



Spiritual Transformation – Message 1

Announcements

- **Rhythms of Grace Groups** // Women, consider hosting a Women's Group based upon the book *Rhythms of Grace* by Women's Night guest speaker Kerri Weems.

Warm-up

What injustices in the world are you most passionate about? What do you think is the biggest concern the world is facing today?

Have you recently asked yourself, "How do we live peacefully in an ever-changing culture?" Do you wonder if recent events and global unrest point to the imminent return of Christ? During this new five-week series, entitled *Unshaken: Confident Living in Dangerous Times*, we will explore answers to these questions – and much more – as we study Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.

Word and Application

Share an experience when you stood resolute and unshaken in a challenging situation or when you were able to bring peace and confidence into a difficult moment.

Impressed by the faithfulness of the Thessalonians in the face of persecution, Paul penned 1 Thessalonians to encourage Believers to continue to grow in godliness despite false teaching. Paul teaches that spiritual growth is motivated by hope in the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

Today we look at three keys to spiritual growth and transformation.

1. **Faithfulness to Christ**

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

What does this passage tell us specifically about the church in Thessalonica? This passage lists three hallmarks of faithfulness:

- Work of Faith. **Read Romans 5:1 and James 2:14-17**. In light of these passages what does *work of faith* mean to you? Imagine if believers did not demonstrate works of faith. What would that look like in today's world?
- Labor of Love. **Read 1 Corinthians 14:4-7**. Which of these expressions of love in these verses comes most easily to you? Which is the most difficult? Keeping these passages in mind, why does Paul describe love as labor? Share a time when you chose to labor in love for someone who wasn't very *loveable* at the time.
- Patience of Hope [in Jesus]. The patience to which Paul is referring is based upon a maturity displayed through consistency in our hope in the promise and return of Jesus. **Hope** is a powerful factor and an anchor in our lives. It's amazing what we can endure if we know that tomorrow will be better. How does hope build perseverance? Name a person (famous or otherwise) who demonstrated patience in hope. How does that differ from our hope in Jesus?

2. **Openness to Christ**

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5. Paul is reminding the Thessalonians of how God came into their lives—how God moved upon their hearts and made Himself known to them. Paul is saying something about their openness and receptivity to the gospel of Christ. If you had to sum up the gospel in 30 seconds, how would you explain the gospel message?

Take time this week to memorize a short gospel message. Here's three sentences that may help:

1. The Gospel is the good news that God became man in Jesus Christ.
2. He lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died, in our place.
3. Three days later He rose from the dead, proving that He is the Son of God and offering the gift of salvation and forgiveness of sins for all who repent and believe."

3. **Passion for People**

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:7-10. The believers in Thessalonians were transformed by:

- 1) Turning from something
- 2) Turning to God
- 3) Their life was characterized by an expectant waiting for Jesus to return.

Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being high, on the following statement.

- People who know me can see the spiritual transformation Christ has done in my life.
- My daily life reflects my anticipation of Jesus' return.

Share practical tips on how we can grow in these two areas. What will you do this week to grow in one of these areas?

Prayer

Ask the Lord to remind us each day to stay fixed on the truth about our identity in Him. Pray for specific needs of the group.