

10/28/07 AM

A Christian's Central Focus!
1 Thessalonians 1:1-4

Introduction:

1. Last Week We Started Looking At This First Letter By Paul To The New Church In The Greek City Of Thessalonica!
 - A Church Started In A Thriving Greek City In Paul's Day!
 - But A Church Started With Much Opposition To The Gospel!
 - And Paul Had To Leave Very Quickly!
 - And He Was Concerned About The Possible Persecution The New Christians Would Face Without Him!
 - Paul Sent Timothy Back To See How The Church Was Doing!
 - And Once Paul Received The Report, He Was Thrilled To Hear How Things Were – Even Though Physically, Times Were Tough – Spiritually, Things Were Great!
2. This Morning We Come To 1 Thessalonians 1:1-4!
 - An Important Start To This Letter!
 - Read 1:1-4!
 - After Hearing The Good News Of Their Growth As A Church:
 - Paul Is **Thinking** About Them!
 - Paul Is **Thanking** The Lord For Them!
 - And Through This Prayer, Paul, As Their Exiled Pastor, Is **Teaching** Them! And Us!
 - The Lesson: * **The Lord Jesus Christ Ought To Be The Central Focus Of Your Life!**
 - When Times Are Tough Physically! *
 - When Times Are Good Spiritually! *
3. **IE:** Just Like When You Are Taking A Picture!
 - Frustrating When You Get The Print Back, And Its Either Too Blurry / Too Obscure / Too Dark!
 - This Is Why I Love My Digital Camera! When This Happens Now, All I Have To Do Is Delete It!
 - You Can't Take A Good Picture If The Subject Of Your Picture Is:
 - Not In Focus!
 - Not In The Center!
 - Not In The Light!
 - So It Is With Your Life As A Christian!
 - If Jesus Christ Is Not The Central Focus Of Your Life, It's Not Going To Be A Pretty Picture!
4. So Paul, Encourages This Young Church & You To Keep Christ The Central Focus Of Your Life!
 1. **Keep Your Position In Christ In Central Focus!**
 - 1:1 - "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ!"
 - **IE:** One Of The Most **Disappointing & Frustrating** Things When Taking A Picture, Is When It Comes Back **Blurry & Out Of Focus!**
 - When It's Out Of Focus, The Excitement Is Gone!
 - So It Is When You Don't Keep Jesus Christ The Central Focus Of Your Life!
 - It Is So Easy For Things To Get Blurry & Out Of Focus! Why? Because Of:
 - The Focus On Your Place!
 - Paul Wrote To The "Church Of The Thessalonians!"
 - Thessalonica Was A Filled With Prosperity, Pleasure & Temptation For These New Christians!
 - Much Like What We Have Today!
 - They Did Not Have Cars & Computers! But Whatever Was The Latest & Greatest In Technology Back Then, It Was Available To Them & Very Attractive!
 - It Is Very Easy To Let Our **Place** Be The Focus Of Our Lives!
 - But You Need To Remember:
 - The Focus On Your Position!
 - Paul Wasn't Just Writing To The Thessalonians – He Was Writing To "The **Church** Of The

Thessalonians!”

- Even Though Their Place May Cause Them Problems, It Is Really Their Position That Matters!
- They Have Been Called Out Of Their Place – The World!
 - “Church” - Ekklesia - A Gathering “Called Out” - Common For Politics Or Clubs - They Were Special!
 - They Were Called Out By God!
 - They Were Called Out From Their Place!
- They Have Been Brought “In [To] God The Father & In The Lord Jesus Christ!”
 - No Matter What Place You Live, A Christian’s Position Is In God!
 - What A Privilege / Opportunity / Blessing To Receive From God True “Grace & Peace”!
- Don’t Let The Focus Of Your Life Go Blurry!
- Keep Your Position In Christ In Central Focus!

2. ***Keep Your Persistence For Christ In Central Focus!***

- 1:2-3 - “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; / Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father!”
- **IE:** One Of The Most ***Distracting*** Things When Taking A Picture, Is When Your Subject Is Not In The ***Center!***
 - Either Something Gets In They Way / Or Your Attention Is Drawn To Something Else!
 - This Is What It Is Like When You Don’t Keep Jesus Christ The Central Focus Of Your Life!
 - Other Things Will Very Quickly Take His Place!
 - So, While Paul Is ***Thanking*** God For Their Persistence For Christ / He Is Also ***Teaching*** Them To Keep What ***God Sees*** As Their Central Focus, Not Jut What ***Man Sees!***
 - Paul Saw The Results Of Their Central Focus:
 - Their “Work” / “Labor” / “Patience”
 - But God Sees Their Hearts:
 - Their “Faith” / “Love” / “Hope”
 - As They Are Centered On The “Lord Jesus Christ!”
 - This Is What Is “In The Sight Of God And Our Father!”
- Don’t Let Your Work Be Distracted From Your Faith In Christ!
 - First Thing Paul Remembers: “Your Work Of Faith!”
 - It Is So Easy To Become “Occupied” With Things In Life & In Church, That You Are Distracted From What Really Matters: Your Faith In Christ! (Martha & Mary)
 - People Might See Your Work!
 - Only God Sees Where Your Work Springs From!
 - Is Your Faith In Christ The Central Focus Of Your Work?
- Don’t Let Your Labor Be Distracted From Your Love For Christ!
 - Second Thing Paul Remembers: “Your Labor Of Love!”
 - How Easy It Is To Get Caught Up With Something With Passion & Fervency, That You Are Distracted From What Really Matters: Your Love For Christ!
 - People Might See Your Labor!
 - Only God Sees What Your Labor Is Prompted By!
 - Is Your Love In Christ The Central Focus Of Your Labor?
- Don’t Let Your Patience Be Distracted From Your Hope In Christ!
 - Third Thing Paul Remembers: “Your Patience Of Hope!”
 - So Often We Base Our Patience On Something Else That Distracts You From What Really Matters: Your Hope In Christ! He Is The Answer To Difficulty & Depravity!
 - People Might See Your Patience!
 - Only God Sees What Your Patience Is Inspired By!
 - Is Your Hope In Christ The Central Focus Of Your Patience?
- Don’t Let The Focus Of Your Life Become Distracted!
 - Keep Your Persistence In Christ In Central Focus!

- It Doesn't Matter How Man Sees You: "For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart!" (1 Samuel 16:7)

3. Keep Your Possession By Christ In Central Focus!

- 1:4 - "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God!"
- **IE:** One Of The Most **Depressing** Things When Taking Pictures, Is When You Get Them Developed & There's Nothing On Them! Everything Is **Dark & Black** – Your Len's Cap Was Still On!
 - Has This Happened To Anyone Else Besides Me?
 - When There Is No Light, There Is No Picture!
 - This Is Also What Its Like When You Don't Keep Jesus Christ The Central Focus Of Your Life!
 - Life Becomes Very Dark & Difficult!
 - But Paul Is "Knowing" Something About Those Thessalonian Believers That He Wants Them To Know As Well: Their Possession By Christ!
 - Their "Election Of God" – Which Shows You That You Ought To:
- Live In The Light Of God's Love!
 - You Belong To God Because Of His Love For You!
 - "Brethren, Beloved [Of God]!" (Marginal Note In KJV)
 - "Of God" Can Go With Either Word: "Beloved" Or "Election" – Because God Is The Source Of Each!
 - No Matter What You Face, If You Are A Christian, God Loves You In A Unique Way!
 - Romans 8 - Paul Lists Many Things That We Might **Think** Or **Feel** Could Separate Us From God's Love – Like "Tribulation" Or "Persecution" Or "Death" Or "Distance" – But He Reassures Us That Neither "Height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!" (Romans 8:39)
 - You Are Christ's Possession Because Of His Love!
 - When Things Get Dark, Keep His Love In Focus!
- Live In The Light Of God's Choice!
 - You Belong To God Because Of His Choice Of You!
 - "Knowing . . . Your Election Of God!"
 - With All The Debate On Election, It Is Entirely Biblical & Mysterious & Entirely Dependent On God And His Will!
 - But Also: "Nothing Gives Security To The Idea Of Salvation Like The Concept Of Election! Salvation, From First To Last, Is A Work Of God! Full Of Sweet, Pleasant, And Unspeakable Comfort!"
 - No Matter What You Face!
 - And The Thessalonian Christians Were Facing A Lot Of Temptation & Trials!
 - You Are God's Possession Because Of His Election!
 - When Things Get Dark, Keep His Election In Focus!
- Don't Let The Focus Of Your Life Become Dark!
 - Keep Your Possession By Christ Your Central Focus!

Conclusion:

1. Is Christ The Central Focus Of Your Life?
 - What Would People See If They Could Take A Picture That Showed What Your Christian Life Was Like?
2. What Would They See?
 - Would It Be A Life That Is Blurry & Out Of Focus?
 - Because You Are More Focused On Your Place In This World Than In Your Position In Christ?
 - Would It Be A Life That Is Distracted?
 - Because Other Things Are At The Center Other Than Christ?
 - Would It Be A Life That Is Dark?
 - Because You Are Not Experiencing & Enjoying The Light That Comes From A Walk With The Savior?
3. More Importantly, What Does God See In This Picture?
 - Keep Jesus Christ The Central Focus Of Your Life!

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