

8/31/25

A Model Church On Fire
1Thess. 1:8-10

The church is an amazing organism that functions by the grace of God, as Jesus works by the Holy Spirit in each of us as living stones from generation to generation.

There are no perfect churches, but I believe there could be more mature ones that could better model the church of Jesus Christ.

* It has been said that if you find the perfect church, don't join it, you will ruin it!

Jesus said, "I will build My church, and the gate of hell will not prevail against it". Matt. 16:18

Paul has declared in the opening versus some facts regarding the gospel, as proof of the Thessalonians election in verse four. vs. 5-7

1. The gospel had come to them. vs. 5

2. The gospel had been received by them. vs. 6

3. The gospel had transformed them. vs. 7

* Now Paul builds from verse seven to explain how and why they had become a model church and Christians to all.

Paul gives us three marks as evidence of their transformed lives, which caused him to view them as a model church. 1Thess. 1:8-10

- I. Their proclamation was contagious about the gospel. vs. 8
- II. Their transformation was outrageous by the gospel. vs. 9
- III. Their expectation was in confident hope according to the gospel. vs. 10

I. Their proclamation was contagious about the gospel. vs. 8

- A. The apostle Paul revealed they had been witnesses of the gospel. vs. vs. 8a
 - * Verse 8 explains verse 7, the word examples "typos" is type of model! Heb. 8:5
 - 1. Paul identified the message of their witness of the gospel, "For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth." vs. 8a
 - a. The phrase "the word of the Lord" represents the gospel, God's revelation to man, that which is inspired. 1Thess. 4:15; 2Thess. 3.1; Acts 8:25; 12:24; 19:10, 20
 - 1) It did not come to them in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit. 1Thess. 1:5
 - 2) It was received and welcomed not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God. 1Thess. 2:13
 - 3) The phrase is used throughout the Old Testament to describe God as the author and spokesman. Gen. 15:1, 4, Is. 1:10; Jer. 2:4

- b. Paul described the method of their witness as loud and clear, having been proclaimed. vs. 8a
 - 1) The phrase, has sounded forth “exechetai”, means to emit, ring out or resound unmistakable and found only this time in the New Testament.
 - 2) The root word “echo” gives us the word echo, the Thessalonians had echoed the exact message they had heard, just as the echo of a voice in a canyon, unmistakable.
- b. This is the indicative perfect tense, literally “has sounded out” and was still continuing to sound and ring out.
 - 1) The word is used of a loud trumpet blast or rolling thunder.
 - 2) Since the time of Chrysostom, A.D. 347-407, it has been thought to symbolize the brilliant tone and dynamic sustained trumpet blast.
 - 3) The gospel message coming from the Thessalonians was like thunder or a loud trumpet that would not stop!
- 2. Paul declared the extent of their witness of the gospel, “not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place.” vs. 8b-c
 - a. Macedonia was to the north, Achaia to the south and also in every place implying far and wide. vs. 8b

- 1) This included Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Berea, Corinth and Athens.
- 2) Thessalonica was 100 miles from Philippi and 50 miles from Athens.
- b. The proclamation of the gospel had traveled out from them, beyond these two provinces, “but also in every place.” vs. 8c
 - 1) The word “but” is a strong adversative, setting the two regions against “every place”. vs. 8c
 - 2) The city was located on the great highway, the “Egnatian Road or Way”, which was a major Roman trade route that brought into contact travelers all over the Roman Empire.
 - 3) The gospel had spread in a very contagious and far reaching manner, reverberating reaching all directions, due to the geographical location of Thessalonica.
 - 4) Several commentators say Paul is not speaking literally, but in hyperbole, a form of embellishing, but Paul is speaking literally by contrasting it to the two provinces.
 - 5) The city had the largest and most prosperous seaport situated on the northmost point of the Thermaic Gulf, a short distance from the mouth of the Axios River, receiving mariners from

all over the Roman Empire and also sent them out, modern day Turkey.

- 6) Paul was hearing this when he was at Corinth, perhaps from Aquila and Priscilla who passed by Thessalonica, after being expelled as Jews from Rome and recently arrived giving Paul that report or from Rome? Acts 18:2

* Paul, Silas, Timothy had been accused of treason against Caesar by believing in Jesus. Acts 17:6-7

B. The apostle Paul revealed they had been witnesses about the effect on their personal lives through the gospel. vs. 8d-e

1. The report the people were hearing is described by the phrase “Your faith towards God has gone out”. vs. 8d

a. The pronoun “your” is plural, the believers were a witness of a model church of Christians.

* Regardless of the gods they had worshipped, the life they lived or experiences, having been transformed to Christians.

b. Linski the Greek scholar declares this is one of the few instances called face to face preposition “pros”

- 1) The idea being that their faith and trust faced God as He faced their faith, a face to face relationship.
- 2) Their object of faith was looking to “the God”, the article is present, not the gods of their religions, but having a face to face personal relationship.
- c. Their conduct and witness of faith “had gone out”.
 - 1) It was one with the “word of the Lord”, in spite of the persecution, being such an example.
 - 2) The tense is indicative perfect active, “has gone abroad and continued”.
 - 3) Their faith was based on the very gospel they were witnessing about to others, the revelation about Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.
 - 4) Their transformed lives spoke for them, so people were speaking about them, becoming an eye-catching example, the talk of the empire. 1Thess. 1:6; 2Thess. 1:4; 2Cor. 8:1-5
2. The result was that Paul, Silas and Timothy did not need to say anything, “so that we do not need to say anything.” vs. 8e
 - a. Their fervent, passionate living of the gospel by the Thessalonians had clearly communicated the message of the gospel, **as new believers.**

- b. Their contagious Christianity had led to evangelism, not undercover Christians!
- c. The word of the Lord and their faith towards God lived out was a very clear and distinct message that was being heard and seen!
- d. The three apostles did not have to say a word about the gospel, a present indicative, this is not a contradiction.
 - * Their proclamation of the gospel identifies their work of faith! 1Thess. 1:3a

Illustration

When a person is said to have a contagious disease, it means they are in an infectious condition that can be transmitted to others, if there is contact.

* The Thessalonians had a genuine contagious case of Christianity, not just enough to act as an antidote to keep them from the real Christianity, like the Jesus people in the late 60's and 70's!

Application

1. Is your case of Christianity contagious, if it is, so will your proclamation be about the word of the Lord?
 - a. Do you give out the word of God or your opinions, man's philosophies and psychology?
 - b. Do you promote your church or Pastor more than Christ?
 - * There is nothing wrong with referring people to good Bible teaching churches and

- pointing them to godly men, but if we are not careful, it can become almost cultic!
- c. Do you proclaim the gospel wherever and whenever the Lord opens the door or only in church and convenient times and places?
- d. Do you proclaim the word of the Lord distinct and clear to give an answer to every man, as every believer is supposed to? 1Pet. 3:15
- 2. Is your proclamation contagious about your personal faith towards God and the Lord Jesus?
 - a. Do you take the opportunity to proclaim the good news to sinners, knowing they will perish without Christ, first to family and friends?
 - b. Do you see those you share your faith with come to Christ and then in turn they tell others?
 - c. Do you live out your faith so that those around you need not to be told of Christ, we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Matt. 5:13-16

Their proclamation was contagious about the gospel!

II. Their transformation was outrageous by the gospel. vs. 9

- A. The apostles were hearing the report about themselves, regarding their coming to Thessalonica from those in Macedonia, Achaia and every place. vs. 9a

1. This focuses on the nature of the preachers and the gospel, it was different, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you.” vs. 9a
 - a. The word declare “apangellousin” is a present active, continuous and repeatedly by people, all who were hearing, aloud.
 - 1) The people knew Paul and those that came with him to Thessalonica to preach the message of the gospel, Jew and Gentile one in the power of the Spirit and assurance for the sake of those who would hear and believe. 1Thess. 1:5
 - 2) The people knew they had previously suffered at Philippi and preached to them in much affliction. 1Thess. 2:2
 - 3) The people knew Paul and the others had established a church in the city of Thessalonica.
 - b. The expression ”what manner of entry” also does not refer to just their coming to the city, but includes the character of the missionaries, the powerful work and outcome of the gospel, distinct from their religious deceivers, resulting in their transformation. 1Thess. 1:5, 6-7; 2:1-12, 13-14
 - 1) The expression is in the aorist to indicate the historical fact, it really happened. Lenski

- 2) They spoke not pleasing man, but God. 2:4
 - 3) They did not use flattering words or a pretext of greed nor seek glory as apostle. 1Thess. 2:5-6
 - 4) They had been gentle as a nursing mother, even imparting their own lives. 1Thess. 2:7-8
 - 5) They were self-supported by working night and day, being blameless, as examples, exhorting them to live likewise as a father. 1Thess. 2:9 12
 - 6) Their entry was different from the charlatans and religious quacks the entered into Thessalonica often.
 - 7) The word of the Lord and their faith towards God lived out was a very clear and distinct message that was being heard and seen!
2. This also focuses on the efficiency of the gospel. 1Thess. 1:6-7; 2:13-14
 - a. They received the word of God with much affliction. 1Thess. 1:6
 - b. They become examples to all Macedonia and Achaia, who believed. 1Thess. 1:7
 - c. They received the word, not as men but God’s, which worked effectively in those who believed. 1Thess. 2:13
 - d. They became imitator of the churches of God in Judea, suffering at the hand of their countrymen. 1Thess. 2:14

- e. The word “declare” remember is a continuous present, it was non-stop!
* For that reason Paul boasted of them.
2Thess. 1:4
- 3. Again could refer to Aquila and Priscilla.
 - a. They had been expelled from Rome by the edict of Claudius. Acts 18:2
 - b. They came to Corinth and Paul joined himself with them, for they were of the same trade, tentmakers. Acts .18:3
- B. The apostles were hearing from the unbelievers how the Thessalonians had turned from their pagan religions, “and how you turned to God from idols.” vs. 9b
 - 1. Their response to the reception of the gospel message was that they turned to God.
 - a. The gospel proclaims sin separates man from God. Eph. 2:1-2
 - b. The gospel proclaims the finish work of Christ for reconciliation with God. 2Cor. 5:21
 - c. The gospel proclaims one condition to be one with God, repentance. Acts 2:38
 - 1) This is accomplished through faith, which come by hearing and believing the word of God as His revelation and repenting. Rom. 10:17
 - 2) This faith is given by God to all who hear the gospel and God illuminates

- His word to bring conviction of sin and understand the need of salvation.
- 3) Then the sinner must be acted on it by turning to God in repentance, turning from one’s sins.
 - d. The word turned “epistrepho” is used in the sense of repentance conversion throughout. Acts 3:1; 9:35; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19; 26:18, 20; 28:27
 - 1) The tense is the indicative aorist active, an intense definite turning.
 - 2) Genuine confession brings about genuine forgiveness! Ps. 103:12
 - 3) Too often we want people to change so they can come to faith and that is backwards!
 - 4) Vine’s Dictionary points out that “in no case is God or Christ or the Holy Spirit, said to turn, or convert anyone. Conversion is always the voluntary act of the individual in response to the presentation of truth”. (Hiebert:67)
 - 5) This indicates their conversion was the result of a deliberate choice on their part, voluntarily, not by force.
 - 2. The result of their turning to God was that they turned “from idols”.
 - a. The definite article is present with idols, indicating all idols they had known in their past life.

- 1) This identifies the Gentile pagan who had left and turns away from “apo” from their worship of Zeus, Hera, Artemis, Apollo and all others.
 - 2) Mount Olympus was about 50 miles south of their city, where the Greek gods were supposed to live.
- b. The majority of the church must have been Gentiles in idolatry.
- 1) Acts tells us that a great multitude of devout Greeks believed. Acts 17:4
 - 2) There were devout Greeks “God Fearers”, Gentiles who had proselyted into the Synagogue, but did not become circumcised, yet they had turned from their idols.
 - 3) Salvation should never be thought of as beginning by our giving up something, but rather by our receiving something, namely Christ in our heart through the gospel message, enabling us to turn from sin!
- c. The worship of idols had always been an offense to God and commanded the Children of Israel to destroy them when they entered the land.
- 1) Idols were always identified with sexual sin and demons. Num. 25; 1Cor. 8, 10; 2Cor. 6
 - 2) The Psalmist says they are the work of man’s hands; they have mouths but

cannot speak, eyes but cannot see, ears but they cannot hear, they have hands, but they cannot handle and feet, but they cannot walk. Ps. 115:4-8
 * Those that make them and trust in them are like them, insensate!

- d. The fundamental mark of Christianity in the Bible and throughout history is that there is a definite break with non-Christian habits, regardless of one’s background before salvation.
- 1) Today this basic principle is ignored or explained away by being a victim.
 - 2) When there is no break with a sinful practice, it is a worse commentary on the person than the Word, carnal disobedience! Acts 14:15; Gal. 4:9
 - 3) Turning to God from idols identified their work of faith! vs. 3a

- C. The apostles were hearing from the unbelievers how the Thessalonians were serving God, “to serve the living and true God.” vs. 9b
1. Paul identified the nature and intent of their new life commitment, to serve God.
 - a. The word serve “doulou”, is a verb, the idea being the surrender of their will, total and complete to Jesus, to serve the purposes and will of God, serving as a devoted slave.

- 1) The tense is the present infinitive, continuous action, complete and wholehearted service to God.
- 2) They were slaves to sin, the idols of their culture that had enslaved them all their lives, but now born again able to live for the will and purposes of God in righteousness. Rom. 6:20
2. Paul identified the nature of God, as “the living and true God.”
 - a. God “Theos”, refers the Father.
 - 1) The reference to “His Son”, in the next verse refers back to the Father.
 - 2) The Trinity is found from the start of the letter, the Father and Son are mentioned in verse one.
 - 3) The Holy Spirit in verse five.
 - 4) The absence of the article before God, emphasized His character.
 - b. God is alive in contrast to the dead idols.
 - 1) God is invisible, idols are visible.
 - 2) God is one, idols are many.
 - 3) God is the Creator of all, idols are created by man, having eyes, ears and a mouth, but cannot see, hear or speak. Is. 40:18-20; Ps. 115
 - c. God is true, in contrast to false idols.
 - 1) The word true “alethinos”, means that which is not only the name and resemblance, but the real nature

corresponding to the name in every respect, real and genuine.

* The word is used for Jesus, the true bread and true vine. Jn. 6:32; 15:1

- 2) The opposite of what is counterfeit, imperfect, defective, frail, uncertain, the excellence of perfection, unfailing in strength, the only God to be served.

* This is their labor of love. 1Thess. 1:3-b

Illustration

A black church congregation had met to pray for rain to release a long dry spell. The preacher looked severely at this flock and said: “Brothers and Sisters, yo’ll knows why we is here. Now what I wants to know is -where is yo’ umbrellas”. #1498

Application

1. Do people who knew you before Christ, see a consistent difference in your life, that they tell others of how the gospel has effected your life?
 - a. How it has changed you into a more loving and considerate person.
 - b. How that your life practice is consistent with the gospel by seeing the difference.
2. Do people wonder how you changed, and in fact speak to others about your drastic change, becoming channels of God, even though they are unbelievers?
 - a. How you have turned to God from the idols you worshipped, drugs, alcohol, sex, money, etc.
 - b. An idol is anything that does one of two things.

- 1) Takes the place of God and is before God.
- 2) Controls my mind and meditation.
- c. Have I come in faith to follow Jesus or come to church to try to change myself?
- 3. Do people see you serve the living and true God?
 - a. Serving consistently.
 - b. Serving willingly.
 - c. Serving lovingly.
 - d. Serving wholeheartedly.
 - e. Service of a slave is marked by obedience to God's word and will.
 - f. Service is marked by joy for it is willful service not forced, empowered by the Holy Spirit.
 - 1) We are called the children of the living God. Rom. 9:26
 - 2) We are the temple of God. 2Cor. 6:16
 - 3) We have the Spirit of the living God. 2Cor. 3:3
 - 4) We are the church of the living God. 1Tim. 3:15
 - 5) We have come to the city of the living God. Heb. 12:22

Their transformation was outrageous by the gospel!

III. Their expectation was in confident hope according to the gospel. vs. 10

- A. Their expectation was the soon return of Christ, "and to wait for His Son from heaven." vs. 10a

- 1. They had believed and accepted all the truth about Jesus.
 - a. The fact that Jesus had come the first time as the God-Man, Incarnate to die for the sins of the world.
 - b. The fact that Jesus was coming again a second time for His church.
 - c. The One they were patiently waiting for God's Son, their Messiah and Savior.
- 2. They believed Jesus could come back at any time in the present, called Imminence.
 - a. The word wait "anemeno", means to wait for one, with added notion of patience and trust, found only this time. Strong's
 - * This is a present active tense, a continuous attitude.
 - b. The phrase "His Son", appears only this one time in the letter.
 - * Proverbs says, "What is His name, and what is His Son's name, If you know?" Prov. 30:4f-h
 - c. The coming of Jesus is for His church "from heaven".
 - 1) Literally, out of the heavens, plural.
 - 2) There are three heavens, the atmosphere, the stellar and the one God dwells. Matt. 6:26; 24:29; 2Cor. 12:2; Heb. 4:14; 8:1; 9:24
 - 3) The angels told the disciples Jesus would return in the same manner they saw Him go into heaven. Acts 1:11

- 4) This was and is a great incentive for holy living. 1Thess. 4:3
- 3. They believed when He came for them from heaven at the rapture and they would go with Him back to heaven.
 - a. This involved the future, permanence, the fact that He would never leave again. 1Cor. 1:7; 1Jn. 3:1-2
 - b. The place of His origin and coming is “from heaven”, His present abode and throne.
 - c. The word “wait” again is in the present active tense, always looking with expectation, a continuous attitude.
 - 1) This had led some to be irresponsible about work, some had forsaken it. 1Thess. 4:11; 2Thess. 3:10-12
 - 2) This first letter focuses on Christ coming “Parousia” for his church at the rapture, the topic closes every chapter. 1Thess. 1:10; 2:19-20; 3:13; 4:17-18; 5:22
 - 3) The second letter focuses on Christ coming with His church to set up the Kingdom.
 - 4) Paul deals extensively distinguishing the rapture from the Second Coming and told them that the rapture had not happened. 2Thess. 2:1-12

- B. Their expectation was to see the resurrected glorified Christ, “whom He raised from the dead.” vs. 10b
 - 1. The word raised “egeiro” is an indicative aorist active, a historical fact and is emphatic in the Greek.
 - * Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, the other women, the disciples, 500 at one time, many others and to Paul!
 - 2. God raised Jesus from the dead as proof that God accepted payment for sin. 2Cor 5:21; Acts 17:31; Rom. 3:25-26
 - 2. God raised Jesus from the dead as proof that He would raise all who would believe in Jesus. 1Cor. 15:20
 - 3. God’s Son will return with no beauty that we should desire Him and the marks in His hands. Is. 53:2; Zech. 13:6
- C. Their expectation was knowing Jesus had delivered them from judgment, “even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” vs. 10c
 - 1. The word delivers “rhomai”, means to save, rescue, draw to one’s self to emphasize the greatness of the peril from the deliverance given by a mighty act of power.
 - a. The tense is the present participle, already in progress.
 - b. This excludes the believer from many forms of the wrath “orge” of God.

2. The word wrath “orge” comes from the verb “orgao” meaning to teem or swell.
 - a. It means an abiding settled habit of mind with purpose of retaliation, not some sudden uncontrolled wrath.
 - b. It is in direct hate of evil by His attribute of holiness that is withheld by the patience of God with sinners to be saved.
 - * The word appears 36 times in the New Testament, 3 in the letter. 1Thess. 1:10; 2:16; 5:9
3. The believer has been delivered from this wrath,, church will return with Jesus at the Second Coming to set up His Kingdom. Rom. 5:9; 1Thess. 5:9; 2Thess. 1:7-8
 - a. The wrath is in the future and certain in the seven year tribulation, it comes as a thief in the night and no one will escape it. 1Thess. 5:2-3; Rev. 6-19
 - 1) The first 3 1/2 years will be false peace, deception, under the deceiver the Antichrist.
 - 2) The last 3 1/2 years will be Great-Tribulation under the direct wrath of God on a Christ rejecting world.
 - b. The wrath to come should not be confused with the wrath “orge” that is being poured out now on man for their ungodly living. Rom. 1:18

4. The wrath God at the White Throne Judgment is on unbelieving sinners. Rom 2:5; 16, 3:5
 - a. God will pour out his wrath “orge”, against every Christ rejecting sinner, 6 times in Revelation. Rev. 6:16, 17; 11:18; 14:30; 16:19; 19:15
 - b. This is the ultimate judgment of the unbeliever, to be judged and sentenced, then cast into the Lake of Fire forever. Rev. 20:11-15
 - * Their waiting for Jesus identified their patience of hope! 1Thess. 1:3c

Illustration

John and Charles Wesley were blessed with a patient mother. At one time her husband said, “I marvel at your patience! You have told that child the same thing twenty times!” Susanna Wesley looked fondly at the child. She said, “Had I spoken the matter only nineteen times, I should have lost all my labor.” - Choice Gleanings. #4269

Application

1. Are you aware Jesus can return at any moment for His church, He said this often, listen to Him, “Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” Lk. 21:36
 - a. Like a bride, I am to be looking for our groom!
 - b. Am I keeping myself pure, faithful to Christ?

- c. We are to be occupying till He comes, not just sitting in the pews or looking up. Lk. 19:11-27
- 2. Are you allowing the resurrection to keep you from trusting Christ as your Savior? 1Thess. 4:13-18
 - a. The resurrection of Jesus is well attested in the Scriptures.
 - b. If it was not so, it would of been refuted all along but it was not.
 - c. The very same power that raised Jesus from the dead, will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body. Phil. 3:20
- 3. Are you clear about the fact that Jesus has delivered you from the wrath to come? Rev 3:10
 - a. There are some in the church who believe the church will go through the 7 year tribulation, not distinguishing between Jesus coming for His church and returning with His church.
 - b. Jesus told His disciples to stop being afraid and promised He would come back and receive His own to Himself. Jn. 14:1-6
 - c. Paul called it the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Tit. 2:11-13
- 4. Are you aware that God's wrath is a strange and unusual act. Is. 28:21
 - * "For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon-- That He may do His work, His awesome work, And bring to pass His act, His unusual act."
 - a. The Lord desires to forgive you of all your sins.

- b. The Lord will make you whiter than snow, a brand new creature. Ps. 51:7; 2Cor. 5:17

Their expectation was in confident hope according to the gospel!

Conclusion

Paul gave three marks as evidence that made the Thessalonians a model church of having the real disease of Christianity.

- I. Their proclamation was contagious about the gospel: They shared their faith with others, the work of faith!
- II. Their practice was outrageous by the gospel: Their lives were the talk of all, a labor of love!
- III. Their perseverance was based on confident hope according to the Gospel: They were waiting for Jesus from heaven, patience of hope!
 - 1. Are these marks present in your life?
 - 2. Are these marks present in our church?