

Election

by Carl Armerding

The Apostle Paul gives three reasons why he knew the Thessalonians were the elect of God: the way the gospel came to them, the way they sounded out the gospel, and the kind of life they lived before their contemporaries.

Duration: 10:06

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 12:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-7, 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

Topics: "Election"

Description

In this sermon, the apostle Paul gives three reasons why he knows that the Thessalonians are the elect of God. He does not rely on his own personal experiences, such as being caught up to the Third Heaven, but instead provides down-to-earth reasons. The first reason is that the gospel did not just come to them in words, but they actually believed it. The second reason is that they turned away from idolatry and began serving the true and living God. The third reason is that they received the word of God with much affliction, yet still found joy in the Holy Spirit. These reasons serve as evidence of their faith and make them examples to other believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

Transcript

Let us turn to God's Word, as found in 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1. This lesson is supposed to be the, this letter is supposed to be the first one that Paul wrote to these believers. And in this letter, after greeting them as he does, and saluting them, in the early verses of the chapter, he says in verse 4, Now, somebody says, how in the world can anybody know whether you've been elected or not? The word elected, by the way, simply means chosen, come from the same root exactly in the original language. Now, Paul gives us three reasons why he knew that they were the elect of God.

And you'll notice this in the verses which begin with the little word for. If you have your New Testament open there, you'll notice in the 5th verse, it says for our gospel. And you find that word again in verse 8, for.

And once again in verse 9, for. And that little word for has the force of because. Because of this.

So what the apostles really doing here is giving three reasons why he knows that they are the elect of God. And in not one of these does he refer to that wonderful experience he had when he was caught up to the third heaven. And you might have thought maybe the Lord showed him the books to see who was elected or not.

But he gives some real down to earth reasons why. And the first reason is found here in verse 5 when he says, for our gospel came not unto you in word only. Alas, many people hear the gospel, but they don't believe it.

It comes to them in word only. But you'll notice that Paul here says it not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance. And this, of course, any true believer can confirm this by saying, yes, I know what that means.

When the gospel came to me, for example, myself, I was born in a Christian home. I heard the gospel again and again. In fact, I would join my parents in singing gospel hymns.

But it wasn't until I was fifteen years of age that this thing came to me as power. It struck me so that I just couldn't throw it off until I had confessed the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. But now you notice that in the same verse the apostle also makes reference to his own life where he says, for you know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes, and so on.

And then as much as to enlarge on what he just said in verse 5, he says, And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost, so that ye were in samples, or types, of all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. Macedonia and Achaia, by the way, were two sections of the country of Greece. Macedonia being the north and Achaia the south.

And here their faith was being spoken of all through these parts of their country. And that brings the apostle now to the second reason how he knew that they were the elect of God. For he says here in verse 8, For from you sounded out the word of the Lord.

Not only had they received the word of the Lord, but now it sounds out from them. And the word in the original language for sounded out is the very word from which we get our English word echoed. In other words, they just simply became sounding boards for the gospel.

And you see, this is a wonderful thing. You don't originate the message. God originates the message and uses you as a mouthpiece.

And this Paul submits here the second reason why he knew that they were the elect of God. But down in the ninth verse, he gives still a third reason. And this, you'll notice, is what other people say about them.

They say here in the ninth verse, For they themselves, that's speaking of outsiders, show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you. And then he goes on to point out three things that were true of them. First, that they had turned to God from idols.

That, of course, was true of them because there had been idolatries and days gone by, and now they came to know the true and living God. And this was an outward evidence that something had happened in their lives. And the second thing he mentions here is to serve the living and true God.

And the word which Paul, he uses for service, is a word which means to serve like a slave. Sometimes people wonder why some servants of the Lord can give themselves so unreservedly to the service of the Lord Jesus. They do more than is required of them.

They don't go by the clock in their serving the Lord. They just go by the direction of the Holy Spirit. And this was one of the evidences to, not only to the neighbors around, but it was one of the reasons that the

Apostle Paul could advance here as to why and how he knew that they were the elect of God.

But then the third thing he mentions there in verse 10, he says, And to wait for his Son from heaven. And this, of course, is a very outstanding proof that something has happened in your life and mine when we're waiting for one who left this world some nineteen hundred years ago, but before he left, he made the promise, says, If I go away, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there ye may be also. And this is what marked these Thessalonians believers.

And so here in these verses, beginning at verse 5 and going down through verse 10, we have these three reasons how the Apostle Paul knew that they were the elect of God. As I said a moment ago, he doesn't advance anything here that he might have seen when he was caught up in the third heaven. He's giving you down-to-earth proof right here, right now, so that you don't have to wonder about this.

Is this simply a theory that some Christians hold, or is this something that really can be believed? Well, here's the evidence. It was the way the gospel came to them. It was the way they themselves sounded out the gospel, and then the kind of life that they lived before their contemporaries, the people that lived at the same time they did.

There's a very interesting little touch in that word, wait. It could have been translated to wait up for God's Son from heaven. Sometimes I'm asked what I believe about the future.

Well, I say, you can put me down as a Thessalonian believer. I'm waiting for God's Son from heaven. And this is something, of course, some people question in these days.

They don't think you're practical if you're waiting for somebody you've never seen. But the Holy Spirit has made him so real to us that we recognize him the moment we see him. I don't have to be introduced to the Lord Jesus.

He's one that I've been knowing now for over three score and ten years as my personal Savior. And one of these days I'm going to see him face to face. And I've been believing his promise as given to us in the fourteenth chapter of John's gospel, where, as I said a moment ago, he promises that if he goes away, and he did go away, he says, I'll come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there ye may be also.

But now coming back to that word wait, to wait up. Ever have anybody wait up for you? In my ministry to the sick and the dying, I frequently came home very late at night, sometimes very early in the morning. My ministry would keep me at the bedside, say, till one o'clock in the morning, sometimes to be there when that dear person passed into the presence of the Lord.

And I'd drive into my backyard with my car. I'd see a light on the kitchen, and I'd say, wasn't it nice? My dear wife has kept a light on the kitchen for me. And when I got up to the door and put my key in the door, the door opened of itself from the inside.

And there she was, waiting up. And looking at me, seeing how weary I was, would you like a cup of tea before you go to bed? You know, this is always welcome to a man like myself. And to me this was a wonderful illustration of what it means to wait up for the Lord Jesus, to be expecting Him and to be glad when He comes.

And this is something which we believe may not be very far off in these days in which we live. We think of the world in its present state and condition, and we thank God for this blessed hope. That's what the Bible calls it, the blessed hope.

And we're not figuring dates when we say this, because we know from experience that we can't figure dates. And we're not going to figure dates. We're not waiting for a date.

We're waiting for a person. And that's exactly what these Thessalonians were doing. So when you get troubled about this question of election, just read over this chapter again and see the reasons that St. Paul gives here for knowing that they, with the elect of God, it was by the way the gospel came to them, the way they were sounding out the gospel.

And thirdly, by the way...

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