

1 Thes 1:9-10

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[0 : 00] And if you could grab your Bibles, turn back there to 1 Thessalonians, and we're really just going to look at the last two verses of chapter 1, verses 9 and 10.

But this letter, just to give you a little bit of background, it's speaking about a time when the church was just started in that city of Thessalonica. The Apostle Paul and his friend Silas had gone there on a church planting mission to northern Greece.

It's a lovely city on the Aegean coast. Just imagine it now with the warm sunshine. And you can go there today. You can see all these places and try and imagine where all of this stuff happened.

But it was a city where there was no church before, and this new church had been established and planted there. And so Paul is writing here, sort of reflecting on those first few moments of when that church began.

He writes to them to encourage them, but also picks up a few things that they can remember from that time that Paul was there with them.

[1 : 07] So let's have a look. Verses 9 and 10 that we're going to look at this morning. And this is speaking about the people of that place in Macedonia, southern Macedonia.

Let's pray and ask God's help now.

Our Father in heaven, please speak to each one of us now. Tell us the truth. We want to hear your voice. We want to hear the things of Jesus this morning. And please be with us so that we would want to hear your voice and that we wouldn't listen to any other voices.

Pray, especially if there are people here this morning who don't know the Lord Jesus as we do. May they come to meet him personally and have their lives transformed.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Little question for you, just a little one to start with. What is a Christian? What is a Christian? That's the big question, isn't it?

[2 : 30] What is the difference between somebody who's a Christian and somebody who's not a Christian? Maybe there's someone in the room this morning who wants to know that question. What is the difference between a church and just any other club or society or something like that?

What makes Christians Christians? And maybe you look around this morning and you see in the room, you see, well, it's an interesting mix of people, isn't it? Older people, younger people, different backgrounds represented.

And everyone wants to be here. What is this group of people? What are we about? It's a pretty rare thing these days, isn't it? To have such a diverse group of people who genuinely want to be together and are friends.

It's not a forced thing. Over in Leeds, the church, we have a very mixed, diverse congregation. And it's great. On a Sunday morning, you'll see some students, 18, 19, 20 years old, sitting and talking to a guy in a wheelchair in his 80s.

And they are genuinely friends. Why is that? It's not a bit strange. You have the recovering heroin addict talking to a successful businessman.

[3 : 44] Isn't that odd? Someone who's come from overseas, whose first language is not English, speaking to someone whose first language is Yorkshire. It's a strange place sometimes, the church.

So what is the difference between a church and just any other group of people? What is a Christian? What's the reputation here of this church in Thessalonica?

What did the locals there make of them? What did they see? What was the difference between them and anybody else? Have a look at verse 9. They report concerning what happened about how they turned.

They turned. That's one difference. They turned. And it should be known here, as it was in Thessalonica, that these people that gather together have turned.

We are different people. Once we were like this, but now we're like this. We weren't always like this. I'm sure you have, from time to time, an opportunity for people to share their testimonies, their stories of how they came to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

[4 : 58] And they're thrilling times, aren't they? And you hear about someone's life and how they've turned. There's a difference now. We've had, back in Leeds, we've had a number of testimonies nearly every week of different people who have turned.

There was a young man addicted to heroin who's now turned. Another young man who was addicted to pornography who has turned.

A lady who, so wracked with grief, her husband died, her son, young child died, her other family members died, all within the short space of time, and she was bitter.

Very bitter. Very bitter. But she turned. Another young man who, I'll never forget this, I've never heard it before, and I'll probably never hear it again all my life.

He said his mother abandoned him as a young teenager, just ran away and left him. But he turned and he found true love in the Lord Jesus.

[6 : 01] And he said, that's a church. A bunch of people who've turned. They've turned. And here's the thing, you might not be that addict.

You might not be in that situation of incredible grief. And, you know, all these other things. You might think, well, my life's a little bit more settled than that. I don't need to turn.

It's good that they did, because, you know, it's great to hear these stories, and the world needs more of these stories. Hearing of people turning their lives around, and this great and brilliant change.

We love to hear those things. People turning over a new leaf, but it's not that, you see. That's not what it is. If you just decide to sort yourself out, if you just decide to deal with your problems, deal with your bad choices, well, that's not becoming a Christian.

That's not what a Christian is. Look at what it says, back in verse 9. Yes, they've turned, but they've turned to God.

[7 : 08] They've turned to God. They didn't just sort themselves out. They didn't just turn. They turned to God. They turned to a person, in other words. Christianity is a personal thing.

They've come to know a person. They've turned to the living God. God wants to know you. He wants to know you.

He made you to know him. He made you a relational being. That's why you like family. That's why you like to love, and that's why you like to be loved. It's because you were made to love and to know the living God, and he longs to know you.

He wants to know you. That's a Christian, someone who has come to know God. They've turned, and they've turned to God.

They didn't know him before, but they do now. So actually, it doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what problems you may or may not have in your life. It's a real leveler, isn't it?

[8 : 11] You come to know God. Everybody needs to turn to God. We might have a life full of chaos. We might have a life full of grief or addictions or difficulty, or we might have a more sedate, normal, quiet life.

But everyone needs to turn to God. Either way, to become a Christian, for either of those people, it's the same thing. You turn to God, whether you think you're sinful or not.

You need to turn to God. That's the point. You need to turn to God. If you become a Christian this morning, then that's an amazing thing.

You could leave this place, and you could say, I've come to know the living God. I've come to know God. And that will change everything. That could happen between now and the end of our time together, but it would be the most amazing thing, and it would transform your life.

Now, you may think that church is a bit weird, and in many ways, it is. Stand up, sit down. Stand up, sit down. Sing this, sing that. You know, it's a bit odd if you're not used to it.

[9 : 31] Maybe you think Christians are boring people. Maybe you think I'm a little bit crazy. I don't know. But if you become a Christian this morning, you'll be able to say, I've come to know God.

And that is amazing. No matter what you think about anything else, that is amazing. You'll have come to know him yourself as your father.

That is a kind of relationship. Christianity is not about living by a new set of rules. It's not about understanding the Bible.

It's not about being nice to people, giving food to the poor. Yes, some of that will happen, but that's not what a Christian is. It's about personally knowing the living and true God, turning to him.

If you've come into church this morning just wanting to find out about Christianity, you need to forget about that. That's not going to work for you, I'm afraid.

[10 : 38] You see, there's a big difference, isn't there, between finding out about a person and coming to know them. It's very different, isn't it? We need to turn to God.

And maybe you think, I don't need to turn to anything. I'm all right. I'm strong in myself. It's a bit weak, this whole turning to God. That's okay for those people with the problems, but I'm okay.

I'm strong. I don't need to turn anywhere. Well, here's the thing. You may not want to turn to the living God, but you cannot say you do not turn to something.

We all turn to something. Everybody turns to something. The question is whether or not the thing that you're going to turn to is worth turning to. So, however silly it might sound to turn to the living God, I wonder how your turning sounds.

So, where do you turn when crisis comes? Where do you turn? When the day of death visits your family, your household, where do you turn?

[11 : 53] Does it really help? Is it going to deal with the problem of death? Where do you turn? When you go to a funeral, do you need a drink?

Why? Can that deal with the problem of death? When you have problems in your relationships, your marriages, your neighborhoods, do you just, how do you deal with that?

Where do you turn? Do you switch on the telly and watch X Factor and just push the problems to one side? That's escapism. You all turn. We all turn to something.

But that something, whatever it is we turn to, that something has been lying to you all your life. It's lying to you. Whatever you live for, it tells you, if you could just have this, if I could just have that, if I could just bring this into my life, if I could just achieve this, then I'll have everything.

It's lying to you because you find, don't you? As soon as you go after them, well, you may get briefly satisfied, but it's gone. It doesn't last. It doesn't last. We're always chasing after a dream.

[13 : 06] What do you dream about? It's a lie. Nothing that we turn to can deal with death. Nothing can deal with the decay of our bodies and the decay of the world around us.

They're just false comforts. So we have to say, what is the difference between turning to some of these false comforts and bowing down to a little wooden idol?

They haven't got hands to help you. They've not got ears to hear your concerns. They've not got a mouth to speak words of comfort. They've not got feet to carry you. But you can turn to God, the living God.

You can turn to all of these things, but they just let you down. They really do. They lie to you. They're dead things.

They're inanimate things. They are false hopes, false comforts, and they cannot save you. They cannot deal with death, but you can turn to the living God. That's what a Christian is.

[14 : 14] Someone who has realized that all of the stuff in their lives, all of the things that they used to turn to, all of the things that they valued and dreamed about, these were empty.

These were lying to me. These were pulling me away from the only one who truly can deal with the problems of the world, with my real problems. A Christian has turned to the living God.

And you can turn. And you can come to know him too. The God who is true. Do you see that? It's the living and true God.

He is the true God. All these other things lie. Can this God deal with them? Well, can he deal with death?

Yes, he can. He raised Jesus from the dead. And Jesus himself raised many others from the dead. He can deal with death. Can he deal with decay?

[15 : 13] Well, yes, he can. Jesus went around and he healed people. Everywhere he went, he would heal those who had diseases. He is the true God. Can he deal with hunger?

Yes, he can. He dealt with those who were hungry. He fed an abundance of food. There was stuff left over from nothing. He can deal with hunger. Can he deal with loneliness? Yes, he can.

He will invite you into his family. His father will become your father. His spirit will become your spirit. He can deal with that. Can he deal with natural problems? The natural disasters?

Yes. He calmed the storm. He is the true God. He can deal with it all. Christ is the truth and the real God. And he will never let you down as these other things do.

Turn to him. And what else does it say? He is the living and true God. This is good news. God is alive.

[16 : 12] He's alive. He is the living God. He's not alive in the sense that you and I are alive. He's not alive in the sense that we have life. He is the source of all life.

He is the beginning of all life. You only have life and I only have life because he gives us life. We have life in him. In him we live and move and have our being.

In him all things hold together. He sustains all things by his powerful word. He is the breath and the heartbeat and the life of everything in this world. And you can come to know him personally.

Turn to him. He longs to know you. Serve him. And not these worthless idols that cannot help, that lie and that pull you down.

Well, maybe you think, okay, that's good. Okay, I can see that. But what's all this serving thing about? It doesn't sound great to serve the living God, the true and living God.

[17 : 14] Sounds a bit, you know, face down and slavish. Doesn't sound like a great future. Well, there's a lot we could say here. But let's just see what this passage gives us in the next verse, verse 10.

What does it mean to serve the living God? Well, here's one thing. Wait. Wait for his son from heaven.

Who he raised from the dead. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath. We wait for Jesus.

Jesus has said he's going to come back and so we wait for him. We've seen the value of the Lord Jesus Christ. We've seen he is the true God and we want to wait for him.

There's nothing else worth waiting for, is there? Maybe you're waiting for something. It's a bit like the idols. What are you waiting for in life? What is it that you think if I just had that, if I just received this or if we just could do that, what are you waiting for?

[18 : 19] Maybe you're waiting for promotion. Maybe you're waiting for your retirement. Maybe you're waiting for that special someone you want to meet. What are you waiting for?

What is it worth waiting for? Will it last? You get in the films or the soap operas sometimes, you get that scene, don't you, where there's a young couple who are deeply in love with one another and they're going to be separated for some reason, whether it's, you know, he's going to be sent out into the battle or he's been taken away to go to jail and his sweetheart's there and she goes, I'll wait for you.

But you know what's going to happen, don't you? Someone's going to get killed or someone's going to be unfaithful. It sets it up, isn't it? Because what we're waiting for has to be worth waiting for.

We have to have confidence in the truth and the ability of what we're going to wait for because it will direct our entire lives. What are you waiting for?

Is it worth it? We wait for the Son. We wait for Jesus. We wait for the one the Father loves. We're waiting for Him and He's worth it.

[19 : 36] He who was dead is now alive and He's alive forevermore and He holds the keys to death and hell. We wait for Jesus.

Turn to Him and wait for Him. He answers death. He answers decay and He answers hell. Do you notice Jesus delivers us from the coming wrath.

Or maybe you think hell I'm not going to hell. What's all that about? What are you talking about? Jesus delivers us from the coming wrath.

Well you know what hell is like. You know what it's like. You've been there. You know what it's like to be lonely.

Lonely. You do not want that forever. Maybe you've raged up so much in anger that you've gnashed your teeth.

[20 : 45] You felt the anger. You do not want that forever. Perhaps you feel the weight and the pain of something in the past that gnaws away at your soul and your life and it's constantly there.

You do not want to be in the place where the worm that turns never dies and the smoke of your torment rises forever. Maybe you've been at work and you've looked at the clock and you've thought is this day ever going to end?

You do not want to go there. You know what it's like to feel unclean. To feel naked. To feel shameful. God is speaking to you in all of these things that you do not want that forever.

You do not want that forever. And Jesus will deliver you from the wrath to come. Only Jesus. Let's be brutally honest. Everything in our life is all about trying to cover over that other stuff.

It's trying to hide the reality of the coming wrath. That's why we distract ourselves. That's why we entertain ourselves. That's why we turn to these idols because we can't face the reality of the wrath to come.

[22 : 06] God is warning us. The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven. It's being poured out upon all the unrighteous. It's upon us. And God is warning us. You do not want that forever.

You do not want forever. You need to turn to Jesus the true and living God and wait for him from heaven.

Wait for him to appear because only he can deal with the wrath to come. How does he do that? How has Jesus dealt with the wrath to come? Isn't it not too big even for Jesus?

How did he do it? Well that sin that all the idols that we turn to all the things that we do Jesus wore that. He became these things for us.

He went through it all on the cross. The wrath to come. He went through it all on the cross. Maybe you are that angry man with gnashing teeth. Jesus became you on the cross.

[23 : 09] He took that on the cross. Maybe you're somebody who feels the guilt and the shame of something you did in the past. Well Jesus took that bit of you on the cross and it is now dead.

It's gone. He's taken it away forever. Maybe you feel the shame of a sexual sin. The Bible says that Jesus was hung up full of shame naked.

No polite loincloth. He became that for you. Maybe you cry yourself to sleep at night wishing that you were not alone.

Jesus knows loneliness more than you will ever know. He was abandoned by earth. He was abandoned by heaven. And he did it for you. He became lonely for you.

The wrath of God which is upon you, which drives you to turn to all of these things, to serve those idols, to chase after the lies, to hide from the reality of the wrath to come, Jesus took all of that on the cross.

[24 : 17] The Bible says he was so dreadful in his form and appearance that nobody could look at him. Do you ever despise yourself? Ashamed to look at yourself or think of yourself?

Jesus became that for you on the cross. Can't you see? Everything he did, he did for you. He took it all upon himself. Though he was without sin, he became sin that you might become the righteousness of God.

That God would be delighted in you. If you are united with Christ in his death, then how much more are you united to him in his resurrection?

He's alive. He is the living God. God raised him from the dead, and this is why Jesus is worth waiting for. Only Jesus deals with the problems.

Only Jesus can offer you eternal salvation. Only Jesus has the answers that drive us to despair. Only Jesus. The everyday things that torment our lives, the niggles, the knots in our guts, the pains in our joints, the loneliness, the anxiety, the depression, the darkness, the sense of falling, whatever it is in your life, Jesus delivers you from that forever.

[25 : 38] Turn to him, turn to Jesus, then you'll find rest. Don't you want rest? Don't you want the relief? Don't you want to just be still and know who is God?

Turn to Jesus. He loves you. He gave himself for you and he became marred beyond all likeness. He took up our iniquities. He took all our infirmities, became a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, and he did that to rescue you from the coming wrath.

He's done it all. He's dealt with it. It's finished. The Messiah dies. What more could God have possibly done for you?

What more could he have possibly done in your life to tell you that you do not want all of this rubbish forever? You do not want these idols forever? You do not want the torment forever?

Turn to Jesus. He doesn't want you to do that. He wants to save you. He longs to save you. Why wouldn't you come to Christ? Even this morning, why wouldn't you?

[26 : 47] That is what made the Thessalonians stand out. That is what gave them this great reputation, that they turned. They turned to God from their idols to serve him, the true, the living God.

God and they were seen waiting for Jesus. Why? Why would they wait? Why wouldn't you wait? You've come to know this one. Maybe this morning you've heard the voice of God.

You've heard the call of God to come to know him. If you can say, Jesus, you're Lord. Jesus is Lord. He's the top.

There's nothing better than Jesus. He really does deal with all these things. He's Lord. That's what it means. You can say that and you can confess in your heart that Jesus was raised from the dead.

God raised him from the dead. He's alive forever more. You can wait for him. Then you will be saved. And you can do that this morning.

[27 : 50] That changes everything. That'll turn your life around like nothing else. Jesus is Lord changes everything. Perhaps this morning you could do that.

I'd love to talk to you and Graham who led earlier he would love to talk to you as well. Just speak to someone and say I want to know God. I want to turn my life.

I want to see Jesus and wait for him forever. Let's pray. Father in heaven we praise you and thank you that you didn't leave us as orphans.

You didn't abandon us to the rebellion. You didn't leave us to face the wrath to come with no hope. Thank you that you sent your son into that rebellion.

That he took up in himself our flesh, the flesh of Adam, all that is unrighteous, all that is wrong. He took it to death on the cross. He dealt with it all.

[29 : 03] The holy one, the pure and righteous son. And he took all of that on himself. How his heart must have been torn.

And he did it for love. Love for us. And Father, we cannot but marvel at your great love for us.

We cannot but marvel at your great mission to rescue us. And so we pray, Lord, whether we've known you for years or we've heard you for the first time today, we pray that we would continually look to Jesus, turn to him, that we would be away from our idols and that we would walk with you, waiting for your son because he's worth waiting for.

Lord, give us that great desire in our hearts to see Jesus face to face our saviour, our redeemer, our rescuer and our king.

Be pleased, Lord, to save us, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. to him to death
mercy amazing love how can it be that love I want to shine for me amazing love how can
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[33 : 40] Thy guided views from within rain, I go on and turn to flame with light.

I chase my love, my heart's heart's dream, I close my love, I follow me.

I chase my love, my heart's dream, I close my love, I follow me.

No condemnation, now I tread, Jesus' answer and holy fear is mine.

Come, I give him, I give him hand, And the loving Christ, yes, divine.

[34 : 54] Oh, I approach the eternal throne, And wave the crown in Christ my Lord.

Come, I am, I am, I am, I am, I am, I am. and light the crown of Christ my Lord.

Let us pray. And now, may he who rescues us from the domain of darkness, from that
wrath to come, the one who transfers us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of
light, may he fill us all with his good knowledge that we would walk in a manner that is
worthy of this Lord and Savior to please him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good
work and increasing in love and knowledge of Jesus, our Savior, our Redeemer and our
Lord, now and forever.

Amen.