

In It For Example

1 Thessalonians 1:4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,

1 Thessalonians 1:5-8 ... because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that ***we need not say anything.***

“We need not say anything”....? ... The faith and love and hope of the church of the Thessalonians spoke for themselves!

Being ***“In it for real”*** speaks for itself. And here is what it says when it is speaking...

Here are...

THE IDENTIFYING MARKS OF A REAL CHURCH

Here are details by which Paul and Silvanus and Timothy ***knew*** that the “Christians” in Thessalonica were in it for real, were “chosen by God.”

In the first place, Paul writes,

“We knew that God was at work in you ***BY OUR OWN EXPERIENCE*** in proclaiming the gospel of Christ.” *It’s not always like this!*

1. **verse 5** The gospel comes in word, of course, but **ALSO** with the **power of the Holy Spirit** and with **full conviction.**

There was a power in it. God the Holy Spirit was in it. We spoke with a great intensity of certainty.

There was a conviction with it.

“Proclaiming Christ to you felt like it should feel!” Like it always should feel but doesn’t always.

Relationship to the Word matters!

In the second place, Paul writes “We knew that God was at work in you ***BY YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE*** in receiving the gospel.”

Again, *it’s not always like this!* But here’s how we want it to be! And hope and pray it will be!

2. **verse 6** The gospel **receivers** begin to imitate the gospel **workers.**

1 Corinthians 11:1 Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. This sort of conviction is sometimes very contagious!

E.g. #1 **verse 6** They receive the gospel **as the word of God.**

1 Thessalonians 2:13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, **the word of God, which is at work in you believers.**

Relationship to the Word matters! So what about us? What is our relationship to the Word of God? Do we value it? Do we pay attention to it? Are we “1 Thes.1:6” and “2 Timothy 2:15” about it? → ***Are so many of us here so much like that that we are that sort of church?***

2 Timothy 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

E.g. #2 **verse 6** **They are joyful in their afflictions**

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 13:20-21 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and **immediately receives it with joy**, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

James 1:2-4 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. That was the joy of the Holy Spirit! Always present, but more noticeable in the hard times.

Relationship to the Holy Spirit matters! So what about us? How joyful are we when life gets tough? Are we complainers and whiners? And obviously shocked and disillusioned if things get tough? Or joyful when we “meet trials of various kinds”? Are we “1 Thes. 1:6” and “James 1:2-4” about it? → **Are so many of us here so much like that that we are that sort of church?**

E.g.# 3 **verse 8** They “sounded forth” the gospel. **They get in on the work of the gospel!**

1 Timothy 3:15 ... the household of God, which is the church of the living God, **a pillar and buttress of truth.**

Colossians 4:3-6 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, **to declare the mystery of Christ**, on account of which I am in prison— that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. **Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt**, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Acts 8:4-5 Now those who were scattered went about **preaching** the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and **proclaimed** to them the Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 ... our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

Relationship to the work matters! Again, what about us? What is our relationship to the work of the gospel? Are we in on it? Is the “word of the Lord” sounding forth from us? Are we “1 Thes. 1:8” and “Colossians 4:5,6” about it? → **Are so many of us here so much like that that we are that sort of church?**

THE HAPPY RESULTS...

Happy Result # 1: **verse 6** **People become imitators of God!**

Ephesians 5:1-2 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Romans 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Happy Result # 2: **verses 2,3 and 2:1** **People** (Paul and his gospel colleagues and the Thessalonians) **grow in their assurance that they are in it for real!**

Matthew 7:17-20

So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus **you will recognize them by their fruits.**