



HOW WE KNOW WE ARE CHOSEN BY GOD, PART 3

Week #5; Feb. 8, 2026, 11AM

Taught at: Ridgeview Classical Schools
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Review:

- Today's lesson is **Part 3** of 'How We Know We Are Chosen by God.'
- In the last two lessons, we've unpacked a part of the first chapter of **1 Thessalonians** in which Paul outlines to this new body of believers why they are chosen by God.
- And by 'chosen,' I mean 'chosen for salvation.' Paul is assured of their salvation, and he wants them to see why he has this confidence. It's basically a three-point outline.
- In **vss. 4 and 5**, we saw these new believers' **RESPONSE**:
 - The Gospel came to them '*with power*' – it was divinely energized.
 - The Gospel also came '*with the Holy Spirit*' – their hearts were prepared to receive it.
 - The Gospel also came '*with deep conviction*' – their **RESPONSE** was they were convicted about their sin. They believed in Jesus Christ and they were saved.
- Then, last week, in **vss. 6 and 7**, we saw these new believers **RESULTS**:
 - They *became imitators of Paul and of the Lord* – it's an important insight into true discipleship. We need to duplicate ourselves 'in Christ.'
 - These new believers also '*welcomed the message (of the Gospel) with joy despite of severe suffering*' – this is not natural; it is instead a Godly display.
 - Their 'joy' was the fact that they experienced overwhelming peace and contentment that transcends human understanding.
 - Their circumstances were oppressive. Their pain was real. They were suffering, but because they had an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they **rested** wholly on the divine sovereign will of God in their lives.
 - These new believers became '*models*' or '*examples*' of faith to other believers. Their impact and testimony affected a much wider region.
 - These things collectively showed the **RESULTS** of being 'chosen by God.'

NOTE: So, we saw these new believers' **RESPONSE** and their **RESULTS**. This week, we see their **REPUTATION**, and we find these details in **vss. 8-10 of 1 Thessalonians Ch. 1**.

NOTE: These verses plainly show these new believers' **REPUTATION**. I've outlined five aspects of their **REPUTATION** from this passage. They are things others knew about them:

1. They were courageous in HOW they were proclaiming.

2. They were clear in WHO they were placing their faith.
3. They were consistent in WHAT they were doing.
4. They were committed to WHERE they were going.
5. They were comforted by WHO they knew was coming.

A. They were courageous in HOW they were proclaiming (Cf. vs. 8) – “it rang out, it sounded forth, it resounded” (different translations). Their reputation was they were bold.

NOTE: This was an unmistakable message. It was obvious. It was like a trumpet call.
What can we conclude from this assessment?

- 1. They had no thought of keeping the truth of the Gospel to themselves.**
 - This is a picture of true believers in true action. Their own response to the Gospel produced the effect of doing something about it.
 - They became active passionate witnesses. They were action oriented.
 - I do not see that they worried about what would happen if they did the right thing. They simply did their part and left the rest up to God.
 - We also see here that they were not timid. I think it has become a misnomer in the church today that faith is a very ‘personal matter.’ The idea being we should not foist our convictions on others.
 - These new Thessalonian believers would disagree with that stance. There was nothing secretive about who they were or what they believed. Everyone knew.
 - They had a burning zeal for Christian commitment, and they made the truth of the Gospel clear to those around them. And everything spread out from there.

2. They showed they had a true saving faith.

- The Bible teaches us that whatever the heart believes, the mouth follows suit and makes confession. **Luke 6:45** says:

“A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”

- One of the clearest evidences of these new believers’ genuine faith is the truth that ‘rang out’ from them. They could not contain what was inside of them; it had to be released to the outside.
- The Greek language of this passage also emphasizes that this testimony of their salvation was complete in its message.
- It was exerting a continuous effect. The picture of their faith that we see here emanated like a radio signal – it went out in all directions.

3. While Paul has already said they were ‘elected’ or ‘chosen,’ they didn’t subscribe to the notion that “God will save those He wants to save, and He doesn’t need my help.”

- This sort of person does not properly understand the doctrine of sovereign election - nor do they properly understand the mission of evangelism.
- In the Bible, election always involves responsibility. God chose Israel and made them an elect nation so that they might be a witness to the Gentiles.
- In the very same way, God has chosen the church we are part of today. But He has chosen it for a purpose - that we might be witnesses right now.
- The fact that we are God's elect people does not excuse us from the task of evangelism. Some people hold to that view, but this is wrong.
- On the contrary, the Biblical doctrine of election should be one of the greatest encouragements TO evangelize.
- As Warren Wiersbe puts it, "The same God who ordains the end (the salvation of the lost) also ordains the means to the end (the preaching of the Gospel)."
- There is no conflict or confusion between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, even though we cannot reconcile the two matters in our human mind.

B. They were clear in WHO they were placing their faith. They had placed their faith and trust "in God" (**vs. 8**).

NOTE: Have you ever known a 'Christian' that left you somewhat unsure about where they stood? I've known plenty of these...

1. Last week, we learned that these new Thessalonian believers were 'models' to other believers.

NOTE: In other words, this was a bunch of folks about which nothing was unclear.

- Part of being a 'model' or an 'example' such as these believers were is being very clear about WHO you have placed your full faith and trust in.
- In **vs. 8**, this issue is crystal clear. These believers had '*faith in God*'.
- With many Christians today – and with many churches for that matter – it is not so clear WHO they have placed their faith in.
- NOTE: I've been invited to several meetings in the last couple of months where pastors and various Christian leaders have organized themselves to impact state and federal policy, and to impact school boards and local governance.
- I'm not saying any of this is wrong, but it can easily lead to placing faith in other people APART from God. Good things quickly become adversaries of the best.
- I've sat in these meetings and listened and observed. There is a great deal of passion by some of these folks to 'save our nation,' 'save our schools,' and so on.
- Our churches are being increasingly seen as opportunities for politics – and I think that does not bode well for the clear proclamation of the Gospel.

- I'm not convinced that any of these efforts will amount to much in the long term anyways. The Bible says very clearly that society will continue to erode.

NOTE: I'm all about being '*salt and light*,' but certain passions need to be kept in balance. Good things can quickly compete with the best. We don't want to be 'do-gooders' if that means we need to stop being 'do-besters.'

- Personally, I feel if these people gave the same energy to proclaiming the true Gospel, to responsibly teaching the full counsel of God's Word, and to edifying and equipping the saints instead of trying to be 'attractive to the lost,' then they'd have a more lasting and valuable impact.
- These new Thessalonian believers were renowned – not for their politics, not for their activism, and not for their passion to be culturally-relevant.
- Their reputation in **vs. 8** was their '*faith in God*.' They were known for having, showing, and proclaiming the truth. They were known for a right relationship with God.

C. They were consistent in *WHAT* they were doing.

NOTE: The great evangelist, D.L. Moody, once said, "*It is a great deal better to live a holy life than to talk about it.*" With this point Moody makes, we see how these new believers conducted themselves.

- 1. Several things are mentioned in this passage about what these new believers were doing, and we've brought up a few of them already:**
 - They were conducting themselves as '*model examples*.'
 - They were ringing out the truth of the Gospel boldly.
 - They were impacting an ever-widening circle of people.
 - They were displaying their clear '*faith in God*.'
 - And here's a couple of new ones in **vs. 9** -- they were warm and receptive, and they were repentant.
- 2. Paul states in **vs. 9** that these new believers had earned a reputation for the way they received Paul and his companions.**
 - We learned at the very start of this series that Paul experienced a lot of difficulties in his ministry. He was often received very poorly.
 - But in this case, the Thessalonian believers were different. In the words of the NLT, they had given Paul a '*wonderful welcome*.' This was not the normal pattern.
 - It was different from a lot of Paul's experiences, and other people noticed this. This became part of the **reputation** of these new Thessalonian believers, and folks were talking about it.
 - People notice when you are exceptional. People notice when you are different than the 'norm.' People notice when you are welcoming and nice.

NOTE: In all these things – these new believers were consistent. And there's one more thing they were consistent in: they had turned away from idols. That leads directly into the fourth aspect of their reputation.

D. They were committed to WHERE they were going.

NOTE: This point gets to the heart of 'repentance.' It's a directional issue. It's a U-Turn. It's a 180 degrees turnabout. It's an about face, and going someplace else.

1. These new Thessalonian believers had 'turned to God from idols' in vs. 9.

- They had repented of their former ways. They had left their sinful practices. They had left their practice of worshipping idols and false 'gods.'
- They were now known as being people who 'served the living and true God.'
- This was their new direction, and they were committed to it. They were committed to the narrow path and the small gate.
- This was a big change, and others noticed it and talked about it. How could they not?
- It made other people question what THEY THEMSELVES were doing. These new Thessalonian believers had repented, turning from belief in "nothing" to belief in the ultimate Truth.

In **John 14:6**, Jesus says, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father but through me.*"

- When the eyes of our faith are truly opened, when we fully see the true and living God, then the vain, dead, meaningless things of this world are seen for what they really are: being the empty, unsatisfying, and worthless elements they really are.
- This is a HUGE difference from the patterns of the world around us. When we choose to be committed to a new direction, when we know WHERE we are going and we live like we believe that - - then others notice.
- It becomes part of our **REPUTATION**. Our reversal of direction, of change of attitude, and our turnabout behavior and point of view gets noticed.
- It's not something we can – or should! – hide. And people will talk about it, because it sets us apart from the norm.

E. They were comforted by WHO they knew was coming.

NOTE: This is a compelling matter – especially in our times today. Have we gained the **reputation** as people who are comforted by our expectation of Jesus Christ's imminent return?

NOTE: I want to touch on a couple of things concerning this issue that are brought out in **vs. 10**.

1. First, we are instructed a little later in this same book, in *1 Thessalonians 4:18*, that – concerning the pretribulation Rapture - we are to "comfort each other with these words."

- But - according to recent studies, only about 36% of pastors in the U.S. believe in the Biblical doctrine of a literal, pre-tribulation rapture.
- Seminary education is not helping this dilemma either. Pastors with a master's or doctorate degree are more likely to say the rapture isn't literal. They believe the Bible must mean something other than what it is saying.
- Likewise, younger pastors (under 45) are more inclined to disbelieve the Biblical doctrine of the Rapture. **Yes, we have a serious problem!**
- Paul's instructions that we '*comfort one another with these words*' are consistent with what he says here in **Ch. 1:10**.
- He compliments these new Thessalonian believers for the reputation they have as a group of people who are "...*waiting for His Son FROM heaven....who rescues us from the coming wrath.*"
- There is no way to sidestep what's being stated here: part of faithful living, and part of gaining the right **REPUTATION**, is constantly living in the belief and expectation of "*our blessed hope.*"
- Most churches today have the **reputation** of mocking Bible prophecy, of saying the study of eschatology is not important, of holding to beliefs and ideas which stray from Scripture and which offer no comfort.
- Most churches today are more accurately described by the passage in **2 Peter 3:3-4** which says:

"Most importantly, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

- These are issues we will have an opportunity to dig into much more as we work our way through **1 and 2 Thessalonians**. These two books have much to say about Jesus Christ's return.
- But for our present purposes, we need to understand that these new believers were certain of the pretribulation Rapture, and they were certain of their rescue "*from the coming wrath,*" and Paul commended them for it.

2. Part of these new believers' REPUTATION was they were living for the bigger picture.

- We've talked about this before – this was not a body of believers who were trying to conform to this world. They were not trying to 'fit in.'
- They recognized, in the words of **1 Peter 2:11**, that they were '*strangers, aliens, foreigners, sojourners, and exiles*' in this world.
- This world was not their home – they were just passing through – and they believed that! And their **reputation** was that they lived according to their beliefs.
- I believe a great danger awaits many false 'Christians' today. They will not only be left behind in the Rapture, but their example will be used to argue the Rapture never happened.

- Many people (not all, but ‘many’) who are left behind will continue to NOT believe in the Rapture AFTER it actually happens.
- It’s one of the most stubborn attributes of human nature: we don’t want to be wrong -- and furthermore, God is going to send a ‘*powerful delusion so they will believe THE lie*’ (**Cf. 2 Thess. Ch. 2**).
- Most churches today are not teaching the truth, and so they are positioning many to deny the facts when they are made clear.
- Paul commands these new Thessalonian believers for not being like this in any way.
- These Christians believed in the pretribulation Rapture. They lived for an eternal perspective, and this had become part of their **REPUTATION**.

LET ME CLOSE WITH A COUPLE QUESTIONS (these are rhetorical ones that I want you to think about and reflect on):

1. What is the sphere of influence that God has given to you?

- We read here in this first chapter of **1 Thessalonians** that these new believers impacted others around them. We read that their influence spread.
- So -- who is around YOU, and what is your influence on THEM?
- Paul has been making a strong case for how he knows these new Thessalonian believers are ‘chosen by God.’
- And one of the assessment tools he uses is stating what happened within their sphere of influence.
- One of the evidences in our life that we are ‘chosen by God’ should be the influence we have on others around us.
- Do we cause them to look up, to change their direction, and to embrace the truth of the Gospel -- or do we let them stay ‘as they are:’ lost, directionless, confused, and without a saving faith?

2. Do you have any worthless idols you are hiding in your heart?

- The Thessalonian believers “*turned to God from idols*.” They saw their sin; they saw their worthless pursuits. They made an about-face.
- It can be tempting to stay right where we are – especially if others are doing what we’re doing, and if they are valuing the same things.
- But each of us is going to meet Jesus Christ personally one day -- and He is not going to evaluate you on the basis of how you ‘played the game.’
- If you are truly saved, then He is going to judge the value of your works, your pursuits, your priorities, and what you did with the little time you had on earth.
- Our worthless idols clutter our narrow path. They dim our proper view. They trip us up when we need to be walking with strength.
- This is a good time to look inward and see what ‘idols’ you might have – what things are keeping you from a right **RESPONSE**, the right **RESULTS**, and from having a right **REPUTATION**.

NEXT TIME: We have now completed ***chapter 1 of 1 Thessalonians***. Considering the issues Paul has made clear to us, I want to take a couple of special lessons and unpack some key questions related to the things we've learned.

Here are a few of those:

1. How should we properly define the Gospel?
2. Does God choose us, or do we choose Him?
3. Do we have eternal security if we are a believer?
4. Why do we struggle with doubts about our salvation?
5. What can we know about the issue of 'backsliding'?

I think diving into those questions will be a good exercise for us – a good supplement to the things we've already learned in ***Ch. 1***.



Solid Bread Community was started with a passion to teach the truth of God's Word – every part of it, as it was divinely inspired to be understood.

The rules are simple. First, teach what IS there. Don't pretend the Bible is not saying what it is saying.

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Second, don't teach what is NOT there. Don't force a passage to mean something it really doesn't.

And – number three, if the Bible states it plainly, we should too.

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