

## **Lessons Learnt from the Church in Thessalonica**

Paul only spent three weeks in Thessalonica after which he was driven out of the City. But he spent over two years in Corinth.

Corinth was a much larger and more significant City and seemed much more strategic.

Yet the Church of Thessalonica had an amazing impact over the two great regions of Macedonia and Achaia, roughly covering in today's terms, all of Greece, all the Balkan countries plus Albania and Macedonia. Everybody in this great region was soon talking about Thessalonica and visiting to see and experience what God was there. Nobody, it seems, was going to Corinth because there was not the same power and presence of God there.

What was it that made the difference? What do we need to learn from this so God can come to our City the way He came to Thessalonica?

The answers are in the letters which Paul wrote to these two churches a few years later. Let's learn the lessons they teach us.

It begins with:-

### **1) The way they received God's man.**

In Thessalonica Paul was received with honor (1 Thes.1:9; see also Gal.3:1;4:14).

In Corinth he was treated with contempt (2 Cor.10:10).

### **2) The way they received Paul's word as the Word of God( 1 Thes. 2:13).**

### **3) The way they came to Faith by believing the Word (1 Thes.2:13)**

### **4) The way they became do-ers of the Word (1 Thes.1;6)**

Corinth did none of these things and were paralyzed by arrogance of mind and unbelief ( 1 Cor. Chapters 1-3).

Paul not only taught the Word, but he was a great apostolic leader who was an example in every way for them to follow. There were 12 steps:-

1) The first is in 1 Thes. Chapter 1:5 His gospel did not come in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance (absolute confidence).

The rest are in 1 Thes. Chapter 2

2) Paul was very bold and fearless in spite of his experience in Philippi. V2

3) His message was free from error, uncleanness and deceit V3

4) He spoke not as a man-pleaser but only to please God V4

5) He did not use flattering words to get their approval nor did he use manipulative words to get money out of them V5.

6) He did not seek glory from men and was humble and unassuming. He did not demand their respect even though he had a right to this as an apostle of Christ V6

7) Paul, at first, was gentle among them as a nursing mother. He fed them with milk initially and manifested Christ's unconditional love for them so as to establish a bond of love between them V7

8) He was affectionate and willing to lay his life down for them V8

9) He was a great example in his godly kingdom work ethic. He was willing to give himself and serve them and not use them for his own ends V9.

10) He manifested a blameless life of devout prayer and devotion to Jesus. He was impeccably righteous in all his ways V10.

11) Once the bond of affection had been established he could out of that bond of love begin to discipline them to bring them to maturity in Christ. He exhorted, implored and comforted (urged on) each one as a loving father V11.

12) Paul had God's passion to bring them into their inheritance, so they actually lived in God's own kingdom and glory and so walked worthy of Him V12.

But it wasn't enough for them to just admire Paul's example. They made a vital decision. They decided to imitate (literal Grk. mimetes - mimic or copy) him as he imitated (mimicked) or copied Christ.

There were 7 steps to their response:-

- 1) They received the Word for what it was, the Word of God.
- 2) It was able to do its work in them because they believed (2:13)
- 3) They became followers (mimics) of Paul and of the Lord and of the churches in Judea and just like them cheerfully suffered affliction and persecution (1:6; 2:14).
- 4) They themselves then became examples to all in Macedonia and all of Achaia (1:7).
- 5) The Word of God was sounded forth from them all over this vast region with great power and effect (1:8).
- 6) As a result their faith went out everywhere in this great region so Paul did not need to come himself and say anything (1:8).
- 7) Now the whole region was declaring the manner of entry that Paul had with them and how the Thessalonians turned from idols to serve the living God (1:9)

They were now doing the same works and living in eager expectation of Jesus' return from Heaven and were living to please Him in anticipation of that great event (1:10).