

# A PICTURE OF A TRUE BIBLICAL CHURCH

## 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

When you think of the word “church” what comes to your mind? Can you tell the difference between a true biblical church and one that is not. The sobering truth will be in the coming of Christ, that many attending services year after year, but where they attended was not a true church, because the people were not true Christians that made up that fellowship. It makes a radical difference to be a part of the Lord’s Church...for it will only be the Lord’s church, that are saved, redeemed, and raptured in God’s timing.

The very word “church” literally means “called out ones”. We have been caught out of the world to a life of devotion, surrender and service to the Lord Jesus Christ. The very idea of being saved and not being a servant, is foreign to the teachings of Scripture.

What does a genuine New Testament church look like? Better still, are we as God’s people a demonstration of a genuine New Testament Church? Paul in 1 Thessalonians, gives a picture of a true biblical church as he speaks to the saints at Thessalonica.

### 1. A TRUE CHURCH RECEIVES GOD’S WORD AS THE WORD OF GOD.

First...**One of the characteristics of these believers was that “they received” or took in the Word of God into their lives. Irregardless of who preached it, taught it, they received the Word of God seriously. Not only did they receive it but they passed it on. The sobering fact is, if we heard the truth and never shared it, think of what would happen to Christianity. Our children, grandchildren, friends, would never know a thing about Christ.**

**Proclaiming, and declaring God’s Word are His ordained ways of getting it to the ends of the earth. Paul declared the gospel to the Thessalonians and they were saved. It is when the gospel is shared that men are saved. A true biblical church shares the gospel willingly, deliberately, to others.**

Second...**these believers received the Word of God, not as though it was their ideas, but that it was the very Word of God. The evidence of a genuine Christian is the “putting into practice” of the Word he has received. Sadly, many do not put God’s Word into practice for the reason, that they think, the words being shared are from a person, and not from God, thus removing the obligation to be obedient.**

Yet, the truth is, no preacher, pastor, that is true, has a message of himself. He is the messenger of God, with the message of God, for the people of God, to walk in the ways of God. People were changed in Paul’s day, as they watched his life being and revealing change. A true pastor, reveals himself to others, and applies the Word of God first to his life...as he knows it is the very Word of God.

If a preacher preaches God’s Word about winning souls...he is open and ready to lead people to Christ. If he preaches God’s Word on tithing...his life reveals tithing. If he preaches God’s Word on obedience...his life demonstrates a life of obedience to the risen Christ. Because the pastor first...has come to know it is the real Word of Almighty God affecting his life in a powerful way.

**Third...**a true church receives and believes God’s Word enabling it to work all through their lives. These believers didn’t only hear the Word, but believed His Word, thus enabling it to work all through their lives. If we disregard the Word of God, then there is nothing to believe but the words of men. When a people fails to believe God’s Word, there is no mighty working among that fellowship.

Messages apart from the power of God, deal with: self help, self improvement, self image, morality...and deny the wonderful power of Christ. Scripture declares that “without faith it is impossible to please God”. Could it be that many churches are meeting, but are not pleasing God...all because of a lack of belief, or asking great and mighty things of God. A true church believes, and allows God to work through them. God will come to His church and give them commands that from time to time seem illogical and out of the norm, but they know it is of God...for the purpose of developing a deeper trust, faith and confidence.

2. A TRUE CHURCH IS COMPOSED OF TRUE BROTHERS AND SISTER THAT WILL WITHSTAND SUFFERING AND PERSECUTION. **The sobering reality in any church will reveal that in time of hardship, suffering and persecution, that some or even many will walk away revealing their true self at that point. John the apostle under the inspiration of the Spirit, gives sobering reasons why individuals leave the fellowship.**

1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

When suffering comes to the Lord's church, there will be many that will leave...but not the true child of God. True believers, those who legitimately belong to Christ stand fast despite trial. In the days of Paul, it was their own countrymen that were mocking them, yet many stood firm, revealing that they truly belonged to Christ. Scripture nowhere reveals that a church service with large numbers is the determining factor of a true church. Neither does Scripture reveal that a determining factor of a true church is large financial resources...but rather a true church reveals herself by staying faithful to Christ in the midst of suffering and difficulty.

In the midst of persecution and death...Christ was faithful to the mission of the Father. In the midst of rejection, persecution, and abandonment...Paul stayed faithful to the teachings of Christ.

In the sight of God, a small church with 20 members may be honoring God more than one of 1000. These precious saints were not about to abandon their relationship with Christ...even though it cost them relationships with friends and even family members.

Note: A person reveals his depth of commitment to Christ, when he is willing to stand when family is opposing him, and standing against him.

3. **A TRUE CHURCH STANDS FIRM IN THE TRUTH IN THE MIDST OF FRIEND AND FAMILY REJECTION.** It is one thing to be rejected by the world, but another to be rejected by friends, neighbors and relatives. To these believers, they were suffering at the hands of their own countrymen. They were being despised by their own neighbors for the cause of Christ. They were being rejected by those that grew up with them, no doubt went to school with. Yet, for the sake of the Lord, they stood firm. The fact is, they could not be loyal to their friends and family of the world and loyal to the cause of Christ. However, their friends and family were not those who looked bad, but rather, very religious but simply denying the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. Paul declares what these Jews did to the Lord.

- 1) They killed the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2) They killed their own prophets.
- 3) They persecuted Christian believers.
- 4) They did not please God. **NO PERSON CAN PLEASE GOD THAT OPPOSES CHRIST. NO RELIGION CAN PLEASE GOD THAT REJECTS HIS SON'S DEATH.**

- 5) They hated men that didn't believe as they did.
- 6) They attempted to stamp out the Word of God...preventing others salvation.

**4. A TRUE CHURCH POSSESSES A STRONG FELLOWSHIP.** It was the heart's desire of Paul to "see" them "face to face". Not only was Paul's desire to proclaim the truth, but His desire was to fellowship with them, giving of himself to them, and allowing them to give to him from the Lord. One word that has often been underemphasized in the Lord's church is "fellowship". Often times there is a sense that the family can "fellowship" too much. Yet, Scripture makes it clear that the saints will be fellowshiping for all eternity. Therefore God loves to see His people fellowshiping in this life, during this lifetime. Paul may have been away from these saints in body, but not in spirit. Paul "endeavored" to return, meaning, he earnestly, eagerly, anxiously sought to be with his brothers and sisters in the faith.

While Paul desired to return, it was the goal of Satan to hinder the fellowship of Paul with the saints, and Satan has not changed his tactics. Satan despises seeing the saints of God, enjoying one another, enjoying the Lord, enjoying their relationship with the Lord, thus he will throw all he can...disaster, catastrophe, difficulty, tragedy into our lives, in hopes to get us to think God is out to hurt us...but God is never out to hurt His people, but to help, to bless, and to relieve from all anxiety.

**5. A TRUE CHURCH LIVES TO BRING GLORY TO GOD.** It was not the goal of Paul, or the church to have a name for themselves...but rather they were directly linked to the Father, with a heart's desire to bring glory to God. It was these believers that was Paul's crown of rejoicing. As he labored to bring souls to faith in Christ, and preach God's truth, God added to the church, and as lives were changed, they became a change point in their homes and among their families. What a day of rejoicing will be, when Jesus comes and a person and church can declare, that they lived not for the world, or for the applause of the world, for friends, or their approval, but for a life that was given to bring honor and glory to the Lord God, by life, conduct, witness, behavior, and declaring God's precious truth. All true saints need to be reminded that God the Father, will at some point give to all who love Him a crown of righteousness. Do your actions reveal you love the Father and the Son? Do your words reveal that love? Does your wallet reveal that you desire to advance the Kingdom and love God's world of people?

When you arrive in heaven...will there be a single soul that you can point to that you led to faith in Christ by your life and lips?