

Marks of a Maximum Church

1 Thessalonians 1

INTRODUCTION:

- Today we dive in to chapter 1. Before we do, you were challenged to study this chapter on your own this past week. Did anyone discover anything they would like to share?
- DISCUSS: What are the elements of a great church? *Allow for some discussion...*
- The church is a miracle of God. It is a group of people bonded together in one fellowship.
- The people who make up the church are people who have been wonderfully saved by God and brought together for His purposes and for His glory.
- The church at Thessalonica was a well-grounded church that was growing in the faith.
- But even good churches have things they are working through, and Thessalonica was no exception.
- Paul had a desire to address these problems before they became too severe, and he does this in chapter 1 by sharing with his readers the marks of a maximum church according to Jesus.

BIBLE STUDY:

1. A Maximum Church is an Energetic Church (vs. 1-3)
 - a. The church is a living organism. As its members, we must do all we can to maximize the life of the Lord's Church here in Florence.
 - b. This means that we cannot make church "business as usual" and become content with the minimum. *What are signs that we are in auto-pilot when it comes to our attitudes toward church?*
 - c. Three familiar words catch our attention: faith, love, & hope. Where else do we find those words?
 - d. The energetic church depends on the work of faith.
 - i. Faith produces service for the Lord.
 - ii. Our service for the Lord is directly linked to the level of faith in our lives (James 2:17).
 - e. The energetic church also depends on the labor of love.
 - i. To labor literally means "a beating" in the Greek!
 - ii. Loving labor is labor that continues to the point of exhaustion! (Think about the implications of that point!)
 - f. The energetic church depends on the patience of hope.
 - i. Hope has the idea of endurance because we trust in the promises of God.
 - ii. The promise of the "blessed hope" is often the only thing that keeps the Christian going in the difficult days in which we live.
2. A Maximum Church is an Elect Church (vs. 4-5)
 - a. Note: The doctrine of election is a difficult, yet Biblical, doctrine.
 - b. Note the source of election (vs. 4).
 - i. God chose us to be His own before the foundation of the world.
 - ii. Before time began, God in His omniscience looked through the tunnels of history and knew who would accept and who would reject salvation offered through Christ.
 - c. Note the course of election (vs. 5).

- i. How do we know if we are “in the elect?” Simple: Have you responded to salvation’s call? The Bible tells us repeatedly that “whosoever will” can be saved. Those who accept the gift of salvation are found in God’s elect.
 - ii. God gives every person a choice. If we accept salvation we are elect.
3. A Maximum Church is an Exemplary Church (vs. 6-7)
 - a. The Thessalonians were becoming imitators (vs. 6).
 - i. The Greek word translated “followers” is literally an “imitator.”
 - ii. The Thessalonians became moral and theological followers or imitators of Paul and his companions’ example.
 - iii. Note that Paul points out the ultimate model is Jesus Himself – “and of the Lord.”
 - b. The Thessalonians were also demonstrators (vs. 7).
 - i. They were also to be “examples to all that believe.”
 - ii. The Greek word is interesting and was commonly used to communicate the result of the blow of a hammer – the “mark” left on an object.
 - iii. The Thessalonians had been transformed by the Gospel – they became a “mark” to others who believe.
4. A Maximum Church is an Evangelistic Church (vs. 8)
 - a. An evangelistic church is branded with three specific marks.
 - b. The first mark of an evangelistic church is information – “the word of the Lord.”
 - i. The content of our message is God’s Word.
 - ii. God has a message for the world and the church is to be His mouthpiece.
 - c. The second mark of an evangelistic church is communication – “sounded out.”
 - i. The idea pertains to a trumpet blast.
 - ii. The church is to sound out the Gospel message to all who will believe.
 - d. The third mark of an evangelistic church is reputation – “faith to God” was “spread around.”
 - i. The Thessalonians were known by their evangelistic reputation.
 - ii. Far too often we are known for our large budgets, massive programs, etc. They were known for telling people about Jesus.
5. A Maximum Church is an Expectant Church (vs. 9-10)
 - a. One of the key truths that Paul communicates in this letter is the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus.
 - b. His Second Coming is a return – “His Son from heaven.” We are not looking as much for an event as we are a Person – the Son of God!
 - c. His Second Coming is a rescue – “deliver us.” When Christ appears, He appears to rescue us.
 - d. The Second Coming is our blessed hope – it is what we are looking for as we endure these difficult days.

APPLICATION:

- How well do you personally contribute to each of these five characteristics in our church? Discuss ways we can contribute in each of these areas.
- One thing we can all do is have our eyes open for people to invite and to witness to as we go throughout our week. This could be an opportunity to promote Team 13:3.
- How well do you live with Christ’s Second Coming in view? What impact can this thought have in our daily lives?