

Series: **Confident Hope**

Today's Title: **"Celebrating a Deeply Rooted Church"**

June 12, 2022 – 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4 – Sermon 20 of 28

Objective: To help Christians know some important traits of a good church.

Bill Updike – Works for Samaritan Purse - in Iraq - doing reconstruction.

Carlos & Gracia Luque – Carlos is moving from the National Guard to Active Duty with the Army. They leave on June 23 for Fort Campbell, Kentucky. **Kids:** Alan (9 yrs. old) and Alena (7 yrs. old).

Prayer for Bill, Carlos, and Gracia – *and for the sermon.*

Our theme for 2022 is **"Deeply Rooted"**.

The idea behind this them is for all of us to focus on deepening our faith.

Colossians 2:6-7

"Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving."

Deepening our roots in the love, grace, and truth of Christ.

Growing our spiritual roots deeper – so we are stronger, more resilient, and more committed to Christ.

There is no magic formula for growing our spiritual roots deeper.

We have an area of grass in our backyard.

There is no magic formula for taking care of this grass – no secret tricks.

The grass needs food and water.

Fertilizer 4-5 times per year and water.

I have to pull the weeds out in the Spring, so it won't choke out the grass.

Nothing fancy. I get on my hands and knees and pull the chickweed or crabgrass out with the roots.

Spiritual health is similar to growing our grass in the backyard.

Food. Water. Pull out the weeds.

Food = God's Word / Learning the truth of Christ – the truth of Scripture.

Water = Communion with Christ – Faith in Christ.

John 4:13-14 – Jesus talking with the Samaritan Woman at the well.

“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

Pull out the weeds / pruning

We must examine our lives to see when some weeds – some false ideas begin creeping in – when we are overtaken by sinful fleshly desires.

When this happens, it's time to pull the weeds in our life.

Time to pull them up – roots and all!

James 5:16

“...confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

We must do the work of pulling the weeds out of our life – getting rid of sin and false thinking.

But sometimes God must do it for us.

Hebrews 12:6

“For the LORD disciplines those He loves, and He punishes each one He accepts as His child.”

“Deeply Rooted”

In our passage today, we will see some key spiritual realities that result in deep spiritual roots.

Turn to 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4 – p. 989

After 19 sermons going verse-by-verse through **1 Thessalonians**, we’re starting our verse-by-verse look at **2 Thessalonians**.

Paul wrote both letters from the city of Corinth, which was / is about 350 miles from Thessalonica.

Paul would have sent his first letter to Christians in Thessalonica by a trusted courier.

This courier would have delivered the letter, and then stayed for a month or two with the Thessalonian church before returning to Corinth to give Paul a report on the status of the church and how they received his letter.

The report given to Paul prompted him to write a 2nd letter - which we are starting to examine today.

So, Paul wrote **2 Thessalonians** shortly after he wrote his 1st letter to them – probably less than 6 months between letters.

Today we're covering 1:1-4.

Follow along as I read the passage.

The deity of Jesus. vs. 1-2

Being a Jewish rabbi, Paul was a strong monotheist. But in these first 2 verses we see a strong statement about the deity of Jesus.

The deity of Jesus is seen in **vs. 1** (“in”) and **vs. 2** (“from”) “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The grace and peace believers have is from “God our Father” – **and** – “the Lord Jesus Christ.”

It's a small detail in the Greek and English text – but a small detail with a massive implication.

Paul talks about receiving “grace...and peace” from God. But he says, “...from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The preposition “from” gives the source of “grace...and peace.”

The 1 preposition governs both persons listed: “God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The conjunction “and” puts them both on equal footing. It brings equality to both – making Jesus equal to “God our Father”.

As a strong, life-long monotheist, Paul's statement here reveals his full confidence in the deity of Christ.

Also, since he doesn't give any explanation of this claim, it is safe to assume when he was with them in Thessalonica before being forced out of the city, he taught this truth – so his statement here needs no explanation.

The Thessalonians had a strong hold on the deity of Jesus.

A word about “grace and peace”.

These two are related.

We have one because of the other.

vs. 1 – their faith / new life in Christ

“To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...”

They had faith “in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...”

Their faith wasn't in their abilities – their family – their financial status – their social standing.

They were “in” God and Christ.

This is a preposition that denotes position.

Because they were “in” Christ, they had the grace of God in their life.

The undeserved, unmerited favor of God.

When you have the grace of God in your life, it will lead to “peace” in your life.

But only if you understand the grace of God and how it secures you in your position with God.

Grace means you can't merit salvation – you can't merit God's favor on you.

This applies not only to receiving salvation, but in remaining saved.

God's grace is why we are secure in our salvation.

When you understand and accept the “grace” of God and the spiritual security it brings to you, you can then have “peace”.

3 reasons for their thanksgiving. vs. 3-4

By “their thanksgiving” I'm referring to Paul, Silas, and Timothy – and their entire team.

They were thankful to God for the spiritual realities in the Thessalonian church.

Paul uses a few unique terms and phrases in the Greek.

First, when he says, “We ought always” he is using a term that has the idea of *duty, obligation, to owe a debt*.

They were obliged to give thanks.

It's not that they weren't willing to give thanks on their own, but what was happening in the Thessalonian church was amazing – and Paul has a sense of obligation – that they better give thanks for what God is doing.

If they wanted to be quiet – to withhold their thanksgiving – they couldn't!!

They had to give thanks!

Second, in vs. 4, he says, “Therefore we ourselves” – he uses 2 personal pronouns to emphasize that he, Silas, and Timothy – all three of them are boasting about them.

As the founders of the Thessalonian church, this would not normally be their practice.

And there is a tone / implication here that the Thessalonians are being overly shy with what God is doing in their gatherings.

So, the 3 church planters are going to take every opportunity they have to let others know what is happening in Thessalonica!

Read vs. 3-4

There are 3 things Paul lists as reasons for their thanksgiving.

No doubt the courier who delivered Paul’s 1st letter – and then brought back a report to Paul and the others about the Thessalonian believers – relayed these things to the Apostle.

1. Their Growing faith.

More accurately, their ‘hyper-growing’ faith.

“...your faith is growing abundantly”

The Greek word for “growing” is amped up by the prefix ‘huper’ – meaning extra – excessive.

This is the only time this compound word is used in the N.T.

The growth of their faith was unusual – not expected.

They were growing beyond what was expected and hoped for.

Their faith was '*Growing abundantly*'.

2. Their *increasing love* for one another.

Their love for each other was growing.

As their faith grew (beyond normal expectations), their love also grew.

I believe this tandem – growing faith and increasing love – go together.

They are like 2 sides of the same coin.

One of the evidences of growing faith – a maturing Christian – is increasing love for others.

- Don't equate Biblical knowledge with Christian maturity.

There are many people who have a comprehensive knowledge of the Bible – but they aren't even Christians!

- A more godly morality is a by-product of growing in the faith, but morality can be an external set of rules that govern one's behavior, and leave their heart unchecked.

Increasing your knowledge of God's Word and a godly morality is certainly important for the Christian and these are spiritual fruit in the life of a Christ-follower.

But if love for others is absent, there is a major problem.

Their increased love for one another was a natural by-product of their super-growing faith.

Also notice their love captured everyone “every one of you for one another”.

It wasn't a situation where only certain people were experiencing love from others – it was all of them! Even if “every one of you” is not to be taken in an absolute and literal sense, the idea behind this term was the non-discriminating expression of love to virtually every person in the church.

Let's step back for a moment and think about these 2 things.

Spiritual growth and mutual, expressed love.

- How are you doing in these 2 areas?
- How are we (CDOBC) doing in these 2 areas?

Are you growing in your faith?

Is your growth a turtle or sloth-speed growth – or if it was plotted on a graph is your line going up and to the right at a 45-degree slope?

Are you a good lover?

Are you loving others well?

How do you know if you're loving well?

- Are you serving them?
- Are you critical and short with others?
- Are you eager for their good – to do what blesses them?

All this is in-line with what Jesus stated when He was asked what the greatest commandment was.

Matthew 22:37-39

“You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.

This is the first and greatest commandment.

A second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

3. Steadfast in their faith during persecution.

They remained committed and unwavering as persecutions increased.

They were “deeply rooted” in Christ – and when pressures and persecutions started and increased, they didn't shrink back.

They stood tall.

Like the POW who refuses to give intel to the enemy even though they are being tortured.

The Christian remains faithful – and even gains spiritual strength when they suffer in persecution.

Persecution and difficulty strengthen the Christian, and at the same time it reveals those who are religious, but not followers of Christ.

The religious person does not have the Spirit of God in them, so they lack the spiritual strength to endure difficulty.

In addition, many Christians have bought in to the false belief that being a child of God means good things in this life and an absence of bad things.

They believe God will bless them both spiritually and materially – with good health and material prosperity.

This is not what the Bible teaches.

But so many Christians have this belief. With some it seems it's a sub-conscious assumption – and when difficulty and pain enter their life, they begin to question God, as if He has been negligent toward them.

- God promises to be with us during trials – not to keep trials from us.
- He promises to right all wrongs, but He doesn't promise to keep all wrongs from us.

The Thessalonians were “steadfast” in their faith in their “persecutions and in the afflictions” they were “enduring”.

The encouragement from their faith. vs. 4

I alluded to this earlier – to the double pronoun usage in vs. 4 which Paul uses in a position of strong emphasis in the sentence.

The Apostle, Silas, Timothy – and the members of their church-planting team – were beyond thankful for the good report the courier brought to them about the spiritual health of the church in Thessalonica.

It was such a good report that Paul says, “we ourselves boast about you in the church of God...”.

Paul was in Corinth when he wrote this letter, so we can safely assume at the very least Paul is referring to the house churches in Corinth – as well as the towns in the general vicinity of Corinth.

How far beyond Corinth we don't know.

I believe Paul was in Corinth for about 2 years, so he may have used Corinth as a ‘home base’ for that time.

I think it's also safe to assume if they traveled from Corinth to any other places where a church existed, they would have boasted to those believers also!

It's good to brag and boast on God.

Too often our standard of what makes a good church is rooted in the non-essentials.

Is the music good?

Is the preacher entertaining and engaging?

Is the youth group fun?

Is the Children's ministry fun for the kids?

Is the building nice?

These are not bad things.

I hope we can answer in the affirmative on this list.

But there's more to it.

These verses give us a list of what makes a good church.

A deeply rooted church.

The people in the church are growing spiritually.

They are increasing in their love for others.

They are unwavering in their faith – even when they experience difficulty in life.

Apply it...

1. Take steps to grow your faith.

Quiet time / devotions / small group /

2. Pray and ask God to help you love better.

When you pray this prayer, He will answer your prayer by putting you in situations where you can serve others – put their needs / desires ahead of yours!

3. Get deeply rooted – so you can withstand the storms of life.

Food – Water – Pull the weeds!