1 Thessalonians 1: 1-10. Faith, Love, Hope and Copying.

Letter written by Paul to church in Thessalonica. A Greek seaport city, important trade centre. Largest city in Macedonia and capital of the province.

Paul had been to Thessalonica with Silas. Had preached in synagogue about Jesus. Thessalonians had accepted the message – some Jewish but mainly gentiles.

In Acts 17 it tells us that the Jews who had not accepted were jealous. Rounded up bad characters, formed a mob and rioted. Searched for Paul and Silas but could not find them. The Thessalonian church helped Paul and Silas escape.

New-found believers left without apostolic leader to expand upon what was required to follow Jesus.

Paul and Silas were writing the letter remembering them in prayer – sign of fondness, care and standing in unity.

3 things mentioned:

FAITH – faith is based on past revelation. It is seeing the result of actions taken that encourage you to continue to trust and spurs on to further action.

Example: Giving to poor – being sacrificial – not going hungry yourself

 When act, see God is there. Past event into future actions

LOVE – Love is what prompts us into action. Yes, faith encourages us to do things, but love is the catalyst. Seeing people as a valuable commodity, worthy of help. Offer kindness despite ridicule.

Love is present – produces the labour of living a Christ life. Exhausting, exertion required, doing, practical.

HOPE – The hope being mentioned is not wishful thinking. It is deep hope that Christ is redeemer, saviour, comforter – the Truth.

Hope is future – and gives us strength to endure.

Paul knows that Thessalonians were chosen because of the gospel being shared in words, but with power of Holy Spirit.

Word of God is Spirit’s sword. Spirit without word is weaponless. Word without Spirit is powerless.

If we have the Holy Spirit, but do not speak to people with knowledge of God’s word, then we are lacking the words and promises that will cut into the culture of today. If we use only God’s word, but the Spirit is not there with conviction it is just stories and warnings. Not real.

The purpose of the gospel – good news - is to build the church. Dependent on each other. Cannot have God’s church if there is no gospel. If hear and accept the gospel, then we are convicted to become church. To reflect the truth and nature of Jesus.

Thessalonians continued living as church. Despite the severe suffering surrounding them. When Paul and Silas were not found the Jewish leaders had dragged the person who they had been staying with, and some other Christians, into the crowd and before the city officials. Jason was made to GUARANTEE a peaceful, quiet community or else faced confiscation of his properties and even death.

Let us not forget who had stirred up the riotous mob – jealous Jewish leaders – but Jason was the one who had to make a guarantee.

Not fair, not just. But this is what the Thessalonian Christians were living within.

Despite this, continued to imitate Paul and Silas. In the way they lived, their preaching – what do you think that would entail?

Through their imitation of Paul, they also became a model to believers in Macedonia and Achaia. And the message also rang out beyond that area.

Imitators of imitators of imitators. Following the leader (childhood game).

The news was carried so far and wide that Paul and Silas did not have to tell others about how faithful the Thessalonians had been to Christ and to them, as other people were bringing the news to them.

Told how they had turned away from idols. In Thessalonica especially this was a big deal. Mount Olympus is very close where the Greek gods were supposed to live.

Turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven.

Faith that this was true – was from past events that HAD already happened. First coming of Christ

Love for each other and to live a life that reflects Jesus is the present.

Hope that the work of Jesus is not finished completely. His forgiveness and sacrifice that has been shown is for our assurance of eternal life with Him – future.

Imitators – we need to follow what Jesus has shown us.

Jesus will return. The details and the timing are unknown – but we are living in that reality – awaiting Jesus to return from heaven.

In the meantime, let us remember the first revelation of Christ. His death for each of us – and His resurrection power.