

## The Model Church - *is His Glory & Joy*

Every born-again believer would like to hear from the Lord: “*Well done thou good and faithful servant...*” when it is the time to meet the Lord. The phrase came from Matt 25:21 & Luke 19:17 in the parable of the talents where those servants who traded their talents and made extra were commended for being good and faithful. What are the activities involved in the trading of the talents are not clearly mentioned, so how would you know the service you are involved in now will qualify you to be good and faithful in serving God? Did we serve in a manner that make us comfortable in the church without looking at the examples given in the Bible to help us serve the Lord better. We can compare serving in church to taking an examination where you have some short questions and some multiple choices plus the one or a few long most important questions. One may pass the examination by knowing all the answers to the multiple choices and the short questions but in order to do well you must be able to do that one or few long questions.

We all know that Apostle Paul wrote many epistles to the churches in Asia Minor and Macedonia, and his epistles were inspired by the Holy Spirit. They are clear instructions from God for every believer to consider. Today we are calling this article the model church because you can find the main question in living our lives as believers of the Lord and succeed well when we meet him soon. We start by looking at some scripture:

The first portion we are looking at is Eph 1:12 “*that we should be the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*” Eph 1:1-11 talk about the predestination in salvation from God and verse 12 is what all those things should lead a believer to be - *the praise of his glory.*

Being *the praise of his glory* is certainly better than to be found faithful through the trading of talents. This is the commendation from Paul’s first epistle that he wrote to the church in Thessalonica. This is the model church that we are referring to – Paul’s first epistle to the model church so that other churches can look at their example and do well also. It was one of the many churches that Paul founded during his second missionary journey. In his 13 epistles, except for the church of Thessalonica, he did not comment any church that “*they are his glory and joy*” (1Thess 2:20). Paul is proud of what they did with their lives. No wonder, he wrote the first epistle to the church in Thessalonica and not to some other more prominent churches he founded earlier. ***They are his glory and joy!*** What did they do right to

get such high commendation from Paul? In Act 17:1-3,10 we are told that Paul only spent three Sabbaths with them and had to escape because the Jews in Thessalonica were persecuting them and he went to Berea (Acts 17:1-3,10). The Bereans were more noble than the Thessalonians because they search the scripture, *to be Paul's (also Christ) glory or joy!* It takes more than being good at searching the scripture to receive that comments from Paul.

To know what those believers in Thessalonica did to get this commendation and we just need to look in the first epistle to Thessalonians to discover why Paul feels so proud of them. In 1Thessalonians 1:9, we are told that they had turned from idols to serve the living God. This sound familiar to most of believers in other churches during the first century and even today, most converts in this part of the world (Asia) were idol worshippers before our conversion. Maybe the idols are more than a physical idol, it could be that your pride is your idol, your position in society, the comfort zones you tried to protect, your own desires and everything that stands in the way of you going to serve God fully.

Let's take a closer look at chapter one of the epistles to find out more of what does it means to serve the living God. We can start at verse 8, we can see that the Thessalonians' believers were spreading the word of the Lord (evangelism) and their faith in God to all in Macedonia and Achaia and every place. They were obeying the Great Commission. In verse 7, we also know that they became examples to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Their changed lives had impacted many others. In verse 6 of chapter one we were told that they became followers of Paul and his team in the suffering for the sake of the gospel. Paul was thankful for the believers at Thessalonica because they did not stop the work of their faith and their labor of love and patience of hope in Jesus (1Thess. 1:2-3). It is a lifestyle change to promote the kingdom of God and not to just keep ourselves separated because we thought that others will corrupt us, it is we who need to impact the lives of other people.

To summarize, then serving God will involve finally impacting the lives of others in our neighborhood (Macedonia and Achaia) through the obedience of the Great Commission. But first, the gospel must impact yourself so that we turn from our idols and we are assured that the gospel came to us in power and in the Holy Spirit (1Thess. 1:5) [this keep you going] and that it is your election of God (1Thess. 1:4) [God chose you]. With this conviction, then you can have the courage to change your focus for the gospel's sake and not remain as one who is ignorant and a follower of

others. We need to follow Christ and the apostle and be ready to suffer for the sake of the gospel. [1Thess. 2:2]

The action for you to consider is that do you want Paul and the Lord to commend that you are his joy and glory. Or do you want to continue to serve others – yourself, your own boss or your other idols. In the parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1-8), the Lord commended that the unjust steward did well – not for his unfaithful action of squandering his master money but for planning his future/ his exit plan.

Make your plan counts and at the end of our lives, we only have one family that counts, that is the family we inherit through our Lord, Jesus Christ. On the contrary, if you never want to change your lives for the gospel, then you will never suffer persecution and will never know your eternal family members as you only wanted to be associated with your earthly family members. Make you action counts and serve the living God! May God help everyone who is willing. Look at our model church again and learn to live it right while there is still time. Remember your decision may impact those who look up to you, like your children, your friends who respect you and your action will affect their lives too. May God bless your decision.

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