

Are You One of God's Elect?

06/03 & 10/2018

Scripture Reading: I Thessalonians 1:1-10

This message is not actually about the doctrine of election. The term "God's elect" is often used to describe those who are saved/born-again (Romans 8:33; Titus 1:1 cp. Matthew 24:22, 24, 31; Luke 18:7; Colossians 3:12). They are sometimes called Christ's sheep (as opposed to "goats"). See John 10:1-30; Matthew 25:32-33.

The term "elect" means "chosen." There is much mystery and divided thinking about the cause of God's election. For now, let's just say that it is something held within the heart and mind of God (Ephesians 1:3-14; I Peter 1:1-5).

However, our Scripture reading gives us something tangible that we can work on. Rather than studying the cause of election, we will be looking at the effects of election. I Thessalonians 1:4 says, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." (KJV) / "Knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you." (NASB) The results of God's choice are presented in this chapter as something that we can be involved with. We can look for these things and strive for them (II Peter 1:1-11).

So, how did Paul know that these people were part of God's elect? Paul gives us six descriptions that provide a model for us to understand and follow.

- If you lack these six things entirely, you need to consider your need to repent and call upon the Lord and be born again by God's Spirit (II Corinthians 13:5; John 3:3; 5:24; 6:63; Matthew 7:7; 11:28-30; Romans 10:9-13; Ephesians 2:8-10 cp. James 2:17-18; Hebrews 9:14).
- If you are weak in these things, you need to seek the Lord, and strengthen yourself (Hebrews 12:12-14; Revelation 3:2; Ephesians 5:1-21; Colossians 3:1-17; II Peter 1:1-10).

How did the believers in Thessalonica show that they were God's elect?

Sincere reception of God's Word – I Thessalonians 1:5

People have various reasons for becoming a Christian: fear, guilt, peer pressure, curiosity – to name a few. We need to be motivated by the Word of God, or our faith will not be real (Romans 10:17; I Thessalonians 2:13; John 5:21, 24-25 [cp. Ephesians 2:1]; 8:30-36; I Peter 1:18-25).

Serving, Suffering, and Spiritual Joy – I Thessalonians 1:6

Conversion is not a mere acceptance of ideas. It is the beginning of a journey. We are told to take up our cross and follow Christ. There will be hardships and opposition, but there will also be joy and comfort from the Lord (Matthew 16:24-26; Luke 14:25-35; John 16:33; II Timothy 3:10-12; I Peter 1:6-9; II Corinthians 1:3-5).

Setting forth an example to follow – I Thessalonians 1:7 cp. 3

We do not encourage doing your works in pride, to be seen of men and admired. However, there is a need to live our lives purposely as an example that others can follow. Our life should be a light for other people's paths (Matthew 6:1-5; 23:5; 5:13-16; I Timothy 4:12; Philippians 2:14-15). Note how I Thessalonians 1:3 gives a simple description of a good example. We need to have a reputation for living by faith (I Thessalonians 1:8).

Scripture proclaimed – I Thessalonians 1:8

A good example sets the stage for proclaiming and teaching God's Word to others. Testimonies may begin in silence, but eventually something must be said (Philippians 2:14-16; Romans 1:14-17; 10:13-17).

Serving the Living God, while forsaking worldly idols – I Thessalonians 1:9

Coming to Christ is a 180-degree turn, **from** the World, the flesh, and the devil, **to** Christ and His ways. We must continually check our bearings, to see if our thoughts, words, and deeds are going the right direction (Matthew 4:8-10; Acts 26:18; I John 2:15-17; 5:19-21 cp. James 4:1-10; II Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1). See also Psalm 19:14; 139:23-24 cp. 115:1-8; Deuteronomy 6:4-7.

Singular Desire: The Return of Christ – I Thessalonians 1:10

This life / this world is passing away. Eternity must be kept in view. We are only strangers and travelers in this world, now that we belong to Christ. His return is our desire, and our focus for how we live (Galatians 1:3-4; I Corinthians 7:31; Titus 2:11-14; Romans 13:11-14; I Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:11; II Peter 3:13-14; Revelation 22:20).

So far, Christians have died in the faith and in the hope of Christ returning. There is a desire for His "new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." However, until Christ returns, we have the prospect of Christ taking us home, through death. The joyful expectation of dying and being with the Lord is the other way to "wait for His Son from heaven." While wanting to live and serve the Lord, there is also the desire to depart and be with Him. See II Peter 3:13; I Corinthians 15:55-57; II Corinthians 5:1-8; Philippians 1:20-24.