

## *Back to Basics*

### **1 Thessalonians 1: 1- 10 (October 22, 2017)**

#### ***1 Thessalonians 1: 2-3***

2We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly  
3remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness  
of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### ***Historical Context***

Thessalonica was an important city, the capital of the Macedonian province, located on an inlet and an important trade route. The converts to Paul's message would have previously participated in the many and sundry cults of this bustling city. When these people heard Paul's message and accepted it, they would have faced rejection and persecution from their families and friends.

#### ***Theme: Back to Basics***

These words are very old; ancient. It is possible that 1 Thessalonians constitutes the earliest document ever written following the ministry of Jesus Christ. Contained in these ten verses is a breathtaking look at what Christians professed, believed, and proclaimed. That Jesus is the Messiah, the one who died to set us free from sin, who rose again to show us that life and not death will have the last word, and who will come again one day to make all things new.

What the Thessalonians endured for their beliefs was remarkable. It became famous even back then throughout the known world. In the end it was all so simple: someone like Paul came to a city for the first time. He met people. He spoke words of hope anchored in someone named Jesus. That's all Paul had: words. It is a reminder to us all these centuries and millennia later that it need be no more complicated than this even now.

When it comes right down to it, what we need to know to live joyful, hope-filled lives even in tough times and suffering, and in the face of social media distractions and constant changes in what is trending, is what the Thessalonians knew almost two centuries ago; that God raised Jesus from the dead to deliver us from sin and evil and by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us, we patiently and joyfully await Christ's return.

#### ***Gospel Story as a Case Study (Matthew 22:15-22)***

When you know that the whole world belongs to God then even the big, bright, loud, and resplendent realities of this world become mere sideshows and distractions.

When Jesus takes the Caesar's coin into his hand and holds it up in front of his bewildered questioners, you can almost see him shrug his shoulders, furrow his brow, and just generally convey the idea, "What are you talking about? THIS is all you have to ask me about? Who cares? This means nothing! Get a life! In a political age when so many people are so sharply divided along so many various cultural and social and economic fault lines, Jesus' confident posture and consistent, laser-like focus on God both challenge us and call us back to basics.