

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-6 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Carrying On The Ministry Work

INTRO: Have you ever stopped to wonder how the church or ministry you are involved in was run 3 years ago, 5 years ago, 10 years ago? Who were the people doing the ministry work back then and what did their programs consist of? Were they faithful to stay true to the Word of God? Were lives impacted for righteousness? Was the Kingdom of God advanced through them? And what part, what role do you now need to fulfill in order for the legacy to carry on?

In this same regard, let's look at the example of Paul, Silas, and Timothy and their having left the Thessalonian church.

BACKGROUND: Paul and Silas had previously been in Thessalonica, preached the Gospel there, started a church there, and stayed in Jason's house until they were forced to leave due to persecution (see Acts 17:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 2:1,9,17). Prevented from returning, Paul and Silas later sent Timothy "to strengthen and encourage" the Thessalonian believers in their faith (1 Thessalonians 2:17-18; 3:1-2). Timothy returned to Paul and Silas with a good report about the Thessalonian believers, which then prompted the three of them to write this letter to the church of the Thessalonian believers (vv.3:6; 1:1).

READ: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-6

[Lesson Question: How do Paul, Silas, and Timothy continue to regard the Thessalonian believers, even after having since left the Thessalonian church?]

SECTION POINT: Even after having since left the Thessalonian church, Paul, Silas, and Timothy continue to regard and remember the Thessalonian believers in prayer with thanksgiving and appreciation.

- - Paul, Silas, and Timothy are always thanking God for all of the Thessalonian believers. (v.2)
 - - They are praying for the Thessalonian believers. (v.2)
 - - They are continually appreciating and remembering before God the quality ministry work the Thessalonians are producing. (v.3)
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[Lesson Question: Why do Paul and his group members still keep the Thessalonians in mind and in importance?]

SECTION POINT: Paul and his group members still keep the Thessalonians in mind and in importance because of a spiritual and ministry bond they each have with the Thessalonian believers.

- - Each member of Paul's group regards himself as a spiritual mentor (v.5) and role model (v.6) to the Thessalonian believers, thus having a special bond with them.

- - They obviously have a sustained care about the Thessalonian believers (“always” v.2 and “continually” v.3).
 - - Paul’s group members have a vested interest in the Thessalonian believers and for how they are doing spiritually (v.3) - Paul’s group lived among them for their sake (v.5).
 - - The Thessalonian believers have been chosen by God just like Paul, Silas, and Timothy have, to be fellow members of the Kingdom (v.4) and are likewise loved by God (v.4) - i.e. spiritual brothers of equal standing before God (v.4).
 - - The Thessalonian believers received the gospel (vv.4-5) and “welcomed the message” (v.6) that Paul’s group presented to them, letting it bear fruit in their lives and their ministry work (v.3).
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[Lesson Question: What benefits did Paul and his group members derive from the Thessalonians responding positively with both faith and actions to the ministry work Paul's group was doing among them?]

SECTION POINT: When the people respond positively with both faith and actions to the ministry work being done among them, those doing the ministering derive the benefits of encouragement and joy.

- - When the Thessalonians responded positively with both faith and actions to the ministry work being done among them, they became a source of long-term encouragement and joy for Paul, Silas, and Timothy. (v.3; vv.2:19-20)
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[Lesson Question: What is the inferred expectation for the Thessalonians?]

SECTION POINT: The inferred expectation is that the Thessalonian believers are to continue to do the ministry work Paul's group had started among them.

- - The Thessalonian believers were doing ministry "work produced by faith". (v.3)
- - They were toiling, exerting draining effort, and laboring in doing ministry work, which was "prompted by love" from their faith. (v.3; Strong's #2873)
- - And they were cheerfully, hopefully, and constantly enduring in living their faith and doing ministry work, being inspired by and in accordance with their faith. (v.3; Strong's #5281)
- - The Thessalonian believers became imitators of Paul's group and "of the Lord" (v.6) - i.e. doing the same kinds of ministry activities that Paul's group had modeled with them (vv.6-7).
- - In this passage, the Thessalonian believers are being commended for imitating, continuing, and even expanding the ministry work Paul's group had started among them. (vv.6-8)
- - Essentially then, the Thessalonian believers became members on the same team with Paul's group, working for the same purposes and goals.
- - From the general content and tone of this passage and its commendations, there is an inferred expectation by Paul, his group, and the Lord that the Thessalonian believers are to continue to properly carry on the ministry work that had been started there among them. (derived primarily from vv.3,6,7,8; cf. v.9; 2:1,14; 3:5)
- - This expectation applies to us believers today, that God expects, designates, and even assigns us to continue doing the ministry work that was modeled and started in the

past among our predecessors, who have toiled, labored, and endured in that ministry work over time. Now it is your turn and responsibility to carry on the ministry work.

BIG IDEA: We are to properly carry on the ministry work that has been conducted among us for us, continuing to labor together for the same purposes and goals.

APPLICATIONS:

- - When you leave a church to go on to another church, how do you usually subsequently regard that former church?
 - - Do you usually forget about them quickly, out of sight - out of mind?
 - - Or do you continue to remember them in prayer? (v.2)

 - - When you arrive at the next church, do you look for ways to get involved?
 - - Do you take seriously your responsibility, your obligation to carry on the ministry work that has been done in that church for years or perhaps decades?
 - - Or do you sit on the sidelines as a spectator, totally content to let others do the work?

 - - When you do get involved in doing ministry work in a church or ministry, do you regard your fellow ministry workers as being on the same team, pursuing the same purposes and goals?
 - - Or by your attitudes or actions do you tend to regard them as competitors, to be outmaneuvered?

 - - Do you openly and verbally acknowledge and commend the appropriate or sacrificial ministry work of others around you?
 - - Or do contempt and criticism dominate your responses to the ministry work efforts of others in the church or ministry you attend?
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Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

"Strong's Greek Dictionary." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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