Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – January 21, 2018

The Last Days! What happens next?

Life Lessons from Four Apostles

Working, Witnessing, Waiting. . . and Suffering

A Church Majoring in Faith, Hope, and Love

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

***When the evidences of God’s spirit are clear. . .*** (vv. 1-3)

 Paul gives thanks for these believers because he sees the effects of conversion in them. In spite of great opposition and persecution, their faith produced works motivated by love, a reality that was kept alive because of the conviction of hope they had in Jesus. He had saved them, and now they were living in the promise of His return. This is not the hope of wishful thinking, but full conviction that God will keep His promises both now and in the future. See Hebrews 6:10-12.

***It proves that God has brought people to Himself. . .*** (vv. 4-6)

 Saving faith is not willed, but given as a gift by God Himself. Ephesians 2:8, 9; John 1:11-13 We believe because, as Jesus told His disciples, He has chosen us. John 15:16 It is a great relief when we realize that our faith is a sign of His love for us, not its cause. As someone has written, We belong to Him even before we believe in Him. This kind of faith comes with deep conviction which enables us to resist the temptation to fold in the face of opposition and to persevere in joy. We see the same sentiments and encouragements in Hebrews 10:32-39, following the model of Jesus and the Apostles in suffering.

***Which becomes clear in their witness to the Savior.*** (vv. 7-10)

 The Apostle’s glowing assurance was due to the fame of the Thessalonian’s faith. Wherever he or his associates went in the neighboring regions, folks were talking about how these believers turned from idols to serve the living God. The reason was that they had believed in the only one who could save them from the coming wrath BECAUSE HE PAID FOR THEIR SINS WITH HIS BLOOD. They would never experience the wrath of God, though they were experiencing the persecution of man. The early church prays this way in Acts 2:23-30.

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 The Thessalonians had only three weeks with the Apostle Paul, and not even a follow-up visit. Yet, as a newly planted, persecuted church, they were known for their loyalty to Jesus and His message.

***Last Days Life Lesson***

***The faith, hope, and love in our lives in the face of suffering,***

***assures us of God’s grace, and is the foundation for***

***our sharing the gospel with others***

***as we await Jesus’ return***

***to judge the world.***

 ***Going Deeper--For Growth Groups:***

1. According to Paul, what does it mean for the gospel to come with power? How does God’s power manifest itself in human lives?

2. Paul is convinced that God has chosen the Thessalonians. Why?

3. The Thessalonians’ faith, within just a few months, had spread throughout the region. What do you think accounts for this?