

Evidence of Election part 2

By David Harrell

Bible Text: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
Preached on: Sunday, November 8, 2015

It's once again a great joy to be able to minister the word of God to you this morning. Would you take your Bibles and turn to 1 Thessalonians 1? We come to the second part of a two part series that I began the last time I was with you a couple of weeks ago. Using Paul's words in verse 4, we are speaking of evidences of election or, as he says, his choice of you.

In a few minutes, we will be looking primarily at verses 5 through 10, but let me bring you back up to speed with the context of what is going on here. This is a very practical and a very profound passage of Scripture. After a fruitful ministry in Thessalonica resulting in many conversions of both Jews and Gentiles, Paul and Silas were forced to flee due to mounting hostilities. Several months later, Paul sent Timothy back to the fledgling church to encourage them, to strengthen them in their faith which was now under heavy attack by their families and by the community at large. Paul feared that the Jewish believers that had come to Christ would fall back into their Judaism with all of their ritualism and legalism and he also feared that the Gentiles would fall back into their immorality and idolatry. And it's very obvious when you read these two epistles that the Thessalonians understood the maternal and paternal love that Paul and the others had for them. After all, these were Paul's spiritual children and so he loved them. He wanted to nurture them and protect them and provide for them and every parent understands this.

So being torn from them for many months and being forced to live elsewhere made it impossible for Paul to care for them like he would like to do so he sent Timothy and Paul prayed and he prayed and he prayed as we see from the text. Then later, Timothy returns to Paul who by now is in Corinth, and brings him the wonderful news that encouraged his heart that indeed the saints in Thessalonica remained steadfast in their faith. They had not floundered in any way. They were standing firm in the face of overwhelming opposition. Perhaps a good way for you to identify with this is to imagine if you've got some newly converted children that are now young adults and they have been torn from you and they have been forced to attend one of our state universities which are really now a breeding ground for debauchery and idolatry and, frankly, a violent opposition to the Gospel. Imagine that that has happened and you have no way to contact them and so you're wondering is their faith real? Will it stand the test of opposition? Or will they wander? You know that if their faith is real, they will persevere in the faith, but you're not sure. They're new converts and so you wonder will their lives confront the culture or be conformed by the culture? You're thinking to yourself will others look at them and see the power of Christ? Will they see something different in my child? Or will they be just like all the rest?

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So you have a friend, we'll say his name is Timothy, and you send Timothy secretly into the university to be able to strengthen and encourage your children and he does and then he brings back this wonderful news that their faith is standing strong. And when you hear that, you know that because of God's grace they have truly been born again because the fact that their faith is strong tells us that it is real and what a wonderful thing it is to know that salvation is more than just the impartation of eternal life and certainly that is a marvelous blessing, but according to Scripture, salvation is also the utter transformation of our nature, of our life, by the power of God so that we can live for his glory come what may. So this is what happened in this scenario. Timothy comes back to Paul, gives him this wonderful report and this thrills Paul's soul and this is what proved, according to verse 4, Paul says, "His choice of you," in other words, this is evidence of your election.

Now, by way of review, notice these first four verses. Paul says this,

1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. 2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 constantly bearing in mind [three things] your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, 4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you.

You will recall by way of reminder here from the last time we were together, that here in verse 3 he expresses three characteristics of genuine saving faith, virtues that are obvious to everyone. Their work of faith which speaks of holy conduct that faith produces. Their labor of love which refers to literally a strenuous effort to love one another even with the church. Bear in mind that these were Jews and Gentiles that absolutely hated each other. You cannot image two cultures further apart than this and now they have come to a saving knowledge of Christ and they're in the same church. So it was a labor of love, a strenuous effort for them to love one another. It's hard for us and we're basically of the same culture, imagine what it would have been for them, but also they were loving their enemies. But then he also noticed their steadfastness of hope which refers to a persevering anticipation of seeing the glory of Christ and receiving their eternal inheritance. I might add that faith, hope and love is really a favorite triad of Christian virtues that we see in other of Paul's epistles, things that really prove the genuineness of a person's faith and it also provides great defense against temptation.

But now beginning in verses 5 through 10, Paul goes on to describe seven more evidences of election that really build upon the first three and together these ten benchmarks provide a tremendous source of encouragement for believers who may be

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questioning their salvation. There are times when true believers will do that. I've been there before. I imagine you have as well. There are times when, for whatever reason, we wander away from Christ and we find ourselves being attracted and distracted with all of the things of the world. You might say we let go of his hand and we wander away and our flesh never wanders towards Christ, it always wanders in the opposite direction and before long we're loving him at greater and greater distances until finally, if we're honest, we think of him and really he's just a stranger. What a tragedy.

Then we begin to wonder, "Well, do I really know him? Am I truly born again?" I can recall many situations where I have dealt with people in this particular situation who, for whatever reason, have lost their assurance of salvation. In many cases, it's because of guilt over unconfessed, unrepented sin and for others, it's just due to apathy regarding spiritual things. They have become intoxicated with the things of the world, those things that appeal to the lust of our flesh. They have failed to cultivate holiness in their life and therefore there is a failure of the work of faith, the labor of love, the steadfastness of hope. But in many cases when I've reminded them of the things that we're about to look at as well as other passages in Scripture, when I remind them of those evidences that really demonstrate the reality of a person that has truly been born again, you can begin to see the life come back into their face. Many times their eyes will fill with tears because they can identify with these things and it gives them great hope and encouragement.

Maybe that's you today. Maybe you need to be reminded of these things. Perhaps you have wandered away from the Lord and you wonder, "Do I really know him?" Maybe you need to sober up spiritually. In fact, Paul later reminded the Thessalonians in chapter 5, verse 8, "since we are of the day, let us be sober." Many times as Christians we aren't very sober. We're kind of frivolous and cavalier about our faith. "Let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation." There you see that triad used again.

Now, if I can digress for a moment to help create a real hunger for you to understand what Paul is about to say. Many times as believers we can find ourselves becoming complacent about our Christian life. We can become smug and self-satisfied. We can fall into sin in various ways. And we know that by nature we are hopelessly biased in our own favor. We never really want to admit where we are spiritually and when we become that way, our flesh inevitably leads us away; leaves us to these things that promise temporary pleasure, but ultimately leave us in great misery. We know biblically that we reap what we sow but many times we don't know what we are sowing until we reap a harvest of despair and when this happens in the life of a believer, it will often cause us to question our salvation.

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It was for this reason that Peter urged his readers in 2 Peter 1:10, "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble." "These things" refers to a list that he gave prior to that, a list that will help us really enjoy blessing in our life and give us assurance of salvation. That list included applying all diligence in your faith, supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence knowledge, and in your knowledge self-control, and in your self-control perseverance, and in your perseverance godliness, and in your godliness brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness love. So there are some disciplines that give evidence of genuine saving faith and they really parallel much of the list that we're going to examine this morning.

So let's look at these additional seven evidences that thrilled Paul's soul when he heard about them from the Thessalonian believers. Let me give you the list. Not only Paul but everyone could see these seven things beyond the work of faith, the labor of love and steadfastness of hope. They could see their reception of Spirit-empowered preaching; they could see an imitation of Christ; their joy in tribulation; their exemplary lifestyles; their bold evangelism; their reversal of allegiances; and finally, their eager anticipation of Christ's return. And I would challenge you from the outset of this exposition: do these things resonate in your heart? Are these characteristics of who you really are? I hope so and if not, if these are foreign to you, I would submit to you that there is a very high probability that you really don't know Christ. You may profess him, but you do not possess him, a very dangerous place to be.

So Paul was ecstatic because everyone could see their work of faith, their labor of love, their steadfastness of hope and now number 4: their reception of Spirit-empowered preaching. Notice verse 4, we'll get a running start here. He says, "knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; for our gospel," verse 5, "did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction." He's saying basically this, "We know that you are chosen by God from the fact that our Gospel did not come to you as some ordinary discourse like the rest of these philosophers that float through town and talk to you about their understanding of the nature of the universe and the meaning of life. We know that our message did not come that way. It wasn't just some spoken message, it had a supernatural force behind it that absolutely changed your very nature."

He says, "It came," notice, "in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction," or it could be translated "full assurance," and this refers to the immediate effect of the Spirit's power and presence in the hearts of the missionaries that spoke the word, not necessarily a reference to the Thessalonians that heard it. A very important distinction. Hopefully I can explain it to you. You see, Paul and Silas and Timothy were acutely

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aware of the fact that the Holy Spirit had anointed them to speak for God himself. They knew God had spoken through them in the past and had spoken through them to the people at Thessalonica and they also knew that the word of God will always do one of two things: it will either harden hearts or soften hearts. They knew that. They knew that when they preached and they also knew that only God the Holy Spirit can break through the walls of the ignorance and unbelief and penetrate the conscience with a genuine conviction of sin. Only the word of God by the power of the Spirit of God can bring a hard-hearted sinner to a place of repentance and belief and they weren't disappointed.

They saw what happened to the Thessalonians. These people heard the message of God and they saw his power through the apostolic proclamation. In fact, Paul tells us something similar in 1 Corinthians 2, beginning in verse 4. He said, "my message and my preaching were not in wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith would not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power." Beloved, I would submit to you that that is what is lacking in the church today, Spirit-empowered Gospel preaching. We don't need more men who are profound and persuasive, men who are witty and funny. We don't need more men who want to have a conversation so that we can somehow find common ground. We don't need more men who are obsessed with their hairstyle and their wardrobe and their Twitter account so that they can be culturally relevant. We need men that are absolutely obsessed with the glory of God, being accurate with the word of God and have a burden for the souls of sinners. We don't need ear tickling, man-centered sermonettes by men who fear man more than God. We need men who will stand in a pulpit and will fearlessly and with God-ordained authority and power say, "Thus saith the Lord." That's what we need. Men who absolutely know, as Paul says, "with full conviction." With full assurance that their message is indeed the word of God that carries the power of God to either save or condemn. These kind of men will bear spiritual fruit. These will be men who can fully identify with what God said to the prophet Jeremiah, he said this, "Is not my word like fire and like a hammer which shatters rock?"

So they understood this and it excited them because they knew that the Spirit of God used their message to save these people. In fact, Paul put it this way, notice at the end of verse 5, "just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake." This is really interesting. He's basically saying that, "Our lives backed up our message, unlike what you're used to seeing with the philosophers that come through town." You see, they had many traveling philosophers in that day. They didn't go to theaters to watch movies and they couldn't watch football on television, okay? So what they would do is they would go and listen to philosophers wax eloquent and these men did this to earn a living.

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But Paul and Silas had radically different motives. Their passion was the glory of God manifested by the preaching of the Gospel so that sinners could come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and so they worked hard so they would be a financial burden to the people. They were willing to suffer persecution that those people might be saved and the people saw this. The people saw that their lives demonstrated the same love and purity and power as their message. If I can speak personally for a moment: my constant prayer for me, especially when I come into this pulpit, is that the Spirit of God will fill me with his power and give me wisdom and boldness and love to proclaim his word with authority and clarity. I pray that he will help me to be accurate, accurate enough that men will know what they need to be offended about, what they need to reject, and likewise, what they need to believe. My passion as well for myself and I hope this is true for you, is that my private life will match my message because when it does, my public life will be no different. I pray the same for my elders. I hope you will pray that for us, in fact, we all need to pray in this way.

So Paul is absolutely overjoyed because he knew that when he stood before those people, his message was empowered by the Spirit of God who was working this mighty work of grace and now he could see what was accomplished and what an amazing thing it is to see God use his word to soften a heart and to bring a person to a saving knowledge of Christ. We know biblically that it is God that brings man to Christ for salvation. The initiative and the power and all of the glory belong to him and to him alone. When God calls one of his own unto himself, it's what we see biblically as an irresistible calling, an irresistible compelling and those that he calls he will save.

Jesus says, "All that the Father gives me shall come to me." He said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him," which means to drag; to irresistibly compel. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him and I will raise him up on the last day." What an amazing truth. I know that what I have to do is be clear with the Gospel message, but I know that it's not up to me to somehow manipulate you to place your faith in Christ. That is a work of grace. That is a work of the Holy Spirit by the power of his word. Then Paul says in Romans 8 that the elect are, "those who are called according to His purpose and those whom He predestined, these He also called, and whom He called, these He also justified, and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

So not only could Paul and others see this amazing reception of the Spirit-empowered preaching of the Gospel, but also, number 5: they could see their imitation of Christ. Notice in verse 6, "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord." Folks, this isn't hard to understand. A likeness to Christ will always be a visible evidence of election. Paul and his friends had a loving but bold proclamation and their character was gentle and caring

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and compassionate. They were selfless, hard-working. They joyfully persevered, even amidst all of this persecution, and their lives modeled Christ so the Thessalonians modeled them and therefore imitated Christ.

It's an amazing thought. This theme of imitation is found in several of Paul's letters. For example, in Philippians 3:17 Paul says, "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." So watch what I do and watch what others do who are watching what I do because what I'm doing is what Christ does. In 1 Corinthians 4:16, after giving a list of the ways he had conducted himself in their presence he says, "I exhort you therefore be imitators of Me." And in chapter 11, verse 1 of 1 Corinthians, he says, "Be imitators of Me just as I also am of Christ." You see, Paul understood that his life was a model for others to look at and to see Christ, one who they knew nothing about, so that they could look at his life and in that life have a living object lesson of who Christ really was.

But we also see here in verse 6, that there is somewhat of a limit to their imitation. It's primarily referring to the way they received the word in great distress. Notice again verse 6, he says, "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord." By the way, "imitators," mimetes in the original language, we get our word "mimic" from that so it helps you to understand what he's saying here. "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word," in other words, this is how you imitated us, "you received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit." You became imitators of us and of the Lord in that in spite of the severe suffering that you were enduring, you welcomed the message of the Gospel with the joy given to you by the Holy Spirit.

But not only that, he's thrilled over, number 6: their joy in tribulation. Notice, "having received," at the end of verse 6, "the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit." You know, it's amazing to hear stories of people who have come to Christ who have been willing to risk their lives just to hear the Gospel, especially from Muslim countries and communist countries. I was reading the other day the Open Doors Watch List. They had a list of the ten most dangerous countries for Christians today. The tenth most dangerous is Laos. They view Christianity there as the greatest threat to their communist rule. Then numbers 9 through the second most dangerous were all Muslim countries: Uzbekistan, Iraq, Yemen, Maldives, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, number 3 on the list was Afghanistan, number 2 is Iran. Then the worst, the most dangerous place on earth to be a Christian is North Korea where being a Christian is considered the worst possible of all crimes. In fact, just owning a Bible in North Korea is grounds for execution, yet, do you know what's happening there? The church is growing. It's an amazing thing. It is growing. There is an estimated 400,000 believers there and it's growing rapidly. We are told from people who know that Christians meet in dungeons and in private places in

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very small groups, sometimes no more than 2 or 3 people. They meet there so that they will not be discovered and they sing hymns with whispers. Can you imagine singing hymns in whispers? Their hearts need an opportunity to express themselves but they can't do it out loud because if they get caught they would be sent to the gulags where they would be executed.

I've gotten to know a number of believers from this kind of a background, by the way, a number of them are faithful listeners to this pulpit and other places around the world. And one of the first things that always strikes me when I meet them is their huge smile. They are absolutely overflowing with joy. In fact, they tell me, especially in places like North Korea, that Christians have to be very careful not to look too happy or it will give away the fact that they're a believer. Can you imagine that? You see, these people were like the people in Thessalonica: they received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit. Then when you get to know these people, you will see this joy just overflowing from them.

So, folks, what Paul saw in the Thessalonian believers was true saving faith, and remember, the Jews and the Gentiles risked everything. They were risking losing their families, losing their jobs. They were outcasts. And think about it, we live in a so-called Christian country which is a profound misnomer, and yet look at all of the mounting hostility towards true Christianity that we are experiencing. If you don't believe it, just express a loving but biblical view of homosexuality or of transgender and see what happens. I was reading a headline, a CNN headline a couple of days ago that says this, "A Chicago area school district violated anti-discrimination laws by denying a transgender student full access to the girls' locker room, federal authorities said. The latest inquiry to side with students who feel discriminated against by school policies." By the way, this is a young man that has not yet been surgically mutilated. The article went on to describe California is now the first state to allow transgender students to choose which bathrooms and locker rooms to use. It went on to add, "The federal government has followed suit. Last year the Obama administration announced that transgender people are protected from discrimination under the Civil Rights Act."

Folks, the world has gone mad with sin and it's going to get worse. I mean, this is Romans 1 on steroids. This is the wrath of divine abandonment where God gives people over to an absolutely worthless mind, to ultimately experience the consequences of their iniquity. Beloved, we have much to learn from the saints at Thessalonica because our persecution is coming and it's coming rapidly. If you don't believe me, just send out a memo to your coworkers explaining to them the Gospel and I don't mean this watered down Purpose Driven Life Gospel, I mean the real Gospel, and watch what happens. Send out a memo and tell them what Peter and John said just before the authorities

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commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. Do you know what they said? Oh boy, imagine saying this, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." Try that on for size and watch what happens.

Please understand, folks, this is precisely what was happening with the Thessalonian believers. This is what they did. This is how they conducted themselves and they knew firsthand the kind of sufferings that Paul and Silas and Timothy and the others had experienced. They knew what happened to Paul and Silas in Philippi before coming to their city. They were informed of the sufferings that Paul experienced in Corinth and yet they responded to their sufferings the very same way the apostles responded to theirs. In fact, will you notice verse 7, we see here how they became an example, "you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia." This is the seventh evidence of election: exemplary lifestyles. Because of their joyful reception of the Gospel in face of all of this opposition, they literally became an example to all of the other churches in that region. That would have included the church at Philippi, at Berea, at Athens, at Corinth, perhaps Synchrea.

Even their enemies could not understand the change that they were seeing in their lives. Their family members are pulling their hair out. "What has happened to you? This is a change we cannot understand." And because Thessalonica was a city of about a quarter of a million people, a big seaport city also located on the Ignatian Way that connected the people from all sides of the province of Macedonia together, because of this, the news of the Lord Jesus Christ spread very, very rapidly. You know, it's like a tree that endures strong winds. What happens to a tree when that happens? It digs its roots in the ground even more firmly and that's what happened with these early saints. They became more firmly rooted in Christ as they experienced the winds of persecution. We want to ask ourselves: does my life imitate Christ? Am I experiencing any persecution because of my bold faith? Or do I just kind of blend in like a chameleon? And when I do experience that persecution, do I have joy?

Of course, an exemplary lifestyle will also include the eighth evidence of their election and that is: bold evangelism. This is the stuff of genuine saving faith. Notice verse 8, "For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you." I love that phrase, "sounded forth." It's a term that's used outside the New Testament, not used anywhere else, and it speaks of the loud blast of a blaring trumpet or the rolling of thunder. I mean, that's something nobody will miss, right? And because the grammar here is in the perfect tense, it denotes that this was a constant, continual trumpeting of the

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Gospel. These people would not be silent and aided by their strategic location, the Spirit-empowered testimony that they had was so influential and so commanding that they developed a reputation far and wide. Would that the same be said at Calvary Bible Church.

The ninth evidence is reversal of allegiances. Notice in the middle of verse 9, he's saying here, "For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God." Now, this is really foreign to us. Let me take you back to first century Roman paganism. Gentile idol worship was at the heart of everything that they did. If you lived in that day, you would be considered highly offensive to other people if you in any way offended one of the gods because every family, every community, had certain gods that they worshiped, gods and goddesses. Gentiles belonged to what were called trade guilds, and those trade guilds were similar to what we would have today with like a union and each trade guild had a patron god or goddess. So for example, if you were into agriculture, you would worship a god or a goddess of fertility and everyone honored the gods their local government honored, and when business went well, it meant that you were correctly honoring your patron god. So if you come along and say, "Do you know what? That's all a bunch of superstition. I'm not going to worship that stuff anymore. I don't want anything else to do with that. I am now worshiping the one true and living God, the Lord Jesus Christ." Well, everybody is just going to go nuts because you may bring that god's wrath upon that family, upon that community and depending upon their area of residence, people honored the ruling Caesar even as god.

Yet what we see here is these early believers jettisoned their superstitions and they boldly, as Paul says, "turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God," rather than those nonexistent false gods. Can I draw your attention to the word "serve" for a moment? That term does not mean they got excited and found a church that they decided to attend so that they could work and hang out with friends and do some stuff that would make them feel spiritual and religious. That's not what happened here. The term "serve" comes from a Greek term that means "to serve as a slave." So what Paul is saying is that these people reversed their allegiances; they abandoned their slavery to these false gods and by God's grace, became slaves of the living and true God. In other words, what was manifested here was an internal, whole-hearted, joyful commitment to be totally devoted to God. Oh, that we would see that in our churches today. Oh, that we would see that at Calvary Bible Church today and by God's grace, we see a lot of that but wouldn't it be wonderful if we could see more in each of our lives.

He also adds, not only did they turn from idols to serve a living and true God but, verse 10, "and to wait," which refers to a sustained expectation, "and to wait for His Son from

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heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come." This is the tenth and final evidence of election. These people had an eager anticipation of Christ's return. I mean, think about it, they had been utterly transformed by Christ's first coming so naturally they're going to patiently await for his second coming. People that are truly born again have a great expectation for the second coming of Christ. They knew that God had raised him from the dead; they knew that he was alive; and they knew that he would return as he says, "to rescue His own from the wrath to come," and that wrath refers to his eternal settled indignation against sinners because of their idolatry and immorality and their rejection of the Gospel.

Oh, dear Christian, please hear this: true believers will always have a sustained, unwavering expectation that the Lord Jesus Christ is going to return again to this earth to judge the wicked and to establish his glorious kingdom as King of kings and Lord of lords. The redeemed will glory in this doctrine. They will live in light of this great truth, knowing that their glorious Savior is going to come and he is going to judge. He is going to uncreated the heavens and the earth and then recreate a new heaven and a new earth.

Therefore the lives of that kind of a person will be manifested in what Peter says in 2 Peter 3. We read this earlier but I want to wrap this up by reading it to you again. He says this, "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

Well, folks, there you have it. Ten evidences of election. Ten characteristics of a life that has been radically transformed by God's grace. Ten things that thrilled the apostle's heart. I would ask you: do people see this in you? Is this characteristic of you? Do people see your work of faith? Your labor of love? Your steadfastness of hope? Do they see how you receive Spirit-empowered preaching? Do they see an imitation of Christ? Joy in tribulation? Exemplary lifestyles? Bold evangelism? A reversal of allegiances, those

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Evidence of Election part 2

By David Harrell

Bible Text: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Preached on: Sunday, November 8, 2015

things that would distract you and lead you away from worshiping and serving the true and living God? And do they see in you an eager anticipation of Christ's return?

If none of this resonates in your heart, you probably don't know Christ and I would plead with you to ask him to save you today. But if it doesn't resonate in your heart and you're a believer, the reason is you have somehow grieved the Holy Spirit because of the ways you're conducting your life. So can I close with a very practical challenge? If this is you, I would encourage you to find a person that truly manifests these seven evidences of God's choice of them, and then really get to know them. Find out who they read. Find out who they listen to. Who are the folks that have had the greatest impact on their life for the sake of Christ. Then as you get to know them, as you spend time around them, as you study them, imitate them as they imitate Christ. Ask them to pray for you, perhaps disciple you, or help you to find someone who will disciple you. And the great news is that here at Calvary Bible Church there are large groups of these people and so take advantage of that and watch what God will do. Oh, what a glorious God we serve. Amen?

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. As always, I plead with you that by the power of your Spirit you will cause the seeds of these realities, of these great doctrines, of these great evidences, to find lodging deep within our souls and bear much fruit to the praise of your glory. May Christ have preeminence in all things in our lives as believers. And finally, Lord, if there be one here today or within the sound of my voice that hears all of this and thinks, "You know, there is nothing about any of that that resonates in my heart," I pray that you will bring them to a place of such profound brokenness, such overwhelming conviction of sin, that they will literally fall on their face before the Lord Jesus Christ and ask him to save them. May today be the day that they experience the miracle of the new birth. Lord, we love you and we praise you and we thank you for this time in your word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.

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