

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON FOR FEBRUARY 2012

A Saved Church! (I Thessalonians 1:2-4)

(Sunday, February 5, 2012)

For the next two Sundays, we will take a look at the Thessalonian model of the church.

All the basic ingredients that our Lord wants in a church were found in the Thessalonian Congregation. The epistle that Paul wrote to the Thessalonians lays out for us the pattern of the church that Christ builds. It contains no reference to the number of members. It doesn't tell us about their goals and objectives, their programming, the kind of sermons that were preached, or the music they sang. It doesn't tell us about their Sunday school or their worship services. If you were to take a look at the web site of Thessalonian Church, you wouldn't see any of these for mentioned things. But it would tell you about several spiritual elements.

The Apostle Paul first preached the gospel to the Thessalonians during his second Missionary journey. After he left them, he sent Timothy to find out how they were doing. When Timothy returned, he came with a fantastic report that we find in **1Thessalonians 3:6-7**; *“When Timothy came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you. Therefore, brethren, we were comforted.”* The good news that Timothy reported to Paul prompted him to write this first letter to the Thessalonians.

I trust that as we look at some of the basic principles in the epistle to the Thessalonians, the Lord will help us to see what He desires from us and how our church can be what He wants it to be.

And so the first principle that we are dealing with is:

“A Saved Church”

The church at Thessalonica was a saved church. That is significant because many churches today don't know that meaning of salvation. The Thessalonian church was an assembly of born-again Christians. That fact is verified by the terms Paul used in the first four verses of Chapter One: *“Paul, and Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God, the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus*

Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God our father, knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”

Paul could thank God for the Thessalonians because they were all “in the Lord Jesus Christ” (v1). They gave evidence of personally knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. Therein lies the beginning of an effective church. The reason so many churches are ineffective is that there is a mixture of wheat and tares, even among the leadership. Having unregenerate people in places of responsibility works against God’s purpose and confuses the church’s message.

(Sunday, February 12, 2012)

If you want to see how the church of the Thessalonians begin, take a look at Acts 17, verse 1.

Paul and his companions came to Thessalonica where there was a synagogue of the Jews. When Paul entered a City to spread the gospel, he generally went to the synagogue first. He found the greatest opportunity there since he was Jewish himself. Furthermore, he realized that if he went to the Gentiles first, the Jews would not be willing to listen to what he had to say. So he initially preached in the synagogues to win some Jews to Christ so that he gain support for reaching the City.

From the very beginning there was a tremendous response, even though Paul spent only three Sabbaths with them. But they would have been in bad shape had they not been led by the Holy Spirit. Since Paul was justly concerned for their welfare, he was overjoyed to learn from Timothy that they were having a dynamic impact on the surrounding area.

Well, just let me submit to you today, that a saved church is a strong church. That was the key to the success of the Thessalonian church. They were saved. It was a regenerated church. A strong church is a church of born-again people; People who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Without people who are committed to the Lord, there is no church.

The church is not a man-created fellowship, a man-created gathering, a man-created assembly, or a man-created body. The church is the body of Christ made up of saved people.

- People who have received Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.
- People who have been delivered from the chains and shackles of sin.

- People who are now a joint heir with Jesus Christ, our elder brother.
- People who are new creatures in Christ and all things have become new.
- With new EARS, we listen to the preached word.
- With new EYES, we look upon the creation of God.
- With new ACTIONS, we witness to others.
- With new ENTHUSIASM, we carry our responsibilities.
- With new ATTITUDES, we confront our difficulties.
- With new DESIRES, we hunger after righteousness.
- With new GOALS, we labor to win the lost.
- With new FEET, we walk in holiness
- With new KNEES, we kneel in prayer.
- With new TONGUES, we praise and magnify God.
- With new HEARTS, we express love toward others.
- With new MINDS, we contemplate the “holy things.”
- With new LIPS, we worship and glorify the Lord.
- With new HOPE, we are waiting on the rapture.
- With new VALUES, we place God first.
- With new JOY, we rejoice with the saints.
- With new VISION, we see the harvest fields.
- With new HANDS, we labor in God’s vineyard.
- With new MOTIVES, we minister to the needs of others.

Being saved is life’s most thrilling, breathtaking, exciting, hair raising, spine tingling, highly motivating and soul stirring decision you’ll ever make.

Aren’t you happy to be saved through His grace; forgiven through His mercy; lifted through His love; redeemed through His blood; accepted through His sacrifice; justified through His atonement; sanctified through His truth.

Being saved is unspeakable, unmatched, unmistakable and immeasurable.

A Surrendered Church

(I Thessalonians 1:6)

(Sunday, February 19, 2012)

The genuine character of the church's salvation is apparent in that statement. The Greek word translated, "followers" means to mimic. The Thessalonian Christians weren't just talkers, they were imitators. They didn't merely talk about their Christian experience; they actually modeled their lives after Paul and his companions. Not only are Christians to be collective representatives of Christ on earth but also individual representatives as each believer strives to be like Him. The pursuit of the Christian is to be like Christ. That's the key to unity in the church. If all of us were like Christ, we'd have no problem getting along with each other. But unfortunately, we are not always in tune with one another because we are not following Christ. Unity in the church isn't the result of running around and adjusting to everyone else. Rather, it is becoming like Jesus Christ. The Thessalonian church was surrendered to Christ-likeness, which had been demonstrated in the lives of Paul, Silas and Timothy.

It is a daring thing to expect people to "imitate" us. But if you notice here, Paul adds, "and of the Lord." For Paul only expected or desired "imitation" as he himself imitated the Lord Jesus. He says in *I Corinthians 11:1*, "***Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.***" As Spiritual leaders, the only time we should want people to follow us is when we are following Christ. That's why as believers, as preachers and laymen alike – we must guard our lives ever so closely and make sure we are living a surrendered life for Christ. Why? - Because others are watching and following us.

Some child; some adult; some neighbor; some friend, there are people who look up to us and follow after us. Whether or not we like the fact, somebody is imitating you! Therefore, it behooves us to follow Christ and be as much like Him as we possibly can be. Jesus Christ is to be our supreme and only example of true holiness, the pattern that we should follow. He was holy, He is holy, and He shall ever more be holy. While on this earth, He taught holiness, and He practiced holiness. Everything about Him was holy, and we do ourselves a great injustice when we look elsewhere for models because Christ was and is our model for holiness.

To be like Christ becomes the "theme and goal" of every true Christian. There's something wrong with a professed Christian who does

not have the desire to be like Jesus. You can't follow Christ; you can't be surrendered to Him without wanting to be like Him.

- like Him in you conduct.
- Like Him in your service.
- Like Him in your giving.
- Like Him in your efforts.
- Like Him in your manners.
- Like Him in your attitude.

There are some things that become the trademarks of the person who follows Christ.

- Pleasing in his personality
- Modest in his appearance
- Honest in his evaluations
- Patient in his trials
- Submissive in his will
- Godly in his actions
- Strong in his faith

Three lessons I want to teach about a surrendered church:

I. A Surrendered Church will have a maturing habit of prayer.

I can't understand Christians who do not like prayer.....
If we, as Christians, are going to stand firm in the faith, and stay true to the Lord, then we must first spend time in the presence of the Lord. It happens after prayer. A surrendered church is a praying church! We can't minister in a world filled with sin, filled with shameful practices, and satanic powers without the power that only comes through prayer.

(Sunday, February 26, 2012)

II. A Surrendered Church will have a continuing study of the Scriptures.

A surrendered church is a church where people are in the word. Now I know to some folk the scriptures seem to be "dull," but I tell you in the scriptures you will find exciting promises, life-changing truth, powerful messages, sure prophecies, dynamic doctrines and glorious hope. That does not sound dull – does it?

It is important that we know the word, believe the word, apply the word, practice the word, conform to the word, love the word, and stand on the word. I tell you, we need to be familiar with the word of God.

III. A Surrendered Church will have dependable involvement.

Surrendered Christians will be involved in their church. The maturity of every Christian is revealed in his attitude toward his church, his participation in his church, fellowship with his church, support of his church, faithfulness to his church, respect of his church and cooperation with his church.

The Lord so loved the church, that He purchased it, not with silver and gold, but with His own precious and priceless blood. Therefore, since He has such a great love for the church, we should also. Since He cares, we should care. Since He has done and is still doing so much for the church, we should do all we can. Since He is faithful to the church, we ought to be faithful. Since He never disappoints the church, we shouldn't either. Since He is committed to the church, we should be committed.