

“WHAT CHURCH PEOPLE ARE MEANT TO LOOK LIKE”

1 Thessalonians 1:2-5

October 29, 2017

INTRODUCTION: Faithfulness In The Present.

In **vv.2-10** the Scripture pictures a faithful church. Here is a good way to describe them, **“What church people are meant to look like.”** The Thessalonians received the message of grace as a call to action and loving service to others. Chapter 1 is spent applauding them for their Christ-honoring service. The church that Paul addresses is mentioned in **location** and **position.** **v.1**

1 Thessalonians 1:1

“Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The descriptive phrase **“in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,”** the author made more precise identity of this group and emphasized its spiritual nature. He wanted the believers to realize that the local church has a spiritual location just as real and even more important than Thessalonica.

“grace and peace” are gifts bestowed from the throne room of heaven. **Grace** is the unmerited favor of God upon which we are so dependent.

Peace is a judicial statement related to our daily fellowship with God as well as our eternal standing. The conflict created through sin has been resolved through Jesus Christ, restoring the broken relationship between humankind and God, thereby granting peace and harmony. Peace is a condition of completeness, a work totally finished through Christ, yet progressively realized.

Romans 5:1

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I have **“peace with God”** because of the **God of peace** which generates within me the **peace of God.**

This passage leads me to believe that the people who receive God’s call of grace are changed and strengthened by Him to discipline their lives and become effective examples of the grace of Christ. Such believers form God’s idea of a healthy, productive church.

Now, if a fellowship of believers are going to maintain faithfulness in their present ministry, the foundation must be laid.

The people's work **produced by faith** was commended. **James 2:26, "faith without works is dead."** Their labor was **prompted by love**. Labor in Christ's name involves cost, fatigue, and exhaustion. Using the Greek word **agape**, Paul reminded us of an unselfish, sacrificial living for others. Love, along with faith, drives us in our faith (motivated by love).

Again, Paul presents this fellowship as a family of love where they served one another because of their relationship with God.

Paul also mentioned what gave them their endurance; **it was inspired by hope**. This is a heroic constancy, no matter what the obstacles. Hope always looks forward, beyond now, to a future; a certain future. Hope rests in God's promises of eternity. Assured future makes faith, work, suffering, and love possible. Hope looks to something that is sure, but just not here yet. It is coming.

If we serve because we feel that God has promised good things only in this life, we will be disappointed and may even give up.

Today, I want to magnify six important truths concerning the church's message and our need for faithfulness to it in the present.

I. THE GOSPEL'S CONNECTION 5a

“For our gospel did not come to you in word only” v.5 says much about the gospel. If you and I are to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, we must have confidence in our message. This phrase reminds us that the gospel is more than facts. It is part of an effective, life stirring energy that God uses to change our lives for His glory and to spread the gospel to others.

1. Possession of the Gospel.

“our gospel” – the **1 Cor. 15:1-4** message; that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and He rose again the third day, according to the Scripture. The gospel is the good news about God's love and Christ's transforming power through His death and resurrection. The gospel teaches that God's mercy and love came to us not because of who we are but because of the kind of person He is. Through the gospel the Lord Jesus reaches those who respond to His initiations of love and revelation.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

“But 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, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The credit and gratitude for belonging eternally to God should always be given to our Lord; to God be the glory, great things He has done.

The message (gospel) they shared was a **personal possession** and a **personal reality**. One thing is for sure, we can't share with confidence until we have experienced and possessed the truth of the gospel with confidence.

Though actions speak louder than words, there is to be the communicating of the gospel. The gospel is a story to tell.

2. The Priority of the Gospel.

“The gospel came” – Paul puts the emphasis more upon the message as the means of realizing God's call than upon the deliverer (bearer) of the message.

For example, M.E. Gibson preached the gospel to me, but God is glorified for giving the gospel and Mr. Gibson is honored for his faithfulness in preaching it. Thank God! The gospel came.

Thought:

Do you believe when Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem and the people waved palm branches and sang Hosannas that the donkey thought the applause was for him? He is just the bearer of the Messiah (good news).

3. The Personality (Personableness) of the Gospel. (Penetration)

“gospel came to you”

Hebrews 4:12-13

“For the word of God is living 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 discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 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.”

There is a mystery in preaching the gospel. I share it and attempt to explain and to make application, but only the Holy Spirit of God can **“break through”** and bring about penetration.

There are those for whom the gospel is **“simply words,”** interesting, perhaps even disturbing, but that is all. But then, the Holy Spirit touches your heart with the message.

1 Corinthians 1:18

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

ILLUSTRATE: People have heard the gospel for years, but it is as if God singles them out and speaks directly to their heart.

Remember Peter’s sermon at Pentecost:

Pricked

Acts 2:37

“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

II. THE GOSPEL'S COMPANION 5b

The gospel does not travel alone.

“not in word only, but also in power” –

dunamis; dynamite. God's gospel is not destructive; but constructive. Power means the ability to do something. I believe the world can be changed through the gospel.

Romans 1:16

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

In 1 Thess 2:4 we have been **“entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak”**

This pictures a person with words in his mouth and dynamite in his hands.

1 Corinthians 2:4

“And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”

“Power” – refers to the clothing of the witness' words; spiritual power. Oh the difference it makes when we preach and teach and share the gospel. In Sunday school, please teach the gospel. Remember, there is **influence** in a life

well lived, but there is **power** (God's power) in the gospel shared.

The gospel of Jesus Christ faithfully proclaimed is the most powerful force in the world. God takes it and uses it to change lives, heal relationships, build homes, etc.

The picture in the text is that of the power of the gospel exploding, when the hearer allows its truth to penetrate the heart.

III. THE GOSPEL'S CONFIRMATION 5c

"and in the Holy Spirit" – God comes in His Spirit to empower the words used to proclaim the gospel; Pentecostal Preaching!

Acts 1:8

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The Holy Spirit empowers the message so that it comes alive; it stirs the spirit within; it brings conviction and change.

It is the movement of the Holy Spirit of God, not the power of man's personality that convinces someone of their need for Jesus.

The Spirit of God without the Word of God is **weaponless**. The Word of God without the Spirit of God is **powerless**.

Ravi Zacharis shared with me at dinner that without the power of God's Holy Spirit, all of his intellectual apologetics is powerless to change a life.

IV. THE GOSPEL'S CONVICTION 5d

"in much assurance" – with deep conviction. Paul's witness of the gospel was not only powerful in its effect, but also confident in its presentation. He was sure of the message, of its truth and relevance.

Speaks of a settled and passionate conviction of the truth and the power of the gospel.

Isaiah's Mindset

Isaiah 55:11

"So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

ILLUSTRATE: People's lives changed.

“The only explanation for our changed lives is the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Without a shadow of a doubt they believe the gospel powerfully changed their lives.

Hear This Testimony:

1 Timothy 1:11-17

“according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Paul magnifies the **Glory of the Gospel** and the **Greatness of God's Grace**

V. THE GOSPEL'S COMPLIMENT 5e

“as you know what kind of men we were among you”

This served as further proof of the authenticity of the gospel. If our witness is to be believable, it must be the testimony of a life that is believable. There must be in our hearts, lives, and message evidence that God has done a work in our lives.

The quality of the message was complimented by the lives of the witnesses.

2 Corinthians 1:12

“For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.”

Same message to the Ephesians

Ephesians 4:1-3

**“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord,
beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with
which you were called, with all lowliness and
gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with
one another in love, endeavoring to keep the
unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”**

1 Thessalonians 2:3

**“For our exhortation did not come from error
or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit.”**

1 Thessalonians 2:5

**“For neither at any time did words, as you
know, nor a cloak for covetousness--God is
witness.”**

No pretext of greed.

1 Thessalonians 2:6

**“Nor did we seek glory from men, either from
you or from others, when we might have made
demands as apostles of Christ.”**

**v.7 “we were gentle among you...”
“cherishing”**

**v.8 “affectionately longing for you”
“imparting our own lives”
“you had become dear to us”**

v.9 “that we might not be a burden to you”

1 Thessalonians 2:10-12

“You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

- they were examples to them .10
- they exhorted them .11
- they had high expectations of them .12

VI. THE GOSPEL’S CAUSE. 5f

“for your sake” – it was all in their interest and for their advantage. The gospel in its power has the ability to call you to a higher level of living, namely, living for others.

IT’S NOT ABOUT YOU, IT’S ABOUT HIM, AND THEM!

I will tell you how we can remain Faithful in the Present, live for Him and Others! We are building for those who don’t belong.

The **gospel** magnifies the Grace of God
John Newton: **Amazing Grace**

*“Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved,
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.”*

Paul put it this way:

Titus 2:11-15

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.”

Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, we must take the **gospel** to our Jerusalem; keep this as a **priority**. Know that it goes all in **power**, know that God the Holy Spirit **confirms** the gospel. Share the gospel with deep **conviction** of its truth. Live in such a way that your testimony will compliment your message, and let's share it for their sake and for Jesus' sake.