

Lighthouse Bible Church

February 15th, 2015

1st Thessalonians 1: 4 – 5 *Scripture Reading: 1st Corinthians 2: 1 - 5*

‘An Example Church to Follow’ #2

Stand – Read – Pray

Last week we began our study of the book of First Thessalonians by doing an overview of some of its highlights and then looking at one reason for studying this book. And the reason I want to study this book is because the church at Thessalonica is an example church in Scripture to follow. And as I said last time, as we look at the example qualities of this church we can then hold our church and our lives up against that lens and see how we are doing.

We also looked at how the church at Thessalonica began in **Acts 17: 1 – 10** where the Apostle Paul and Silas and Timothy went into their synagogue and began to preach about Jesus as the Messiah and his resurrection from the dead. As a result of him preaching for 3 Sabbaths, 3 weeks, some Jews, devout Greeks and many women were saved.

And as what usually happened to Paul and those who were with him, other unbelieving Jews and others became envious of them and tried to have them arrested and imprisoned but they slipped away by night to Berea.

Then we began to look at the church itself and started to see some of the ways that it is an example church to follow. First of all we saw in Verse 2 that this church was a praying and prayed for church. The leadership prayed for the people and ministries of the church and the people prayed for the leadership and ministries of the church. Then we asked if that is true of us.

Next, we saw that this church was a faithful, loving and hope filled church and it was because they were a work of faith, a labor of love and patient in hope congregation. We saw that it was never enough to just work or labor or be patient without having the character qualities of faith, hope and love motivating them.

We saw that their work of faith was their work that evidenced true saving faith because faith without works is...dead. We saw that in their labor of love, love must always be the motive for what we do or else as 1st Corinthians 13 said 'it profits us nothing'. We saw their patience in hope was a persevering hope in the return of Jesus Christ.

And so we want to continue on looking at this church and see what other character qualities set it apart as an example church to follow and emulate. They were not only a Praying Church and a Faithful, Loving and Hope filled church, but they were a:

#3 Secure in their Salvation and Faith Church. Look at Verse 4.

Verse 4: knowing beloved brethren you election by God.

Paul reminds this church that they are **the beloved** of God and because He loved them He also **electd** or chose them for salvation. This is a church that knew their standing with God and knew they were saved by God's grace and that, even their faith, was God's gift for salvation as **Romans 10: 17** and **Ephesians 2: 8 - 9** tells us.

Even in the midst of all they were going through with their trials and tests and persecutions, they never doubted where they stood with God. They knew that God had chosen them and were **confident that He who began a good work in them would complete it until the day of Christ Jesus** as **Philippians 1: 6** says.

Listen to what Paul will tell this church later in **2nd Thessalonians 2: 13**. He says **we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God, from the beginning, chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.**

As a matter of fact they and all believers, Paul says in **Ephesians 1: 4**, were **chosen before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoptions as sons.**

Jesus said to His disciples and by extension to all believers in **John 15: 16**: **you did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit..** He said in **John 6: 37, 44** **all that the Father GIVES Me will come to Me ... no one can come to Me unless the Father who sent me DRAWS Him.**

They also understood that their salvation was secure and could never be lost. Because Jesus also said in **John 6: 37** **all that the Father GIVES Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.**

This church knew, that because their salvation was a gift from God at His choosing, that their salvation was secure and something that could never be lost and that they could be assured of. **1st John 5: 11 – 13** *Read. They didn't earn it and can't loose it.*

Remember what Jesus said in **John 10: 28 – 29**: **I given them eternal life and no one can snatch them out of My hand or My Father's hand.**

So when we look at our church, do we have such a confidence and security in our salvation & faith? Do we know that we have, as **1st Peter 1: 4 – 5** says **an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for us who are KEPT by the power of God through faith for salvation ...**

Do we know and understand and live the Christian life because we are **persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord as Romans 8: 38 – 39 says.**

The Thessalonian church had that kind of confidence and security in their faith that they did not have to doubt their salvation or fret over the possibility of losing it because they sinned. Because doubt and insecurity about your salvation can interfere with you serving God and serving others.

When we understand that **when we confess our sins He is faithful and ...** then we repent, move on and continue.

We need to have a full confidence and assurance in our salvation and how someone comes to saving faith, if we are going to be the kind of individual and church that mirrors the Thessalonian church.

The next quality that sets the church at Thessalonica apart as an example church is that:

#4: They were a Gospel preaching and living church Look at Verse 5.

Verse 5: For our gospel did not come to you in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

What Paul is saying is, we didn't come to you with flattering words or words of man's wisdom or what is politically correct or what would make people feel good. We came to you with the truth of the word of God, that with the power of the Holy Spirit, was able to bring conviction and assurance in your lives as it did in ours. Look what Paul says to them in the very next **Chapter 2: 4 – 8** *Read*

Paul recognized what few churches today are willing to, and that is that the word of God, the word of Truth, the Gospel message, is the only word that comes with power through the Holy Spirit and is able to change and transform lives and churches.

He could SEE the results of the gospel message preached in the lives of the Thessalonian believers. He tells them later in **1st Thessalonians 2: 13** **we thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.**

He says I know you received it as the word of God because now you are a changed people and a changed church. In Verses 6 – 10 of our passage as well as the rest of the book, he begins to recount how they have changed as a result of the power of the word of God in their lives and in the life of that church.

O that churches today would quit trying to water down the gospel message to bring in more people. To use gimmicks and programs to allure people and then give them a shallow or non-existent gospel message about how their life can be better, how Jesus can make them feel good and feel better about themselves, how they can have all of the health, wealth and prosperity.

Churches need to start preaching more about sin and judgment and the wrath to come instead of God always being presented as a God of love who will make your **life** or your **marriage** or your **children** or your **finances** better. Yes He is a God of love and grace and mercy but ...

We know that the Thessalonian church and its leaders were a gospel preaching church, a church that believed and preached the word of God, even in the midst of persecution and affliction as Verses 6 and 8 say. Because they recognized it and its power in the lives of their leaders who preached it and in their own lives by the fruit it produced in their lives and in the lives of those they shared it with.

Because nothing else can change a sinners heart except the powerful, Spirit filled proclamation of the true gospel message. And, by the way, **Galatians 1: 8 – 9** says **if we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel ...let him be accursed...** because there is only one gospel that save.

Paul told the church at Rome in **Romans 1: 16** for **I am not ashamed of the GOSPEL of Christ for it is (what) the power of God unto salvation.**

In that passage that was read earlier Paul told the church at Corinth in **1st Corinthians 2: 1 – 5:** *Read*

Peter said in **1st Peter 1: 23 – 25** the same thing Paul said to the Thessalonian church. He said **having been born again not of corruptible seed but incorruptible (how) through the word of God which lives and abides forever ... because it endures forever and this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.**

What does **Hebrews 4: 12** says? **For the Word of God is quick, alive and POWERFUL and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (13) and there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.** No clever words, no wisdom of man, no gimmicks can do that.

So what about us? Are we a gospel preaching, teaching and proclaiming church? I think we all know the answer to that one; just sit in on Sunday school class, or the children's church class or any weekly Bible study and you will know that we are. It is because we uphold the Bible as the infallible, inerrant Word of God that is the sole authority for our faith and practice as our statement of faith says.

It is because we highly esteem the words of this book and cherish them more than anything else because as Jesus said in **Matthew 4: 4** **man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.**

And in order for us to live the Word of God in our individual lives and in the life of this church, are we willing to commit ourselves or re-commit ourselves to the reading of it and meditating on it and the memorizing of it and most importantly the obeying of it, because we recognize it as the Word of God. **John 14: 15, 21** **if you love Me keep My commandments.**

Because, ultimately, when we do, we have the promise in **2nd Timothy 3: 16 – 17** that **all scripture**, above any other book, **is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped and ready for every good work.**

Well, how are we doing? If we want to be that example church, then this must be the priority of our own lives individually and the priority in life of this church, because all of the previous and following example character qualities depend on it.

Closing Prayer

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Acts 17: 1 – 10

Verse 4:

Romans 10: 17, Ephesians 2: 8 – 9
Philippians 1: 6, 2nd Thessalonians 2: 13
Ephesians 1: 4, John 15: 16, John 6: 37, 44
1st John 5: 11 – 13, John 10: 28 – 29
1st Peter 1: 4 – 5, Romans 8: 38 – 39

Verse 5:

1st Thessalonians 2: 4 – 8, 13
Galatians 1: 8 – 9, Romans 1: 16
1st Corinthians 2: 1 – 5
1st Peter 1: 23 – 25, Hebrews 4: 12
Matthew 4: 4, 2nd Timothy 3: 16 – 17

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