

What Are the Signs of a Healthy Church?

II Thessalonians 1:3-5

1 What are the signs of a healthy church? 2

The Lord said, *You will know my disciples by their fruit.* ¹ 3

Faith and love are the fruit of the Spirit. ² 4 Paul's prayer in First Thessalonians, chapter 3, verses 9 through 13 was that their faith and love might grow. ³ Our scripture today is an answer to that prayer! ⁵

The Thessalonian church was becoming a healthy church.

¹ John 15:4-8 - Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

² Galatians 5:22 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.

³ I Thessalonians 3:9-13 - How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

What can we learn from them to make your church a healthy one? ⁶

Our scripture today is from Second Thessalonians, chapter 1, verses 3 through 5, *We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.* ⁷

The first thing you can do to help your church to be a healthy one is to . . .

I. Make Sure Your Faith is Growing - v3

Make sure your faith is growing. Verse 3, **We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.**

8

Faith begins as an acceptance of testimony. Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 1 says, **Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.** 9

Your relationship to the Lord is part of a Covenant, or a Will. A Will might come with certain conditions. If you care for Aunt Suzy, you will receive all of your uncle's property. So, you start providing for Aunt Suzy's needs and the property becomes yours! 10 Likewise, you submit to the authority of the Lord over you and then you receive eternal life in heaven. 11

Faith matures as trust in Jesus! Faith goes from believing what's in a book to trusting a person. 12

Peter said, **Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.**⁴ 13

The second thing you can do to help your church to be a healthy one is to . . .

II. Make Sure Your Love is Growing - v3

Make sure you love is growing. Again, verse 3, **We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.**¹⁴

Love starts out as a duty!¹⁵

Let's look at the meaning of the word "love" in the original language.

The common element in all of these words is the expectation of giving!¹⁶

The first word⁵ has the idea that I give to receive satisfaction or pleasure or reward. An English

⁴ | Peter 5:7.

expression of this is, “I love hamburgers!” In Greek literature it is used in a sexual context. We get our English word “erotic” for it. This word doesn’t appear in the New Testament. ¹⁷

The second word ⁶ implies that I give because of my family relationship. So, “I love my wife because she’s my wife.” It emphasizes that special bond between family members. This word doesn’t appear in the New Testament but does appear in the Apocrypha. ^{7 18}

The third word ⁸ is expressed because of a special personal relationship or a mutual benefit. “I love my friend Bill.” This word does appear in the New Testament. ¹⁹

The fourth word ⁹ is the word we have here in our scripture. This is the type of love God wants you to develop and grow in your life. It implies that you give

⁵ ἔρως.

⁶ στέργω.

⁷ III Maccabees 5:32 & IV Maccabees 14:13.

⁸ φιλέω.

⁹ ἀγαπάω.

because there is a need to fulfill. “I want to give to help feed the starving Christians in Darfur!” ²⁰ This kind of love is given to satisfy a need because the need is there! It’s not to get anything out of it yourself.

²¹

This type of love can be commanded as an expression of gratitude to the Lord! Lord Jesus said, **But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.** ¹⁰ ²²

Matthew, chapter 25, verse 40, **The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’** ²³

Love matures by eventually becoming a joy! Nick Sklyros, a Greek short order cook, earned \$56.12 a week. He gave three quarters of his money to the needy in the slums because he enjoyed doing it! Love gives life purpose and satisfaction.

¹⁰ Matthew 5:44.

Everyone in the Thessalonian church grew in love.
What a church! ²⁴

The final thing you can do to help your church to be a healthy one is to . . .

III. Make Sure Your Endurance Overcomes Your Persecution - v4

Make sure your endurance overcomes your persecution. Verse 4, **Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.** ²⁵

This was not just passively enduring trials. **They were using the trials to strengthen their faith!** ²⁶

There are two ways to view tragedy. You can blame God for it or depend on Him for spiritual strength.

I like the message in the southern gospel song "Lord Don't Move That Mountain." ¹¹ ²⁷

¹¹ Author is Etta James.

**Lord, I Don't Bother Nobody
I Try to Treat Everybody the Same
But Every time, I Turn My Back
They Scandalize My Name. 28**

**Now When My Folks Would Slay Me
These Things They Will Try to Do
But Lord, Don't Touch Em
But Within Their Heart
Make Em Give Their Life to You. 29**

**Now Lord Don't Move My Mountain
But Give Me the Strength to Climb it
And Lord, Don't Take Away My Stumbling Blocks
But Lead Me All Around it. 30**

**Many who have lost a loved one ask God for strength
and come out of the trial spiritually mature. 31 Those of
you who successfully endure trials become examples
to other Christians! 32**

So let's look at . . .

IV. The Results of Developing These Character Traits in Your Church - v5

The results of developing these character traits in your church. Verse 5, **All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.** ³³

They are evidence of a transformed life! ³⁴

They are evidence of your worthiness of the kingdom of God! ³⁵

This is not trying to work your way to heaven. You are saved by God's grace, not your work! ¹² ³⁶

You must, however, show evidence of your redeemed life. James, chapter 2, verse 26 says, **As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.** ³⁷

¹² Ephesians 2:8-9 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.

You were created for good works, not in producing good works to get into heaven! Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 10, **For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.** ³⁸

They are evidence that God's judgment is right. ³⁹

A judgment will happen! The Lord said, **For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.** ^{13 40}

Some say Christians will not have a judgment because of John, chapter 3, verse 18, **Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.** ⁴¹ But verse 21 of that chapter says deeds will be shown! ¹⁴

¹³ Matthew 16:27.

¹⁴ John 3:21 - But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

So - what's a possible answer? ⁴² The judgment for a Christian is the evidence of a transformed life, the natural result of your conversion! ⁴³

Many will say, "Lord, Lord" but really not be saved because they talk the talk but don't walk the walk! ¹⁵ ⁴⁴ They may go through the act of Christian baptism yet never **rise to have a new life. ¹⁶ ⁴⁵**

Is your conversion to the Lord really real? Has your relationship with the Lord really made a difference?

The sign of a healthy church is spiritual healthy people!

biblelifemessages.org

¹⁵ Matthew 7:21 - Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

¹⁶ Romans 6:4 - We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.