

INTRODUCTION

1. For the last few weeks we have been in a study on the church.
2. We looked at the call to lead the church which addressed the calling and qualifications of pastors.
3. And we looked at the call to serve the church which focused on deacons and their qualifications.
4. This morning, I want us to take all this that we have studied and see what the true church looks like.

5. What is the church to be?
6. How can the church glorify Jesus Christ?
7. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, we see a model church.
8. This church began and ended well.
9. It truly demonstrated what the true church looks like.
10. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10.
11. In a perfect world there would be a perfect church.
12. And there are no perfect churches.

13. But I believe the church, though not perfect, can be what God wants it to be.
14. If that was not true, then there would be no calling or qualifications of pastors and deacons.
15. We can fulfill God's will by being and doing church His way.
16. Many churches are what they are because they have decided to mimic other churches or the culture around them.
17. Many times, churches mimic other churches simply because they are attracting people.

18. Or they are so steeped in tradition and nothing ever gets done.
19. But is that what God wants?
20. Pastors are told to perfect or equip the saints for the work of the ministry so everyone will do their part and cause growth to the body.
21. The key is everyone doing their part.
22. It's easy to come, sit, and listen.
23. It's hard to do the work because it has its challenges and disappointments.
24. Here at Eastport, we need to focus on one thing: What God says in His word.

25. Not tradition, not culture, but God's Word!
26. God has outlines clearly what He wants the church to be in the world.
27. And that's what I want us to see this morning.
28. Let's look at the Thessalonians model and see what the true church looks like.

LESSON

The Thessalonians provide a biblical model for the church because they were...

I. A Saved Church (vv.1-4)

A. They Were a Called Out Assembly (v.1)

“Church” (ekklesia) from the preposition ek (out of) and the verb kaleo (to call)

Literally means, “a called out company”

In the LXX the term *ekklēsia* translated the Hebrew *qahal* and so designated the assembly of Yahweh, the people of God (Deut. 9:10; 18:6; 31:30; Judg. 20:2; 1 Kings 8:14).¹

It means “the assembly of the believers in Jesus Christ.”²

William Barclay says, “In the New Testament the Church is always a company of worshipping people who

¹ Green, Gene L. [The Letters to the Thessalonians](#). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos, 2002. Print. The Pillar New Testament Commentary.

² D. Edmond Hiebert, The Thessalonian Epistles, p.38.

have given their hearts and pledged their lives to Jesus Christ.”³

B. They Were in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (v.1)

This identifies its distinctive spiritual nature.

It is uniquely a Christian assembly, to be distinguished from all that is pagan and Jewish.

“In God the Father” distinguishes it from any pagan assembly or association, whether political or religious, while “and the Lord Jesus Christ” distinguishes it from Jewish assemblies.”⁴

³ William Barclay, *The Mind of St. Paul*, p.238.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Hiebert, p.38.

Because they were the real deal, Paul was thankful because of what he saw (v.2)

C. Paul Identifies Them as the True Church

1. He calls them “brethren” 12 times (2:1;3:6;4:1,10(2x),13;5:1,4,12,14,25-26)
2. He calls them “believers” in 2:10
3. He references their faith by calling it “your faith” 4 times (3:2,5,6,10)
4. He says they are “not in darkness” (5:4)
5. He calls them “sons of the light” and “sons of the day” in 5:5

D. They Demonstrated Their Election by God (vv.3-4)

1. They had a “work of faith” which is the work or activity that faith inspires, that springs from and is motivated by faith.

The emphasis is on the work that faith produces

“work” Gr.ergon, “refers to the deed, achievement, or function itself.”

“Paul was confident of the Thessalonians’ election because their faith – the authentic saving and sanctifying gift from God – was producing righteous deeds in their lives” (MacArthur).

Jesus said of this soil in Matthew 13:23 was “he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

James says genuine faith produces genuine works that are a product of true salvation – Jas.2:14-26

2. They had a “labor of love” which is the toilsome, laborious activity that is prompted and sustained by love when the going gets hard.

True Christians minister motivated by their love for others.

Loving even one's enemies is an expression of the power of salvation (cf. Matt. 5:44; Gal. 6:10).

The stress in the word 'labor' (kapos) is on the cost, the exertion, fatigue, and exhaustion that it entails" (Hiebert).

John said, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death" (1 John 3:14).

Paul said to the Romans that since they have been "justified by faith" their "hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in [their] hearts by the

Holy Spirit who was given to [them]”
(Rom.5:5).

3. They had a steadfastness (patience) of hope which is the steadfast endurance that is inspired by true hope.

Jesus personally gives “hope” at salvation

1 Peter 1:3 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Their hope was in Jesus and His personal return

1 Thessalonians 1:10 says, “And to wait for His Son from heaven...”

4. This proved their election by God (v.4)

What Paul saw confirmed to him their salvation

“Knowing” Gr.eido, “to see or perceive with the eyes” (Strong).

Here Paul used it to express his perception that the assembly in Thessalonica was genuine.

The demonstration of their faith proved their election by God

“Christians are the elect, chosen of God solely by His sovereign, loving purpose, apart from any human merit or wisdom.

God in eternity past sovereignly chose all believers to salvation, drawing them to Himself in time, by the work of the Holy Spirit (John 6:37, 44; Rom. 9:15-16; 1 Cor. 1:9; Eph. 1:4-6, 11; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9; cf. Acts 13:46-48; Rev. 13:8; 17:8).

Jesus instructed the disciples, "You did not choose Me but I chose you,

and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit" (John 15:16).

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit elected not only the apostles but also all who have believed throughout history.

Not only were they a saved church but they were also...

II. A Surrendered Church (vv.5-6)

A. They Surrendered to the Gospel (v.5)

Paul said "our gospel did not come to you in word only"

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:17 (NASB)
For Christ did not send me to baptize,

but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 (NASB) And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, 4 and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NASB) For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 1:5...

1. The Gospel was demonstrated in 3 ways:
 - a) “In power” - The word used for “power” (dunamis) is also one of the words used in the Gospels for Jesus’ miracles. It was God’s power, not Paul’s, that was demonstrated among the

Thessalonians.⁵

Paul said in Romans 1:16-17 (NASB) For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the righteous man shall live by faith.”

b) “In the Holy Spirit”

While Peter was preaching to Cornelius, his relatives and close friends, Acts 10:44 (NASB) the

⁵ Martin, D. Michael. 1, 2 Thessalonians. Vol. 33. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995. Print. The New American Commentary.

Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.

Jesus said in John 16:7-11 (NASB) But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. 8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

The Spirit's power to call, convict, enlighten, transform, assure, and comfort far more effectively than mere words alone.

- c) "With full conviction" - this is an expression that refers to the way he and his associates themselves were convinced of the truth of the message.

2. The messengers were authentic

"Just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake."

This reflects on the Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy's character, conduct, and methods, which the

Thessalonians witnessed while they were with them.

1 Thessalonians 2:10 (NASB) You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers.

2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 (NASB) For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; 9 not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer

ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.

Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 6:1-10 (NASB) And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain— 2 for He says, “At the acceptable time I listened to you, And on the day of salvation I helped you.” Behold, now is “the acceptable time,” behold, now is “the day of salvation”—3 giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, 4 but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, 5 in beatings, in imprisonments, in

tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, 6 in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, 7 in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, 8 by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true; 9 as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, 10 as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

B. They Mimicked the Gospel (v.6)

1. By receiving “the word in much affliction” (see vv.14-15)

Acts 17:5-9 describes the persecution that arose from Paul’s preaching of the gospel and the Thessalonians conversion.

Acts 17:5-9 (NASB) But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. 6 When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here

also; 7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” 8 They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. 9 And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

But in spite of this they received the word...

2. By receiving the word “with the joy of the Holy Spirit”

After Paul and Barnabus were forced to leave Antioch because of the persecution of the Jews. They turned to the Gentiles and God saved

many. They then went to Iconium.

Acts 13:52 (NASB) And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

III. A Soul-Winning Church (vv.7-9)

A. They Became Examples to All Believers (v.7)

Tupos refers to a mark or impression

It was used to describe a seal that marked wax or a stamp that minted coins. Paul commended the Thessalonians for being model believers leaving their mark on others.⁶

John Gill said, “They were not only

⁶ MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. The MacArthur Study Bible. electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.

followers of Christ and his apostles, whom they took for examples of faith, holiness, courage, meekness, and patience; but they were patterns of good works; and of suffering afflictions to other believers, even to all that knew them, or heard of them.”⁷

B. They Shared the Word of the Lord (v.8) (The Egnatian Way)

But their testimony didn't stop there. They became reproducing Christians. Like ripples in a pool, the word of the Lord spread out in ever-widening circles: first in Macedonia and Achaia, then in every place. Soon the news of their faith toward God became so widespread that Paul didn't have to speak about it; the

⁷ John Gill. E-Sword.

people already knew.⁸

2 Thessalonians 3:1 (NASB) Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you.

C. They Received the Messengers (v.9a)

“For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13 says they “received the word of God” from them not as “the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God.”

⁸ MacDonald, William. Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments. Ed. Arthur Farstad. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995. Print.

D. They Repented (v.9b)

“You turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.”

This word describes what the Bible elsewhere calls repentance (Matt. 3:1, 2; 4:17; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 20:21). Salvation involves a person’s turning from sin and trusting in false gods to Christ.⁹

Last they were a...

IV. A Second-Coming Church (v.10)

“And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to

⁹ Ibid., MacArthur.

come.”

A. They Waited for Jesus to Return

This is a recurring theme in the Thessalonian letters (3:13; 4:15–17; 5:8, 23; 2 Thess. 3:6–13)

B. They Thought They Had Some Advantage Over their Loved Ones Who Died in Christ (see 4:13-18)

CONCLUSION

1. This what the true church looks like: saved, surrendered, soul-winning, and a second coming church.
2. Does this describe you?

3. Does this describe our church?
4. These 4 areas must be constantly evaluated.
5. Are you saved?
6. Have you surrendered to Jesus Christ and His Gospel?
7. Are you an example to other believers?
8. In other words, are you leaving a Christ-like impression on other believers?
9. Are you sharing God's Word with the lost?
10. Last, are you waiting for Jesus to return by living a holy life? Let's pray.