"Imitating Christ"
1 Thessalonians 1:6-10

C.I.T.—Paul commends the Thessalonians for imitating Him.
C.I.S.—We should imitate our leaders as they imitate Jesus.
Purpose—I want to reveal the challenge that our members should follow the example of Godly leaders and live as an example to others to imitate.
Introduction

- Relatively short time of ministry in Thessalonica.
- Surely he would have left behind some relatively new believers as leaders.
- The New Testament wasn't written yet, and so he needed to give some guidance for the Christina life.
- **1 Cor. 11:1** Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ

I. ***We Imitate Christ through Suffering***. Vs. 6
   a. Having received
      i. This refers to how they were imitators.
      ii. They heard the Word of God and received it by Faith.
   b. In tribulation
      i. Difficulty and persecution
      ii. These were pagan Gentiles who came to faith in Christ from a Gentile culture.
      iii. This culture would have rejected them for accepting Christ.
      iv. This would have put immense pressure on them to reject Jesus and to renounce their faith.
   c. Yet they were faithful in the midst of this difficulty.
   d. How did this imitate the missionaries and Christ?
      i. Paul had been beaten, run out of town, stoned, and persecuted.
      ii. Jesus was crucified.
      iii. Yet both remained faithful.
   e. We imitate Jesus when we remain faithful in the midst of trials.
   f. Illus.—Balinese Christians facing persecution
   g. Application
      i. The normal Christian life is one that exercises faith in the midst of persecution and tribulation.
      ii. The Christian life that does not have it is not the normal experience through the ages.
      iii. We should not shrink from tribulation, because it is that very difficulty that tries and proves our faith.
      iv. Not only that, it is faithful endurance through that trial that reveals us to be most like Christ.

II. ***We Imitate Christ through Sharing*** vs. 7-8
   a. The result of their faith and their endurance was so stark and so distinct that it became an example for others.
      i. Macedonia and Achaia
      ii. Some of these areas had churches already and others did not.
      iii. How did they become examples?
   b. Word rung out
      i. Word of the Lord refers to the gospel message
      ii. This word came "from you"
      iii. This means that the evangelized became evangelists
      iv. Those to whom the Missionaries went became missionaries themselves.

c. Faith gone forth
    i. Their faith refers to their belief and therefore their testimony.
    ii. Not only did they share the good news about Jesus, but also their testimony of what He had done for them.
d. This was so affective that there was no need for Paul and the missionary team to go.
e. How does this imitate Paul and Christ?
    i. Paul was the greatest missionary of all time.
    ii. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.
    iii. Paul and Jesus were two of the greatest evangelists of all time.
f. Illus.—Gibson taking the gospel to a new area
g. Application
    i. A natural response to a genuine faith is to share our testimony and the good news with those who haven't heard and those who have.
    ii. Failure or neglect in this area reflects a faith that is not in fellowship with Jesus.
    iii. We are no nearing to imitating Christ than when we are sharing the good news.

III. ***We Imitate Christ through Spreading***. Vs. 9-10
a. "They" refers to those who received the testimony from the Thessalonians.
b. What did they report?
    i. The reception—acceptance
    ii. The repentance—turning from idolatry to faith in Jesus
    iii. The results—a life focused on the hope of Jesus' return
        1. The one who has been raised from the dead
        2. The one who will deliver us from wrath against sin.
        3. The one who will return on day.
c. The message that the Thessalonians gave was a robust Christology, Soteriology, and Eschatology along with their testimony.
d. This message went from Paul to the Thessalonians, from them to the other areas, and then back to Paul.
e. The message spread and spread.
f. Illus.—The issue with COVID was that it was so contagious.
g. Application
    i. Nothing should be more contagious than the gospel.
    ii. It should spread and spread.
    iii. As it spreads, we reach the world for Christ.

Conclusion

- Charles Sheldon—In His Steps—What Would Jesus Do?
    - While there are things that Jesus did, that we simply can't do.
    - The underlying principle is true—when all else fails, imitate Christ.
- We imitate Christ by imitating the visible representatives of Christ, our spiritual leaders.
- This puts a huge responsibility on our leaders and why we hold them to a higher standard of accountability.
- Will you examine your life and answer the question "am I imitating Christ"?
- If others look at you, do they see Christ?
- If not, then something has gone wrong.