

HIGHER AIM

The Church God Loves - Part 2

1 Thessalonians 1:1-4

INTRODUCTION

In today's key passage, Paul writes to a young church that had only existed for a few weeks before persecution began. Yet, even in the middle of opposition, this church remained strong and continued to grow. One of the themes that floats through these opening verses is "the church God loves." I want to be part of a church that God loves. From Paul's writing, we see several key characteristics of a church that God loves.

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KEY POINTS

1. The Church God Loves Is a Church Whose Labor Is Prompted by Faith

The word for work means to toil or do intense labor. As a believer, it is important to realize what God has done in your life. Out of His love for you, Christ Jesus produces a desire not to sit on your “blessed assurance,” but to find your place in the Kingdom of God. You will never be content as a believer just sitting and soaking up teaching.

Faith prompts us to toil. Faith is taking God at His Word and acting upon it. The early church followed Christ, embraced the Gospel, were baptized, and began to do ministry in the name of Jesus because they trusted God. Faith is the willingness to go with God without knowing where, without knowing when, and without knowing how.

Many of us wrestle with the “where,” the “when,” and the “how.” Abraham did not know where God was leading him, but he went anyway. God calls us to trust Him even when we do not have all the answers. A church God loves is marked by people who live lives of faith, trusting God and walking with Him step by step.

2. The Church God Loves Is a Church Whose Labor Is Produced by Love

Ministry can drain your strength, but when it flows out of love for Christ, it energizes you. If your work is not produced by love for Jesus, it will not be sustained. Coercion, guilt, and the expectations of others will not carry you through the race.

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God often empties us before He is ready to use us. When our service comes from being in love with Jesus, God sustains us even when we have nothing left to give. When you love someone, you begin to love what they love and change your behavior accordingly. In the same way, serving God should flow out of a love relationship with Him, not out of obligation.

A church God loves is a church where people serve because they are deeply in love with Jesus. Out of this love relationship, God empowers us to keep going, changes our desires, and transforms our lives.

3. The Church God Loves Is a Church Whose Endurance Is Inspired by Hope

Endurance means to bear under pressure. The hope Paul refers to is the expectation of Jesus' imminent return. The early church endured persecution because they were looking for Jesus, not blessings.

The New Testament church was not a church of comfort and convenience. It was a church that expected opposition. Today, many believers are surprised by hardship, but Scripture tells us that trouble will come. A church God loves is not afraid of persecution and does not measure faithfulness by comfort or prosperity.

As the world grows increasingly divided, believers must stand for Christ with boldness and love. Persecution does not weaken the church—it strengthens it and draws people to the cross. Endurance fueled by hope in Jesus allows believers to remain faithful regardless of the pressure.

4. The Church God Loves Is a Church Chosen by God

The final characteristic is that the church God loves is chosen by Him. Paul reminds the believers that God has chosen them. God initiates this choosing, but each person must respond. God has voted for you by sending Jesus. The enemy votes against you. Your response determines the outcome.

If you have said yes to Jesus, asked Him to forgive your sins, and made Him Lord of your life, you are chosen. God knows how each person will respond, but the responsibility is to cast your vote for Christ. The focus is not on speculation but on faith in Jesus.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In what areas of your life is God calling you to trust Him even when you don't know the "where," "when," or "how"?
 2. What motivates your service to God: love for Christ or expectation, guilt, or approval from others?
 3. How does having hope in Jesus' return change the way you respond to hardship, opposition, or pressure?