

**Subject: *A Church That Pleases God***

**Scripture: *1 Thessalonians 1:1-10***

After words of greeting and introduction, Paul commends this church for being what a church ought to be. It wasn't a perfect church, but it was a faithful church and a worthy example of a church that pleases God and honors Him.

Look how this church is described in our text. Paul mentions their election of God in verse 4, but he also refers to their faith, love, and hope (vs. 3). He refers to the gospel coming to them in power (vs. 5) and how they received the word in much affliction (vs. 6). He writes about their good example (vs. 7), their faith (vs. 8), and their conversion to God. Then he closes the chapter by mentioning their service (vs. 9) and their patient waiting for Christ to return (vs. 10).

Notice what Paul did *not* say about this church. There is no mention of the size of the church, nothing about their style of worship, nothing about their singing or preaching, or programs. But he does mention their faithfulness and testimony and perseverance. Paul describes a church that pleases God in four ways:

### **1. Beloved brethren**

Paul refers to them as beloved brethren (vs. 4). The words "brother" and "brethren" are found 19 times in Paul's letter. Verses 1-5 identify this church in several ways that show they were truly members of God's family.

- Their work of faith – their work was evidence of faith. Faith without works is dead.
- Their labor of love – Their labor was proof of their love.
- Their patience of hope – Their hope caused them to be patient (have endurance)
- Their election by God – God had chosen them and they had chosen to receive Christ as Lord and Savior. Both things were true, but God is the initiator.
- Their response to the Gospel – The gospel changed their lives. It came in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance (see 1 Th. 2:13).

### **2. Faithful followers**

The word for "followers" is *mimetes*, mimics or imitators. These believers were following the example of Paul and others who led them to Christ.

***1 Cor. 4:16 Be followers of me. 1 Cor. 11:1 Be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.***

No doubt that Paul also told the believers at Thessalonica to follow him as he followed Christ. Being a Christian is a lot like "Follow the leader," but it's not a game. The Christian life is to be like Christ. If the leaders of a church follow Christ, then the members can follow the leaders and follow Christ at the same time. That's the way it is supposed to be. A.W. Tozer said, "If you have 100 pianos in a room and you want to tune them all, what a mess you will have if you tune one piano by another. But you can take a tuning fork and tune them all like they should be." Our lives are like those pianos and Jesus is the tuning fork.

### **3. Excellent examples and evangelists**

The word “examples” was used for a seal that made its imprint in hot wax. The same word was used for a stamp that minted coins. These believers had left their mark on others. Their faith had “sounded forth” (reverberated). This is what Jesus planned:

*Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

These believers were like amplifiers for the Gospel. The most powerful impact was through the personal testimonies of people who had been saved. People everywhere heard about the believers in Thessalonica. Their testimonies had a local impact in their city, an impact on the rest of Greece, and even an impact on the rest of the world. Thessalonica was only 50 miles from Mt. Olympus and thought to be the headquarters of the Greek gods and goddesses. These people had been raised from children to worship all these gods. But when they were saved they turned from that false worship to the one true God. That was big news!

The platform of our testimony is a changed life. If we don't have a changed life, we don't have anything to talk about. One man said, “Show me your redeemed life and I might believe in your Redeemer.” That's fair, isn't it? That's what salvation is all about: changed lives, witnessing, seeing others come to Christ.

Oswald Smith: “Oh my friends, we are loaded down with countless church activities, while the real work of the Church, that of evangelizing and winning the lost, is almost entirely neglected.”

### **4. Submissive servants**

Paul mentioned three things about this church in verses 9-10.

- Repentance (“how you turned to God from idols”) – In Eastern Europe, believers are called “repenters.”
- Service (“to serve the living and true God”)

*Psalms 100:2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.*

John Newton described the right attitude for all Christian service: “If two angels were to receive a commission from God, one to go down and rule earth's greatest empire, and the other to go and sweep the streets of its humblest village, it would not make any difference to either one which service fell to his lot, for the joy of the angels lies only in obedience to God's will.”

If God wrote a job description for His servants this is what it would look like: “WANTED: gifted volunteers for difficult service in the kingdom of God. Motivation to serve should be obedience to God, gratitude, gladness, forgiveness, humility, and love. Service will rarely be glorious. Temptation to quit will sometimes be strong. Volunteers must be faithful in spite of long hours, little or no visible results, and possibly no recognition—except from God for all eternity.”

- Endurance (“wait for His Son”) – They were working and waiting.

If we really believe in Christ as Lord and Savior, we believe He is coming again. And if we believe He is coming again we will have an enthusiasm, a sense of urgency, a longing and anticipation to be with Him, and a desire for holiness as we look for Him.

***1 John 3:2-3** <sup>2</sup> Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup> And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*