

A CONGREGATION WORTHY OF COMMENDATION

The apostle Paul bestows a wonderful commendation upon the Church which met in Thessalonica (1 The. 1:1-5). Every congregation of the Lord's Church should seek such Divine approval. For this reason, it is important and necessary that we imitate the characteristics of the Thessalonian congregation which God condones and commends.

First, the Church at Thessalonica followed God and not men. The inspired Paul records that the congregation "received the word" (1:6) and grounded their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:3). The Church at Thessalonica did not seek the endorsement of their community. These Christians were meeting amidst a wicked people who were described as not "noble" (Acts 17:11) and who caused the Church much "affliction" (1 The. 1:6). In order to find the approval of men, the Thessalonian brethren would have had to reject the Word of God and compromise their work, faith, and labor to resemble that of the men around them. The congregation at Thessalonica was commended by God because they "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42) and obeyed "God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Second, the Church at Thessalonica "sounded out the word of the Lord" (1 The. 1:8). These brethren were not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (cf. Rom. 1:16). Like the prophet Jeremiah, each Christian should be able to proclaim that the Word of God is "in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not" (Jer. 20:9, NKJV). Instead of seeking the approval of men, the Church must teach and encourage men to seek the approval of God.

Third, the Thessalonian congregation eagerly awaited the return of the Lord (1 The. 1:10). The inspired Paul writes, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7-8). We must all live our lives in such a manner as to be able to say that we are ready for Jesus to return. We can only "love His appearing" if we have been obedient to His Word, which will serve as our judge (John 12:48). If we live faithful to God's Will everyday, we can be "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God" (2 Pet. 3:12).

As a congregation of the Church for which Christ died, we should earnestly strive for the approval and commendation of God. To help us in this endeavor, God has given us inspired examples to follow. "To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." (Jude 25).

- Brad Green