

b. It was associated.

The prepositional phrase "in much affliction" shows the sort of ground in which the faith or message was received (cf. Acts 14:22). Persecution was a part of the soil in which the seed was sown (cf. Acts 17:6-9; 1 Thess. 2:14; 3:2, 3; 2 Thess. 1:4). The "word" here is probably the message or the Gospel and not the living Christ of God, nor the written Word of God, since this is an early epistle.

c. It was experienced.

Along with the suffering was the joy of the Holy Spirit. This is the smile through the tears. It is a paradox for the unbeliever, but for the child of God, it is a great testimony unto His faithfulness. God brings the child of God through the suffering (1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13).

Conclusion Great things did take place at Thessalonica. God was at work. The witness of the Gospel had plenty for which to praise God. Glory to His Name. Say, what has happened in YOUR life since the Gospel came to you?

THE BOOK OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

"Great Happenings at Thessalonica"  
1 Thessalonians 1:5-7

Introduction

1. The work of the Gospel at Thessalonica started during Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-4). God gave a generous response to the Gospel message given.
2. When Paul later on wrote to the believers in this city, he reminded them of their high position in the Lord (1:1) and proved his continued prayer concern for them (1:2-4). There was no forgetting of the work which God had begun through the apostle.
3. In looking back over the events at Thessalonica, Paul enumerates a number of special happenings. The term "happenings" is used, not to avoid the divine aspects in the work, but to emphasize the progress of the Word. This is done by the use of a special Greek verb which marks this thought. It is found four times in these few verses.

1. GOSPEL HAPPENINGS v. 5.

a. Through a personal Gospel.

The opening particle of this verse explains the selection and choice of God (v. 4) and how it was demonstrated in the Thessalonians. It could well be translated "because." Paul associates his team with the Gospel and calls it "our Gospel." When so used, it notes the instrument through whom the Gospel is given. Where it is the Gospel "of God" (2:8), it means that He is the Originator of it. When it is the Gospel "of Christ" (3:2), then the Subject of the Gospel is emphasized.

b. Through a received Gospel.

1) Negatively The text notes that it was not in word alone. Words are worthless. Hence, the message did not come to the city with just expressions.

2) Positively Three items are listed here:

a) In power Paul does not necessarily use this term for miracles. Hence, the phrase speaks of the very presence of God, without some sort of unusual event. When

the Word was preached, it was evident that God was present. This is an unexplained evidence of the Gospel.

b) In Holy Spirit This may well be an explicative of the previous phrase. Being anarthrous, the mention of Holy Spirit accents His character. His person, however, is not denied (cf. v. 6). It speaks of His divine favor, passion, and fulness.

c) In much assurance This phrase is also anarthrous and there is no preposition used with it. Hence, there is a close connection with the phrase "Holy Spirit." It speaks of a personal deep persuasion. The noun for "assurance" is only used a few times in the New Testament (here; Col. 2:2; Heb. 6:11; 10:22).

NOTE: Oh, for preaching which would be pregnant with the same evidence of God's presence as is described here!

## 2. PERSONAL HAPPENINGS v. 5.

### a. It was known.

Clearly, Paul calls upon the Thessalonians to give testimony to what he writes. They knew the facts. They were knowledgeable of what he wrote.

### b. It was quality.

The word "manner" is the word for "sort." It conveys the idea that when the team came to Thessalonica, the quality of men which they were became evident. Their methods were beyond question.

### c. It bore purpose.

The grammatical construction of the phrase "for your sake" points to the Thessalonians and not to Paul. What took place among them was for their sake and not his. Paul and his team were selfless. They did things for others. Glory!

## 3. EXAMPLE HAPPENINGS vv. 6, 7.

### a. Of Paul v. 6.

The aorist tense of "became" shows its connection with the instantaneousness of salvation. At the moment of salva-

tion, there were some results! This is a dramatic shift from what is normally considered as salvation today. If salvation is not related to the life-changing business, then is it really salvation at all?!? It is true that Paul notes the Thessalonians became followers of Paul and then of the Lord. It is given in this sequence because it removes the believers from the Lord and gives Him a special place (cf. 1 Pet. 2:21). Furthermore, this is the way God operates. He gives the man, inasmuch as he follows Christ, as the one after whom the believers are to go (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1). The word "follower" is really "imitator" and is found six times in the New Testament (1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Eph. 5:6; Heb. 6:2). Thus, here is a corporate body (plural) taking after Paul, even as they did after Christ upon their salvation.

### b. Of believers v. 7.

The Greek here is a result clause. The same Greek verb for "become" is again employed. This is the fourth use in the section. Now, from a mimic or follower, there is an advance to a type (so the Greek for "example"). The MSS use the plural for the word "example" and accent the corporate use of the word. The singular speaks of an individual. It is a unique word which shows the character of pattern, mold, print, or model. The Thessalonians became this throughout Macedonia and Achaia as related to believers. "Believers" is the true translation of the verb "believe." It is a present tense participial form of the verb and conveys the character of the people. It presupposes an active relationship with God through Christ. Note the use of the present tense in most Gospel verses (John 3:16; 7:38; 11:25, 26; 12:46, et. al.).

## 4. BIBLICAL HAPPENINGS v. 6.

Although there is no verb for "become" here, this one is an associate of the others. It comes as a parallel between the final two uses of that verb "become." It concerns the message of the Gospel.

### a. It was received.

The aorist middle form of the verb shows that it was concomitant with the becoming an imitator. Hence, the idea here is the simultaneousness of the activities. The middle shows the personal interest of the believers.