

## 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10 – Becoming a model church

### A model Christian

As a kid I was into these wooden models. As you popped out each piece some had an obvious purpose. Some pieces you could tell what they were, they looked like a mast or sail. But others were just plain old pieces that didn't have an obvious role. But each and every one of those pieces were vital for the whole model to work.

The same is true of the church. Sometimes we can look at others and think they are the model Christians not little old me. But for a church to be a model church every Christian must play its part and take responsibility. God has gifted each of us individually and placed us in unique places and we need to play our part. Paul shows us this by calling the Thessalonians a model church and then talking about the behaviour of the individual people. So, the challenge this morning as we consider what is to be a model church is will you take up your part?

Roy showed us last time that to be a model church we need to have:

1. An active faith
2. A love that labours
3. A hope that endures

The rest of chapter one as we will see this morning then speaks of what that looks like in practice and its three things:

1. To be an example for Christ,
2. To be an evangelist for Christ
3. To be expectant for Christ's return

### **1. An example for Christ. V5-8**

They became imitators of Paul and the Lord; and became a good example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Through them others saw what a Church was supposed to be like.

The word came to them through Paul and his team (the messengers) but also with the power of God that brought about deep conviction and as a result they welcomed the message. The result of believing the gospel was deep joy! The end game is that they were examples of belief to those around them. You see the imitators became the imitated. They imitated Paul as Paul imitated Christ. Then others desired to imitate them. What a great legacy, if only every believer in this room could be the same, what a difference that would make.

They received the Word of God and followed it and the people who brought it to them. But a warning, don't just follow anyone. Out there are also false teachers who are looking to lead sheep astray.

We also need to remember the Thessalonians gave this example while suffering for the Lord. Life was far from easy for them and yet they clung to the truth of the gospel amidst persecution and lived lives that other people talked about.

A Christian's behaviour should stand out as an example that is completely different from the world. One thing I can guarantee you is that people watch the way in which you live. Let's be honest people watching is most people's favourite past time. Without you even speaking people should be able to tell there is something different about you and that it's because you are a Christian. It is not hard to stand out. It won't lead to an easy life but it's certainly not hard. The way you talk should be different, what you talk about should be different, how you spend your time, your money, your life desires and goals should all be shaped by the gospel and if they are you will stand out. I wonder how many of us have ever had someone say to us well that wasn't very Christian of you! They never compliment but they always pick up on the mistakes because they are watching. And although they don't comment on the good example you set, they do notice.

We should live such good lives that we are beyond reproach. That is what a Christian is called to.

## **2. An Evangelist for Christ V8**

Their work of faith and labour of love expressed itself in their sharing of the gospel. The transformation in their lives gave them the desire and passion to share the message. They were not only receivers of the word (1 Thess 1:5) but also transmitted (passed on) the word (1 Thess 1v8) to the lost. But they didn't blow their trumpet, but the trumpet of the gospel rang out.

The location of Thessalonica made it possible for the Church to become a base for missions in the whole area. The message of Jesus Christ rang out. The Church was at its core evangelistic. They understood that the purpose of the Church was to lift up Christ to all around them so that people will be saved. They understood that it was their responsibility to do this but not just a responsibility but also a privilege. Understanding the privilege means that they didn't do it begrudgingly but enthusiastically. The Thessalonian Christians served enthusiastically. What a tragedy if a Church fails to win the lost.

And it is not just the work of the payed staff, it is the work of every believer - Acts 2:44-47. Or how about the commissions at the end of each of the gospel, they apply to all of us here who follow Christ too.

Did you know that 70-80% of church growth is the result of a friend witnessing to a friend or relative to relative? So, are you witnessing to your friends and relatives who don't yet know Christ? There is a place for other methods of outreach and in a digital age the options are endless with social media, radio, internet, and the like. But the best and most effective way doesn't use any technology or gadgets it is simply personal and relational. God no doubt called you through the personal witness of a friend or relative, so be that friend or relative

who shares the gospel with someone, many people. We need more Christians and churches today who are enthusiastic about evangelism.

So, then we have seen that their faith and love made them an examples and evangelists to people. Now thirdly and finally their enduring hope makes them an expectant people

### **3. Expectant for Christs return v9-10**

Because they trusted in Christ, they looked for his return with a joyful expectancy. They believed that Jesus Christ was coming again, and they were waiting for that glorious event. And so, these Christians also served God expectantly. Their true faith caused a huge change in their lives. They turned from idols to the living God. Many of them had been pagans, serving idols with no hope. When Paul came with the Gospel of Christ, they made a complete change and became servants of God and through their trust in God they found a living hope (1 Peter 1:2-3). Before Paul came to them, they were without hope and without God. Listen to Psalm 115:2-8 – that is what it is like to worship an idol.

The word translated wait means to await someone with patience and confidence, expectantly. Waiting involves activity and endurance. While they were waiting, many did not stop working for the Lord. But some of the Thessalonians as we will see had quit their work and become idle busybodies arguing that the Lord was coming soon so work was pointless. But if we really believe the Lord is coming, we will prove our faith by keeping busy and obeying his word. Jesus teaches us that through the parable of the tenants in Matthew 25. He entrusts to us gifts and abilities and wants us to use them well whilst we await his return. He has also placed us amongst non-believers in our day to day lives and entrusts to us the responsibility of sharing the gospel with them.

We as believers are waiting expectantly for the glorious day when Christ returns. A day when pain, suffering, tears, disease, wars will cease. A day when we will be perfect. What an amazing day. But whilst we wait we need to be examples and evangelists for Christ.

A church full of people who truly live in expectation of seeing Jesus at any moment will be a vibrant and victorious group of people. Expecting his return is a great motivation for soul winning. It is also a great comfort in sorrow because the end of this life is not the end of the story. And it is a great encouragement for Godly living because it reminds us of the higher purpose.

Let us not be people who simply hear and believe this. Who know what we should be like but ignore it. Let us also practically live it out.

### **Conclusion:**

No Church today is identical to the church in Thessalonica. Each church is different. However, there were some outstanding behaviours of that Church which all Churches

should imitate. Every Church should be an example to others, have evangelistic zeal in reaching the lost, and be energetic in service. Churches come to have these vital characteristics only as the members of the Churches have them. The character of a given Church is a reflection of the behaviour of its members.

What every church should be is what every Christian should be, full of faith, love and hope leading to lives that are examples and evangelists for Christ whilst waiting, expectantly for Christ's return.