
The Thessalonian Epistles 20

Growing Faith and Abounding Love Baptist Church

2 Thessalonians 1:1-4

Have you ever seen those unusual names of some places of worship, like Abundant Living Faith Church; Living Fire Revival Church; Get Rich and Go to Heaven Church; We Got a Big Building Church; We Got the Most People Church; We Got the Most Popular Music Church; We're the Only Ones Going to Heaven Church; Health, Wealth, and Heaven Church, The Humble Church of Sinless Perfection, or how about a prophecy-rapture oriented church called, The See Ya, Wouldn't Want to Be Ya, Baptist Church?

Well, here is The Growing Faith and Abounding Love Baptist Church of Thessalonica, Macedonia, as evidenced by verse 3 of our text. I always thought a good name would be Candlestick Baptist Church.

As mentioned before, this epistle was probably written about a few months or so after the first epistle. It has both encouraging commendations and authoritative directives. In many ways, this church continued to be a model church for other churches to emulate.

We want to contemplate, first, **The Salutation**; next, **The Appreciation**; and last, **The Commendation**.

I. The Salutation

- A.** The beginning and end of this epistle identifies the writer and those accompanying him. We note the blessings that often begin Paul's epistles which also are sometimes, unfortunately, passed over without much thought.
- B.** As a side note, notice that greetings are Biblical, let us be sure to be proactive to extend a warm greeting to each one before and after services especially.



1 ¶ Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Once more, we see the Apostle Paul, Silvanus or Silas, and Timotheus or Timothy, and the church of the Thessalonians, as in the first epistle.

1. **Paul**, the Apostle Paul was the primary instrument God used to start the church there, as indicated in **Acts 17**, and thus, he was the principal target of the angry citizens of Thessalonica. Paul's fine example was helpful through God to mold the church at Thessalonica to be the model church they were.

2. **and Silvanus**, like Paul, Silas was a Jew with Roman citizenship, and was one of the leaders in the church at Antioch early on. Paul chose him to accompany him on his second missionary journey after his disagreement with Barnabas concerning John Mark going with them because he deserted them on the first missionary journey. It was Silas who sang praises to God with Paul at the Philippian jail.

3. **and Timotheus**, Timothy was Paul's protégé (person guided and helped esp. in his calling), and beloved son in the faith, and though a recent convert, he had grown so rapidly with such humility, that he soon became a part of the mission team of the Apostle Paul who had been sent out of the church at Antioch in Syria. Paul had so much confidence in him that he was sent to report, check on, and minister to the churches as well. Two epistles were

written to him, and he mentioned him in eight other epistles.

4 ***unto the church of the Thesalonians***, this provides yet another of many proofs that the word, ***church***, can only mean a local, visible assembly of baptized believers in Christ. Emphasis once more on the local church which is so neglected today.

5 ***in God our Father***, in this epistle, unlike the first, the word, ***our***, is used to indicate the unity and harmony and family relationship that the church along with Paul, Silas, and Timothy had. The emphasis of ***God our Father***, gives the appropriate designation of the Father's love, care, and protection, in the midst of their persecution.

6 ***and the Lord Jesus Christ***, this full title and equivalency with God the Father reaffirms Christ's deity and qualification as the Messiah. Otherwise, Paul being the strict monotheist that he was would have gone into detail why Christ wasn't God.

7 Only in Christianity are the followers considered to be ***in*** their God, as being in harmony, in unity, and partakers of the divine nature.

D ***2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*** These two blessings of grace and peace sum up our salvation. Grace gives us the gift of salvation and peace is the result of that gift. In our materialistic age we need to recognize that the only lasting blessings are summarized here.

1. **Grace unto you**, this gift is the means of God's enabling to do His will, especially in light of their persecution.
 2. **and peace**, this peace is not that the world gives, that gives a false sense of security, but that which Jesus gives, that the world does not understand, that passes all understanding, because it overcomes all persecution.
 3. **from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**, once more, this is more than some wish from the shallow worldly perspective, rather, it is a blessing that emanates from the Christian God Who is the true God.
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II. The Appreciation

- A. Thanksgiving is a trait that belongs to every child of God. Murmurings and bitterness cannot exist in the shadow of an ever-growing gratitude towards God. Unthankful, is a word that describes people in the last days as referred to in **2Timothy 3:2** *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy.*
- B. 3 **We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;** Even though there were problems at this church, that did not cause the Apostle Paul to be reluctant to express his gratitude for the church there.
 1. **We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren**, this word, **bound**, is an appropriate nuance that refers to a debt owed. Of course, all thanksgiving

ought to be ultimately directly to God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift. In this case, the church at Thessalonica certainly would not exist, especially in light of the intense opposition to them, had it not been for God's divine intervention. This thanks is in the present tense to indicate we must always be thanking God for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

a) Paul, Silas, and Timothy's thanks was not merely out of being duty bound, but, as one writer put it, *elated rather than reluctant, exuberant rather than hesitant.*

b) Another observed, *Power of appreciation is a real test of character.*

2. **as it is meet**, their gratitude was particularly proper and appropriate,

3. **because that**, the reason was,

a) ***your faith growth exceedingly***, not only did they have the initial gift of faith necessary to be a Christian, but it grew; specifically, being a church, they were part of the faith once delivered unto the saints. They were growing in orthodoxy, in doctrinal soundness, in a faith that worked and walked. This growth was overflowing.

b) ***and the charity of every one of you all toward each other abound***; their doctrinal soundness was not cold, but was mixed with the warmth of Biblical love, not just a bunch of warm

fuzzies, but warm substance that showed itself in labors of love. This was not true only of the church as a whole, but each member in particular. This love was expressed superabundantly, so there was no doubt, they were Christ's disciples. **John 13:35** ***By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.***



This was an answer to prayer as indicated by **1 Thessalonians 3:10, 2, 6** ***Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?... And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:...But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:***



Paul, Silas, and Timothy were thankful that instead of the persecution undermining the faith and drying up the springs of love in the church at Thessalonica, it grew exceedingly. The root of bitterness can spring up in the

darkness of persecution and difficulty, and drain the love and faith in a church, but it did not succeed here, nor does it have to anywhere among God's churches.



It is well known that persecution destroys false faith, but not true faith. Seeds sown in rocky soil prove to be spurious faith because no real fruit, and heat of persecution withers it away. Seeds sown in thorny ground are choked up and destroyed with the cares of this world.

III. The Commendation



The result of God working in them, and their yielding themselves to God was something to boast in God about.



4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Good news about God's work in other churches is a tremendous encouragement to both churches.



So that we ourselves glory in you, Paul, Silas, and Timothy were boasting of the church at Thessalonica due to the inworkings of God in them and the outworkings of God through them, as indicated by the prefaced thanks being unto God.



in the churches of God, not in independent Bible studies, or "para"-church organizations, or mission societies, but **churches of God**, that belonged to God, patterned and

promulgated from the first Baptist church at Jerusalem.



for your patience and faith, patience here means to bear the load. The church had considered their burdens to be given for them by God for their good and His glory, hence the patience and the faith in God, not in themselves, material possessions, or circumstances. They looked by faith for a city whose Builder and Maker is God.



in all your persecutions and tribulations, in all the varied persecutions from without and the tribulations or suffering within. Persecution is designed to strengthen the faith of true believers, as with Peter, Job, and as Paul affirms in **Romans 8**.



that ye endure, they did not run from it, or fight against it, but they endured.

By today's perverted standards, the church at Thessalonica, didn't have much going for it, the pagans had better youth programs, entertainment, social status, upscale or ornate buildings, more famous preachers, well-respected campuses, more people,...but, all that pails into insignificance in the eyes of the true Judge of all the earth—what matters is a growing faith and an abounding love with patience, even in the midst of trials and troubles.

May the Lord bless us with an exceeding growth in faith and abounding expression of love with all patience towards all saints, especially in His churches, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
