

Joy in Affliction

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Introduction

When I read that the Thessalonians received the Word in much affliction, I immediately wondered what their trouble was. So, I looked up the story in **Acts** where Paul and Silas first visit Thessalonica (Read **Acts 17:1-9**).

Affliction

Now we know what their trouble, their affliction was. Some Jews and Gentiles were believing in Jesus. The rest of the Jews got jealous and formed a mob to stir up trouble. After stirring up the people, they went to the authorities to turn them against the Christians. They said the same thing the Jews said to Pilate about Jesus: *these Christians claimed there was another king besides Caesar*. Since they couldn't find Paul and Silas, the ringleaders, the authorities basically extorted money from Jason and the others.

Joy of the Holy Spirit

Yet, amid all this trouble, they had joy. In fact, they received the Word, which was why they got into trouble, with joy. How can this be? The first thing to remember is the source of joy. It's the joy of the Holy Spirit. We must understand the difference between happiness and joy. Happiness is an emotion and is dependent on externals. Joy is a gift of God, generated by the Holy Spirit. It is an inner state of mind, an attitude, not dependent on what's going on. To put it simply, "happiness is about what happens; joy comes from faith in Jesus."

Example of Joy

The Thessalonians are examples to all believers. This is because joy, while being internal, produces fruit. Joy comes from faith; faith produces fruit. What is this fruit? How are the Thessalonians examples?

Faith

We see these in **verse 3** of our text. First, is the example of their work of faith. Notice, Paul is in line with what James says about faith. *But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works (James 2:18)*. Like we've said before, saving faith produces the fruit of good works. The things that we do for God, motivated by faith, shine forth as examples, showing our faith. In this case, showing our joy.

Love

Next, we see their labor of love. Remember, I said two weeks ago that only works motivated by faith are good works. Works motivated by love are not good works. The truth is, you can't separate faith from love. God loves us and gives us love along with faith. So, a work of faith can still be a labor of love. Not that we are motivated by love but doing the work in love. We not only show our faith in God by our good works, but we also show our love for others.

Hope

True hope in the Lord is not a fleeting thing, swayed by the winds of change. Hope in the Lord is based on what the Bible says about Jesus. The Bible says that He is the Son of God, come down from heaven and born of the virgin Mary. He's fully God and fully Man, a divine miracle. He died on the cross to take our place and give us forgiveness of sins. He was raised the third day so we might have eternal life in Him. He ascended to heaven so He could send the Holy Spirit to guide, empower, and comfort us. And He's coming back to judge the living and the dead and will take His own to live with Him forever. That's our hope.

Joy of the Spirit Through the Power of the Word

The Gospel came to the Thessalonians in Word and power. There's power in the Word of God. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Romans 1:16)*. The same power of the Word that gives us the faith to believe in Jesus gives us the joy of the Holy Spirit. God does the same thing when we receive COMMUNION, the Visible Gospel. May God give us the joy of the Holy Spirit, so we can have **JOY IN AFFLICTION** and be examples in FAITH, HOPE, and LOVE.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
