

Reasons to be Thankful

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5a

1 & 2 Thessalonians

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### Introduction

- Every good parent loves to give good gifts to their kids | *Luke 11, Myeong preached about it*
- But good parents also know when it's not good for them
  - They can still really love the gift, as long as they show gratitude
- Nobody likes an ingrate. A spoiled brat. Veruca Salt.
- I will argue that every single one of us struggles—to one extent or another—with it
- But I will also argue that God offers us a way to live in his love with gratitude
  - 1 & 2 Thes really help us see the goodness of God leading to thankful

(big idea) When we truly see the goodness of God, we can't help but be thankful

### A Warm Greeting

**1 Thessalonians 1** <sup>1</sup> Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy: To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace. <sup>2</sup> We always thank God for all of you...

- Group authorship | Almost always “we” in this letter
  - Paul: Hebrew name Sha'ul, major life transition once encountering Jesus
  - Timothy: young pastor in training, Acts 16, half Jewish/Greek, letters of Timothy
  - Silvanus: Latin version of the Hebrew name...Silas! Jerusalem council, travel partner, also mentioned as a writer in 1st Peter
- A church in Thessalonica, but what's more important is being in God the Father and Jesus
- “Grace and peace” is a standard greeting in Paul's letters
- Thankfulness is introduced *right out of the gate*

1) why they are thankful, 2) what they are thankful for, and 3) how we can have this gratitude.

- Where and when? Everywhere and always!

### I. The “Why” of Thankfulness

**1 Thessalonians 1** <sup>2</sup> We always thank God for all of you, making mention of you constantly in our prayers. <sup>3</sup> We recall, in the presence of our God and Father, your work produced by faith, your labor motivated by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, <sup>5</sup> because our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full assurance.

- No generic gratitude here | Worldly gratitude is always about circumstances, money, family
- This is a specific gospel gratitude. You've heard this message and it's changed everything

## A Gospel That Is...

1. Trinitarian | *Father...Lord Jesus...Holy Spirit*
    - a. God is three in one, creating all things out of the overflow of relationship and love
    - b. Redemption: right focus on Jesus: perfect life, sacrificial death, resurrection!
      - i. But all 3 persons are indispensably involved!!
  2. Loving | *brothers and sisters loved by God*
    - a. Grounded in the Trinity, eternal relationship of love
    - b. Redemption: for God so loved the world that the Son was sent
  3. Intentional | *...chosen by God*
    - a. People get wrapped up in the language of chosen, elect, predestined
    - b. God wanted you and did everything for you to be redeemed
  4. Assuring | *...with full assurance*
    - a. Because God chose you, and because the payment was made in Christ's blood, you can have confidence and assurance
    - b. Well-meaning Christians can instill fear about salvation in order to prevent sin
      - i. Of course don't sin! But assurance is a better motivator
  5. Received by faith | *...works produced by faith*
    - a. You must believe that it's true | **GOSPEL INVITATION**
  6. Relational | *...all of you, plural "y'all"*
    - a. Saved, forgiven, loved, chosen, and brought into a family!!
- A gospel-gratitude doesn't shift up and down with our circumstances
  - On your good/bad days, rich/poor, healthy/sick...the tomb is still empty!
    - No, don't do Christian platitudes of minimize suffering and hardship
    - But, YES make the gospel the foundation for your gratitude

## What They're Grateful For

**1 Thessalonians 1**<sup>3</sup> We recall, in the presence of our God and Father, your work produced by faith, your labor motivated by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Specific things that the message of the gospel does in the lives of believers
- Faith...hope...love...sound familiar???
  - Rom. 5:1-5; 1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5-6; Col. 1:4-5; 1 Pet. 1:21-22; Heb. 10:22-24

## Grateful for Hearts

1. Faith | Belief, trust, loyalty
  - a. Sounds very Christian-ey, but these other words help fill it out
  - b. I *believe* the news, I *trust* the claims, I am *loyal* to the Messiah
2. Love | Affection + intention
  - a. Two realities that, on their own, can be a problem: feeling vs acting

- b. Different people can lean in to their strengths, but work on the weaknesses
- 3. Hope | Future confidence
  - a. Christian hope is not a “wish upon a star”
  - b. The hope we have is grounded in the past reality that the tomb is empty

*Paul, Timothy, and Silas are grateful for gospel-shaped hearts, but also for tangible realities...*

### **Grateful for Results**

- 1. Work | Gospel behavior
  - a. Focused more on character, good works, not sinning, acting in a godly way
- 2. Labor | Gospel service
  - a. Feeding the hungry, telling others the gospel message, sending money

**Gene Green** Here the word most likely refers to any kind of self-sacrificing labor the believers engaged in as they served those both inside and outside the community.

\*Probably can't be too dogmatic about how best define these words

\*\*But together, it's demonstrated actions that are a blessing to others

- 3. Endurance | Godly grit
  - a. Pressure in Thessalonica, mocking, ostracizing, hard persecution

*The reason that they are grateful is the gospel*

*They are for the things the gospel message does in the hearts and lives of believers*

*Let's land the plane by thinking how we can be grateful*

*(big idea style) Ground your gratitude in the gospel*

### **Gospel-Grounded Gratitude (Remind yourself!!)**

- 1. Every good thing we have is a gift from God
  - a. North Seattle affluent suburbs, it's easy to compare
- 2. Every hardship we experience is an opportunity
  - a. Kill the idols of comfort and convenience
  - b. Opportunity to experience God's true comfort
  - c. Re-oriented to what's truly important
- 3. Every day, the tomb is still empty
  - a. If the worst thing happens and we die, we will rise with Christ
  - b. When he returns, we will reign with him forever