

## Thessalonica—A Deeper Look

**MONDAY 4.18.16** 1 Thess. 1:1 Paul names God as “Father” to establish the origin of this Gospel message. The Lordship of Jesus is mentioned to connect with God’s authority. Thessalonica is a Hellenistic (Greek, civilized) community where “Lord” is a word that refers to a person having the most complete power over persons and things. For Paul to call Jesus “Lord” meant that he “wielded supreme cosmic dominion, after God.”<sup>1</sup> So much so that Paul uses this term 24-times in this letter. He does a similar thing in Corinth. Take a look at 1 Cor. 8:5-6. *How important is the “lordship” of Jesus for your faith?*

**TUESDAY 4.19.16** Read Isaiah 45 and pay close attention to the word “messiah” and the journey of the people away from idolatry. The word “messiah” means “anointed one” (Messiah = Greek, christos; semitic = mashiach). It refers to anyone that is used by God for the sake of God’s people. Cyrus of Persia was considered to be a “messiah” because he let the Israelites go home from exile. Kings, priests and prophets were “oiled” into office, anointed into leadership. *How are we called to be “anointed ones” in our baptism to be leaders and deliverers for others?*

**WEDNESDAY 4.20.16** 1 Thess 1:2-3. Faith is the social value of trust in the reliability of someone else. Love is the attachment to a group like family. Hope is personal allegiance and abiding confidence. So those believers in Thessalonica when asked who they were could say, “People characterized by faith (in the God who raised Jesus), love and hope.” This is core to the early church and how the first believers were taught: 1 Thess 5:8, 1 Cor. 13:13, Gal 5:5-6. *What would it look like for you to live out Christianity as “enduring, personal, trusting loyalty to God, group attachment revealed in behavior to group members, and allegiance and abiding confidence in the Lord Jesus”?*

**THURSDAY 4.21.16** Paul and Silas journeyed 54 miles from Philippi to Thessalonica, which would take 4 days of walking in perfect conditions. Can you imagine how tired you would be after a trip that long? It fits with Luke-Acts and the theme of suffering. While Isaiah 52-53 focuses on a suffering “servant” it is not a suffering Messiah. Luke-Acts is the exclusive place for this idea that the strong, deliverer would also suffer. Look at Luke 24:26, 46 and Acts 26:23. *Is the notion of a suffering messiah important? What would it mean if Jesus simply lived, died, and was resurrected to make a point? What personal connection does a suffering Jesus mean for you?*

**FRIDAY 4.22.16** Acts 17:4, why are there women in the synagogue? Wasn’t that a “men only” gathering? The women were elite so other women were employed to care for their household. Second, they would have special status and be permitted in male space where other women would not be allowed. Third, they would have gathered in a balcony or adjacent room and their husbands would have shared what Paul said. Perhaps it was these conversations that converted the most, where spouses shared and experienced the call of the Gospel together? Take a look at Acts 5:14, 8:3, 9:2, 12:12, 16:15, 17:4, 18:2, 21:9.

**SATURDAY 4.23.16** What’s the problem? Read Acts 17:6-7. The three charges brought against Paul and Silas were: 1. Creating disturbances (literally “turning things upside down, not good in a Roman world obsessed with order!) 2. Acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor (none are cited though) and 3. The men promote Jesus as king, a Lord of greater eternal status than the divine Ceasar. There is zero evidence to this and is simply not the Good News Paul is preaching. Outsiders would see Paul’s message as trying to steer loyalty to Jesus from Ceasar. Insiders would realize the nuanced approach to live in Ceasar’s world and live *for* Jesus through a caring community that loved one another (see Wednesday’s devotion on faith, hope, and love). *The early message of the first Christians was to live into the kingdom and not be concerned with the government; change hearts and individual lives. How is that different for us today? Have we missed our heritage of transforming the lives of the individual as our main focus and chosen to live in systems and institutions?*

**Love:** How do these devotions teach about the love of God and the love for one another?

**Learn:** What have you learned about where Jesus walked that helps you with where you walk?

**Share:** What key insights have you learned this week on how to share your faith with others?

**Serve:** Look at the prayer list. Who can you pray for? Who needs a little extra help in an area where you can make a difference?

**Healing Strength:** Rex Townsend, Stan Ensch, Lincoln Wallis, Mary Schmidt, Chris Osborn (Ken and Sandy Grubb’s daughter), Janet Coons (Donna’s daughter)

**Sympathies:** Family of Bucky Jordan (Tim’s Dad), Family of Houston Wooden

**Homebound:** Mary Hicks, Mary Schmidt, Joann Young, Jeanne Carman

**Military Personnel:** Adam Walters, Joseph Roberts, Lucas Lamkin, Adam Clark

<sup>1</sup> Bruce Malina, Social Science Commentary, Letters of Paul. p. 32.