

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Have you received praises and encouragement that made you feel very good and appreciated? Have you received some that had no impact or feeling? We are going to learn how to give praise and encouragement from this Bible chapter.

The book of I Thessalonians in the New Testament was written by Paul along with Silas and Timothy to church members in Thessalonica. Paul wrote this letter approximately A.D. 50 at Corinth (Acts 18:1 & 18:5). Thessalonica was a seaport city on the Aegean Sea. It was an important communication and trade center, and it was the largest city in Macedonia. Paul wrote the letter to the Christians there to praise their deeds and faith, to encourage them in their trials, to give instructions on godly living (chapters 4-5), and to provide assurance of the hope on Christ return (Chapter 4:13 – 5:24). Key words of this book/letter are praise, joy, prayers, trials and coming of the Lord.

1) Praise God and thank God first

Paul's letter gives us a good example of how Paul did his praises.

- a) Know that all are from God. God is the **source**: all good deeds, material, opportunities, His people, etc. (James 1:17). As shown in the "Lord's prayer" (Matt. 6:9-13), our first praise shall be "Hallowed be Your Name". Many Psalms wrote about the acts of praise and thank to God such as Psalm 100:4-5 and Psalm 95:1-3.
- b) Realize and remember that God is the ultimate one that is worth of praise and give thanks to. Heb. 13:15 tells us to continually praise God. The writers of this letter thank God first as shown in verse 2.
- c) Praise and prayer are often together. In this case, Paul continues to pray for Christian brothers and sisters (vs. 2).

2) Praise deeds that are pleasing to God

As stated in 1 Thes. 2:4, we are here to please God. Thus, we should give praises to deeds that are pleasing to God. We can see several examples (different **categories/types**) in this chapter:

- a) Work produced by faith is the first example shown in verse 3.

b) Labor prompted by love in our Lord Jesus Christ (verse 3). This labor includes delivering the Lord's message (His Words) and the Good News. Other actions such as care for the sick and poor are labors prompted by love.

c) Endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (verse 3). As shown in verse 6, they welcomed the message with joy even under severe suffering.

3) Praise specific action that others can model them

Item c) above on verse 6 lists a **specific** action that was praised. Verse 8 about spreading the Good News because of the love for fellow human is another specific action example. A third example is on verse 9 that it lists how those Christians turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. These specific actions can encourage others to model and learn. Verse 6 emphasizes this point which we can imitate other Christians' holy deeds and imitate the Lord.

The above three points on giving praises and encouragement apply to our relationship with Christians as well as other relationships (Eph. 5:18-20, I Thes. 5:11). I remember I praised one of the Bible study members this way, "Thank God (*the source*) we can have this small fellowship group that we can share and learn from God's Word and each other. It is wonderful that you take the opportunity to lead the study this time (*deeds that is worthy of praise*). Your in-depth explanation on the first three verses really made me and the group understand God's intended message here. Thank you!" I remember I also received some similar praises before in the past, and those encouragements really gave me joy and strength to go forward.

These points can also apply at home with family members and at your work place with your management and coworkers. The Bible teaches us how to apply God's wisdom in all aspects of our lives. Years ago, one of my staff at work has accomplished something great. I praised and encouraged him in the following way. I said "It is great that the company (*the source in this case*) has provided a new powerful computer for us at work. You have done an excellent job using the new computer on your tasks to meet the project's major milestone (*deeds that is worthy of praise*). You worked very hard daily on the computer with various technical strategies to generate the needed analytical result to meet this major Critical Design Review milestone (*specific action*). Thank you!"

The Bible teaches us to be a positive and thankful person. First, give thanks to God always (Eph. 5:19-20). It also teaches us how to give praises and thanks that is meaningful and encouraging to others. May God help us to practice more in this area daily.