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# Words of Truth

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## I Thessalonians 1:9-10

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If you will recall, our last article dealt with the reputation of the congregation in Thessalonica. Their faith and the work they did in sounding out the word of the Lord was well-known. As a congregation, they were a good example to others (I Thessalonians 1:7-8). After those points, this is what was written next to this congregation: *“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye 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, which delivered us from the wrath to come”* (I Thessalonians 1:9-10).

Those who viewed the congregation in Thessalonica as a good example showed Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus that their teaching was effective. Sometimes, a teacher of the Gospel of Christ has to wonder if his work is in vain. We see that with Paul and his work with the churches of Galatia. The churches of Galatia were soon removed from the Gospel unto a perversion of the Gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:6-7). So, Paul wrote this: *“Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain”* (Galatians 4:8-11).

Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus knew that their coming unto Thessalonica was not in vain (I Thessalonians 2:1). The reputation of the brethren in Thessalonica was one evidence that helped them to know their labor was not in vain. However, their reputation alone was not entirely convincing. We can know this because of what was later written to the saints in Thessalonica in this first letter. Notice: *“For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain”* (I Thessalonians 3:4-5). Like many Christians then and now (I Corinthians 6:9-11, Ephesians 2:1-10, and Titus 3:3), the disciples in Thessalonica had a sinful past. They could have turned back to that sinful past (II Peter 2:18-22). This is concerning for faithful teachers of the Gospel.

From the verses we are looking at in this article, we learn the saints in Thessalonica had a history that included the practice of idolatry. We know that idolatry is sinful (I Corinthians

10:7, I Corinthians 10:14, Galatians 5:19-21, Colossians 3:5, and I John 5:21). We need to consider that there is the possibility for a whole city to be given to idolatry (Acts 17:16). To turn from idols, or any other sin (Acts 26:19-20), is to break away from that sin completely. Consider how this was spelled out to the saints in Corinth: *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”* (II Corinthians 6:14-7:1). That turn from idolatry to God includes a forward progress way of thinking.

The way of thinking that a Christian has to have is the looking forward to the return of our Lord and the salvation that comes with His return (Philippians 3:3-21, Hebrews 9:27-28, I Peter 1:3-9, and II Peter 3:9-15). Christians know that the resurrection that first occurred with Jesus is the cornerstone of our faith and hope (I Corinthians 15:1-58). The brethren in Thessalonica needed more teaching on this subject matter. We will see that later in this epistle (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

The idols they had previously served offered nothing to them (Psalms 115:1-8). Idolatry was and is profitless (Isaiah 44:9-10 and Habakkuk 2:18-19). On the other hand, we see Jesus was risen from the dead (Acts 2:22-32, Acts 3:15, Acts 26:23, Colossians 1:12-18, and Revelation 1:5). He is the life and the resurrection (John 11:25). He is not wood or stone that serves no purpose. He promised that He would return and bring the faithful with Him into eternal life (Matthew 24:35-25:46). So, the hope of faithful Christians is in the end (I Peter 1:13). That hope motivates us to be pure (I John 3:1-3). So, they then and we now faithfully wait for the coming of our Lord (I Corinthians 1:7 and Titus 2:13-14).

It is certainly great that we have eternal life to look forward to (Titus 1:1-3 and I John 2:25). We also can look forward to escaping the wrath to come. The wrath of God is going to come upon those who are disobedient to His will (Colossians 3:6). In the second letter to this congregation this was written: *“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day”* (II Thessalonians 1:7-10). So, brethren, we too should be looking forward!