

# “Well Done”

*by Bryan Gibson*

That’s what we all want to hear, especially from the Lord, and that’s what the church in Thessalonica did hear, especially in chapter one. Using 1 Thessalonians 1 then as our text, let’s identify the things for which Paul commends these brethren, the things for which he gives “thanks to God” (1:2).

**For the manner in which they received the gospel**—“you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit (1:6). You don’t often see affliction and joy used in the same sentence, but if we go back to Acts 17, when the gospel was first planted in Thessalonica, we can understand why. The opposition to the gospel became so intense that the brethren “sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea” (Acts 17:10). That’s the environment in which they not only received and obeyed the gospel, but did so joyfully. Later, Paul thanks God again for the way they received the gospel: “...we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God...” (2:13). That’s the key to everything else said about these people—the attitude they had toward the gospel.

**For their genuine conversion to the Lord**—“you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1:9-10). Remember, these people heard the gospel, a message designed to convict people of sin, reveal the consequences of their sin (“the wrath to come”), and then show them how they can be saved from “the wrath to come.” Jesus, they learned, was the only one who could save them from this wrath, and so like others we read about in the Book of Acts, they “were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins” (Acts 2:38). The emphasis, though, in the passage above is on their repentance, something that must precede baptism. The apostles preached that people “should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance” (Acts 26:20). That’s exactly what these folks did—they turned from their dead idols to serve the true and living God, all the while looking forward to the return of their Savior.

**For “their work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope”** (1:3)—three virtues absolutely necessary to go to heaven. This same trio of virtues is found again later in the epistle: “But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation” (5:8). Clearly, these Christians in Thessalonica did more than just profess these virtues; they put them on—they exercised them. Look again at the wording in 1:3, and this time notice the effects of these virtues—WORK of faith, LABOR of love, and PATIENCE of hope.

**For their good example**—“you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe” (1:7). They became good examples, collectively and individually, because they were following the Lord (1:6). When you receive the gospel in the manner they did, when you are

genuinely converted to the Lord like they were, and when you exercise faith, love, and hope to the degree they did—you will have a great influence on who knows how many people living today, and even on generations to come.

**For spreading the same gospel which they had joyfully received**—“for from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place.” Not surprising is it, not when you consider the impact the gospel had made in their lives. It’s really pretty simple—they wanted others to have what meant so much to them.