



FAITH BIBLE FELLOWSHIP of Fairfield Glade
"All Things New Series" ~ "An Exemplary People"

Text: I Thessalonians 1:5-10 ~ Pastor Dave Evangelista ~ Jan. 25, 2009

As we continue in our "All Things New" Series, we can discover just some of the reasons why these people were considered exemplary. From the very inception of this church, Paul looked to them with joy and gratitude as Christians worthy of the name.

It all began when they:

1.) Received the Word. *"Because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake."*

(I Thessalonians 1:5). The gospel came to them through the ministry of Paul and his associates. Many traveling preachers and philosophers in that day were only interested in making money off of ignorant people—not so with Paul! But the Holy Spirit used the Word in great power, and the Thessalonians responded by receiving both the message and the messengers. In spite of the persecution in Philippi, Paul and Silas had been *"bold to speak the gospel."* The people believed and were saved. They never lost an eagerness for the Word of God *(See I Thessalonians 2:13).*

2.) They followed their spiritual leaders. *"You became imitators of us and the Lord."* *(1 Thessalonians 1:6a).* So, these new believers not only accepted the message and messengers, but they also imitated their lives, this led to severe persecution. It is important that young Christians learn from mature believers to give thanks in all things. It is not enough for us as 'long-time' believers to win souls; we must also encourage new Christians to obey God's Word.

3.) They suffered for Christ. *"In spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the*

message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit."

In turning from idols to serve God, these believers angered their friends and relatives, and this led to persecution. No doubt some of them lost their jobs and families because of their new faith. Just as the Jewish unbelievers persecuted the believers in Judea, so the Gentile unbelievers persecuted the Thessalonian Christians *(See 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16).* Faith is always tested and persecution is one of the tests *(See Matthew 13:21 & 2 Timothy 3:12).*

4.) They encouraged other believers.

"And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia."

1 Thessalonians 1:7. Christians either encourage or discourage each other. This principle applies also to churches. Paul used the churches in Macedonia as a stimulus for the Corinthian church to give to the missionary offering *(See Hebrews 10:24).* In every way, the church at Thessalonica was **"EXEMPLARY."** The secret was found in their *faith, hope and love*; for these are the spiritual motivators of the Christian life. Their work of faith and labor of love expressed itself in sharing the gospel with others—*"The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it."* *(vs. 8).* It is the responsibility and privilege of each local church to share the message of salvation with the lost of the world! A recent survey of church growth indicated that 70 to 80% of church growth is *the result of friends witnessing to friends and relatives to relatives.* *(Think "Outreach").*

The "faith and work" of the Thessalonian Christians and their "patience of hope" made them an "expectant" people,

looking for their Savior's return. Note: "*For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to **wait for His Son from heaven**, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.*" 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10.

When the Thessalonians worshiped idols they had no hope! Those of us who have been brought up in the Christian doctrine cannot understand the bondage of pagan idolatry! Before Paul came to them with the gospel, they were without the true and living God! The church is the church of the living God! Paul wrote to Timothy—"*If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the **church of the living God**, the pillar and foundation of the truth.*" The living God has given us a living hope by raising His Son from the dead. If we really believe the Lord is coming, we will prove our faith by keeping busy in the Lord's work and obeying His word.

In Review: What made them Exemplary?

1.) They received the Word; 2.) They followed their spiritual leaders; 3.) They willingly suffered for Christ when necessary; 4.) They encouraged the other believers.

Our challenge: What every church should be is what every Christian should be.

Think of three "E's": *Exemplary, Enthusiastic and Expectant!* As we focus our attention on our series, "**All Things New**", let's use these three "E's" to drive the train to *change* in our personal lives. Waiting for our Lord's return is what the Bible refers to as "*The Purifying Hope*". The spirit of expectancy of Christ's return will really lift your spirits and renew your hope!