lives. It is inspiring others to say, in effect, “I see your faith in action and I want MY faith to look like that.”*

There are many side benefits of this sort of faith, such as the fact that it gives strength to face difficulties, it reminds me that someone else is in control, and it affords me a sense of peace, hope, and joy.

Here’s a random sentence that doesn’t belong here, just to see if you’re paying attention.

Having a faith that speaks for itself means confidently saying, “Follow me, as I follow Jesus”

A faith that speaks for itself is a faith of inspiration (v.7-9a).

- What does it mean to inspire?
 - It means to make someone want to do something. For example:
 - “You’ve inspired me to be a better father, a better woman, a better neighbor, a better airplane pilot”
 - “You’ve inspired me to be a better friend, a better husband, a better coworker, a better business owner”
 - “You’ve inspired me to move away from you”

Matthew 5:16 – Jesus says, **“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”**

- A faith of inspiration points others not to YOU, but to GOD!
 - It leaves lasting effects on all those who encounter it.
 - Eugenia Price – *“If Christ lives in us, controlling our personalities, we will leave glorious marks on the lives we touch. Not because of us, but because of Him.”*

A faith that speaks for itself is a faith of adoration (v.9b). Everyone adores something. Would you agree with that statement? For some may adore their spouse, their children, or their job. For others, maybe it's the increasing of your bank account, your reputation at work or in the community, or maybe even your legacy for the next generation. How about you? What do you adore?

We've recently journeyed through the season of advent. During this time, you probably heard and maybe even sang a song that said, "O come let us adore Him." Adoration is not reserved for shepherds and wise men, though. Adoration is a fitting response on the part of all who know Christ as their Lord and Savior, and when those persons have a faith that speaks for itself, they will surely adore Jesus above all else.

The Thessalonians were in it – worshipping idols and serving themselves. But they turned from that and began to serve, love, and adore the true and living God. So *what does your faith allow you to turn away from? That is, what did faith replace in your life? Do you adore Jesus? Adoring Jesus means not being able to get enough of Him. No matter how much you know Jesus, you still hunger for more. That's a big part of what it means to have a faith that speaks for itself; a faith of adoration.*

And finally, a faith that speaks for itself is a faith of expectation (v.10). We are people of expectation, are we not? We make investments in the bank or the stock market or the real estate market, expecting a return. We turn up the thermostat, expecting to be warmer. If you were not a person of expectation, you would have thrown out your lawn chairs back in October, wouldn't you? Clearly, you understand expectation; you understand that it means looking forward, believing that something is on its way – maybe something that you have thus far only dreamt about.

*There is nothing that captures the imagination more than the glorious thought and blessed assurance that Jesus is coming again. In Acts 1, we see that after Jesus ascended into heaven, those who were there stood gazing up into the sky. I mean, really, wouldn't any of us do the same? But then two angelic messengers appear and ask them, **"Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."** (Acts 1:11)*

Do you live in a state of lesser expectation than those who stood there staring at the sky? Jesus is coming again – not as an infant in a manger, but as the victorious king. He is coming in the clouds to call unto Himself all those who have received Him. A faith that speaks for itself operates daily in the light of that expectation and prepares for it daily.

If you expected someone to come to your house, wouldn't you straighten up a little bit? If you expected Jesus to show up this morning, wouldn't you have prepared your heart just a little bit? Then if you expect Jesus to return one day, as He has promised, wouldn't that affect the way you live? It certainly should. Paul says to the Thessalonians, in effect, "Be ready; live in watchful expectation. Your faith has shown itself through the way you live. Continue in this way, but watch, and be ready."

May that be your desire and commitment as well. May you discover and cherish a level of faith in your Savior Jesus Christ that will inspire you and others to follow ever more closely in the master's footprints. May you demonstrate your faith in the way you live, the way you serve,

and the way you interact with others and with the Lord in prayer. May you live daily with a sense of urgent expectation, eagerly awaiting the return of Jesus Christ, the risen and soon coming King of Kings and Lord of Lords. May your faith guide and inspire you daily as you follow Jesus.

DIG IN!

Here are some farm-fresh questions that will help you to personalize and apply this morning's message.

- 1. What do we know about Timothy (Acts 16:1, 2 Tim. 1:5, 2 Tim. 3:15?) What difference does having a spiritual heritage make? What would you say to someone who does not have that?**
- 2. What do we know about Silvanus? (Acts 16:19-30, Acts 17:1-9)**
- 3. How have you partnered with others to serve the Lord? What advantages are there to partnering with other believers? What dangers might there be? Why?**
- 4. What 3 great works of grace do you see in 1 Thess. 1:3? (HINT: See 1 Cor. 13:13) How do these three works of grace show up in your own life?**
- 5. What's better, waffles or hot dogs?**
- 6. Why is verse 5 so important to your understanding of the early church's understanding of the gospel message?**
- 7. Whose faith have you imitated over the years? Why? What dangers are there in imitating others? (See Philippians 3:12-21)**
- 8. What have you learned through your personal time of Bible reading this week?**