

FAITH BIBLE FELLOWSHIP of Fairfield Glade

Pastor Dave Evangelista ~ January 18, 2009

"What Every Church Should Be" ~ Text: I Thessalonians 1:1-4

Since local churches are made up of human beings, saved by God's grace, no church is perfect. But some churches are closer to the New Testament ideal than others. The church at Thessalonica was in that category. What characteristics of this church made it so ideal and such a joy to Paul's heart? Verses 1-4 of our text, speak of an elect people. The word "church" in verse one means a "called out people." Whenever you read about a "call" in the Bible, it indicates Divine election. God is calling out a people from this world (See Acts 15:13-18). Seven times in John 17 our Lord referred to believers as "those whom the Father gave to our Lord out of the world." (John 17: 2, 6, 9, 11, 12 and 24). Paul stated that he knew the Thessalonians had been chosen by God. *1 Thessalonians 1:4—for we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you.*

The doctrine of Divine election confuses some people and frightens others, yet neither response is justified. We will never understand the total concept of election this side of heaven. But we should not ignore this important doctrine that is taught throughout the Bible. Let's notice some obvious facts about Divine election:

1.) SALVATION BEGINS WITH GOD.

2 Thessalonians 2:13—"But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth." In John 15; 16—Jesus said: "You have not chosen me but I have chosen you." God the Father has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world according to Ephesians 1:4.

2.) GOD'S LOVE MADE CALVARY POSSIBLE.

It is not only God's love that saves the sinner; it is God's grace! God and His grace

give us what we do not deserve, and God and His mercy does not give us what we deserve!

3.) SALVATION INVOLVES FAITH.

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." Ephesians 2:8. Some people who heard the message believed and turned from their vain idols to the true and living God. *"For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God to serve the living and true God." 1 Thessalonians 1:9.* The Spirit of God used the word of God to generate faith. *(Note: Romans 10:17) "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*

4.) SALVATION INVOLVES THE TRINITY.

This truth will help you escape dangerous extremes that deny human responsibility or dilute Divine sovereignty—for both are taught in the Bible. As far as God the Father is concerned we were saved in Christ before the foundation of the world. As far as God the Son is concerned we were saved when He died for us on the cross. As far as God the Holy Spirit is concerned we were saved when we heard the word and trusted in Christ Jesus. At the moment of our salvation, the entire plan fell together and we became children of God—forever!

5.) SALVATION CHANGES THE LIFE.

The person who claims to be one of God's elect, but whose life has not changed, is only fooling himself. Those whom God chooses, He changes! This does not mean they are perfect but they are possessors of a new life that cannot be hidden. Faith, hope and love are the three cardinal (basic) virtues of the Christian life and three greatest evidences of salvation! Faith must

always lead to good works. We are not saved by faith PLUS works but by a faith that works! Love is also an evidence of salvation—*“the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us.” Romans 5:5.* We are taught by God to love one another. *(See 1 Thessalonians 4:9.* The third evidence of salvation is waiting for the Lord Jesus to return. *“And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.”* Faith, hope and love are evidences of election. These spiritual qualities are bound together and can come only from God!

Our challenge—every church member or attendee should examine his or her heart to determine whether he or she has truly been born again and belongs to the family of God!

