

age and stability. They weren't with Paul all that long, but it was long enough.

Consider Paul's final prayer for them.

"Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as {it did} also with you; and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil {one.} We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will {continue to} do what we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ." II Thessalonians 3:1-5 ~



A section of the Via Ignatia over which Paul and his fellow laborers in the gospel moved through Macedonia (modern Greece) and stopped off at Thessalonica.

We meet on James M Harvell Rd next to the public library in Navarre. Call for directions and more information (850) 939-8109

Assembly Schedule
Sunday

Bible Class for all ages ___ 9:00 AM
Morning Worship Service ___ 10:00 AM
Evening Worship Service ___ 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Class for all ages ___ 7:00 PM

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NAVARRE MESSENGER

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The Church of the "Less Noble"

The 3-month-old church at Thessalonica



Thessaloniki, as it is now called, was founded in 315 b.c. and was named after the sister of Alexander the Great. It is Greece's second largest city and capital of the Macedonian region. Many ancient and historic buildings still exist, including the White Tower, which is the most prominent feature of the harbor. Above is from a water color by Pantelis Zografos.

The church at Thessalonica was founded in an uproar. With only three weeks of teaching Paul had to flee for his life leaving this group of new Christians behind to fend for themselves. Not only that, the people from the community of Thessalonica pursued

Paul some 60 miles to Berea and tried their dead level best to destroy Paul's efforts in Berea.

The establishment of the church at Thessalonica so upset the status quo that the Thessalonian community was outraged that

anyone would buy into this new thing called Christianity. They found it to be an incredible inconvenience that the gospel was all true. The Jewish community didn't want to hear it, and were angry at those "less enlightened" Greeks who were loyal to the truth.

Here is the text:

Acts 17

1. Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

2. And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

3. explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and {saying,} "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."

4. And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.

5. But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some

wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.

6. When they did not find them, they {began} dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also;

7. and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."

8. They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things.

9. And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

10. The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily {to see} whether these things were so.

For two thousand years sermons have been preached regarding the noble Bereans. Today I want to ask...

What about the decent people left behind to start the new church of Thessalonica?

So...

What would you advise this group of people? They have only 3 weeks instruction, then they must stand alone. Note that Christianity, (such as it is) still resides at Thessalonica. While many of the churches of the New Testament are no longer there...

this group is still there. They lost their buildings for about 400 years when the Muslims took over but they eventually got them back.

Like the church at Philippi they would have hoped ...That they will prove themselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom they appeared as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life (adapted from Philippians 2:15-16a)

The church at Thessalonica was only about 3-4 months old when the letter that we know as I Thessalonians was written. This particular letter has become of special interest to us locally, because our congregation is now the same age.

Even the "less noble" can make their mark in the kingdom of God.

1 Thessalonians 1

1. Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

2. We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention {of you} in our prayers;

3. constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

4. knowing, brethren beloved by God, {His} choice of you;

Here are the keys, to your success, whether "noble" or "less so."

Work of Faith - This phrase only

shows up 2x in the Bible, here and II Thessalonians 1:11. What was impressive about this 3 month old congregation, with only three weeks instruction? Theirs was a working faith. There are plenty of people around to talk about faith. They simply went out and did it.

"When Christianity really goes into action it must cause a revolution both in the life of the individual and in the life of society." (Barclay)

At Thessalonica Christianity caused a stink, but the reason is that they tried to live up to their faith rather than just talk about it. Paul gives this compliment to no other church.

Labor of love - This expression is so compelling that it has become a common expression in the English language. Most have no clue it was the strongest of compliments paid to the "less noble" Thessalonians. This is the only place in scripture that the phrase occurs.

Today what most term love is really infatuation, but this is real love. It is a love whose labor can still be seen two thousand years later! That is no passing fad!

"For this reason, when I could endure {it} no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain." I Thessalonians 3:5

When their neighbors had tried to kill him, Paul had been forced to leave them behind. Like anyone who has poured his heart into them Paul then worried for them. He didn't need to. These people

went to work and made their place in the kingdom of God, in the scriptures and into our hearts as well as his.

What is the difference between work and labor? (A work of faith, and a labor of love?) Well, it is work to weed a garden, even if you like to garden. It is labor to do it at 110 degrees in the shade! In order to motivate you to do it at 110, it has to be love!

Similarly, even under the heat of persecution the Thessalonians labored in love with, and for, the Savior. Ultimately they were just like us and all who have ever successfully named the name of Christ.

"For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers." I Timothy 4:10

Which brings us to the third and anchoring strength of the church at Thessalonica.

Steadfastness of hope - When Jesus spoke of the various kinds of human hearts in His parable of the Sower, He described one heart in particular that is relevant in contrast to the Thessalonians.

"The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no {firm} root in himself, but is {only} temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away." Matthew 13:20-21

What they desperately needed,

they had... stability. This church had been founded in persecution. Their entire community was enraged over the gospel. They hunkered down and made their place in God's kingdom. They labored as if their very lives depended on it. The reality is that it does!

"And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them." Revelation 14:13

Paul continued to worry over them.

"Now we request you, brethren,

with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you..." II Thessalonians 2:1-3

Could they handle the slick talking smooth speech of the false teacher? Could they keep their composure as people came along in the name of God and undermined some of the core teachings of Christ? Answer? They did.

There is a message here for all of us. Conviction brings cour-

