

## **Visible to God – Teaching Notes**

(I Thessalonians 1:1-10; 6/6/10)

**Introduction:** A key idea in today's lesson is that the Thessalonians received the word of God and grew to be great examples of discipleship. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to receive God's word and grow in it as well.

### **Body:**

#### **Read I Thessalonians 1:1-3**

**I. Thanksgiving for the Thessalonians.** Paul, Silas, and Timothy are together as Paul writes to the church in Thessalonica. He wants them to have grace and peace. He mentions them in his prayers.

#### **Applications –**

- **Seeking God's blessings for one another.** Notice in vss. 1-2 that Paul wanted his readers to have grace and peace. He prayed for them often. The church ought to be a place where people are praying for one another and hoping for good things to happen to one another. Grace or undeserved mercy along with peace and tranquil minds and tranquil relations with God and others should be our desires for one another. Too often church folk don't pray for one another or desire that bad things happen. *Let's work on seeking God's blessings for one another.* When you pray for me and I pray for you, all kinds of good things can happen.

- **Living a life of good works and virtues.** Notice in vs. 3 that the Thessalonians had performed some good works with faith, love, and hope. When Paul prayed for them, he was conscious of the good works and virtues in their lives. There are too many who either live sinful lives or lives of so little good that it is hard to really focus on their good works. *Let's live so that when people think of us, they think of the good that we do and the godly virtues in our lives.* Let's live the way we want to be remembered by people and judged by God. This kind of living should be noted for loving God, ourselves, and others.

#### **Read I Thessalonians 1:4-6**

**II. Salvation of the Thessalonians.** Paul talks about how his readers were elected by God. The Thessalonians received the gospel from Paul and company with joy. They had joy, in spite of the affliction and hard times that were being experienced.

#### **Applications –**

- **Living like we know that God loves and has chosen us.** Notice in vs. 4 that the Thessalonians were beloved and elected or chosen by God. This is not only true for the Thessalonians, but it is also true of every believer. That is, we are beloved by and elected by God. And we should be beloved by other believers. With this kind of perspective of our lives, we should fight off depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. If God loved us enough to elect/choose us then we should love ourselves enough to lift up our heads and strive to live by God's blessed plan for our lives. *Let's live like we know that God loves and has chosen us.* Let's also work on demonstrating love for one another.

- **Living so the gospel can be communicated.** Notice in vss. 5-6 that as Paul and company worked on presenting God's word in such a way that the Thessalonians could receive it that God confirmed and added increase to the sharing of the word. A part of sharing the word was Paul and company living a life that was consistent with the message that they were preaching and teaching. *Let's work on living in such a way that people will listen to what we have to say long enough for God to provide the increase and confirmation.* This is a good place to remind one another that people often don't care how much we know, until they know how much we care. The demonstration of love is essential in communicating the gospel.

- **Receiving God's word with joy.** Notice in vs. 6 that the people heard the word with joy, in spite of their afflictions and hard times. Joy includes feeling great because of one's relationship with and confidence in God. Happiness includes feeling great because of the great things that are happening to us. Sometimes it is hard to feel happy, especially when affliction is all around. In our text, there was some religious persecution. In many of our lives, there is financial challenges, health concerns, and relational drama. But we can still have joy, because we know that God is working all things out for the good of His people. *Let's work on receiving God's word with joy, in spite of our circumstances.* Personal study and congregational studies (e.g., Sunday School and Wednesday Bible Study) are great places to hear the word of God. The more we see how God has taken situations of affliction and turned them around (e.g., Daniel in the lion's den, the Noah's ark on dry land, Paul and Silas in prison, etc.) the more we can have joy, in spite of our afflictions.

### **Read I Thessalonians 1:7-10**

**III. Testimony of the Thessalonians.** Paul talks about how the Thessalonians have set a great example for others, especially those in Macedonia and Achaia. The Thessalonians have been faithful witnesses. They were noted for turning to God from their idols.

#### **Applications –**

- **Being examples of discipleship.** Notice in vss. 7-9 that the Thessalonian believers were examples of discipleship. They repented of their idolatry. They were bold witnesses for the Lord. They were active in doing a good work for the Lord. *Let's work on being examples of discipleship.* This includes turning to God from the sins that are in our lives. This includes inviting and bringing loved ones to church and Christ. This includes being busy with a good work that God has placed on our hearts.

- **Waiting on the Lord.** Notice in vss. 10 that the Thessalonian believers were waiting on the Lord. To wait on the Lord does not mean to sit and do nothing. It means doing what God has instructed you to do with the expectation that the Lord may return at any moment. *Let's make sure that our hope and expectation is in the Lord and not the things of this world.* The things of this world have a way of letting us down, when we need them the most.

**Conclusion:** Let's work on receiving God's word and growing in it. God has much for those who obey His will.