

EFFECTIVE CHURCHES IN THE 21st CENTURY
1 THESSALONIANS 2:9-20

Introduction:

1. I am convinced that many church members feel that by simply coming to church is all that is necessary to please God, and I am equally convinced that some feel lonely, unloved and unneeded while sitting in the midst of the congregation.
2. Do you feel as though you are a part of this church? Do you feel this church cares about you, or all they care about is that you fill up an empty pew?
3. Sometimes we can get lost and feel alone in a crowd, but I want you to know that you are needed in this church, and that there is a place for you in the ministry of this church.
4. Now, if you are unwilling to be a part, then nothing I say is going to convince you otherwise.
5. I want to show you how this church can become an effective force in this community.
 - A. In **v. 13** the phrase, "effectively works," means "to put forth power."
 - B. In spite of the tremendous difficulties that faced the Thessalonians, they became followers of the churches of God which were in Judea, some 1200 miles away. **v. 14**

I. CONSIDER THE EARLY CHURCH IN JERUSALEM.

- A. In the beginning of church history, there was only one church, that in Jerusalem.
- B. At first it was composed of frightened, and sometimes egotistical and crude men.
- C. What happened to change them? It was Jesus' resurrection. **Mark 16:14-20*****
- D. It is no wonder the disciples had something to get excited about. They had seen the crucified Savior risen from the dead! The words He spoken to them became a reality. **John 14:19** *A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.*
- E. They not only started preaching, they couldn't quit. Acts 4:20 *For we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard.*
- F. After His resurrection, Jesus gave the commission to His church to go into all the world. **Matthew 28:19-20** *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

II. CONSIDER THE RAPID GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE WITNESS OF THAT ONE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM.

- A. A few years after Jesus gave His commission we see a church in, of all places, Rome. **Romans 1:7** *...to all that are in Rome, called to be saints...*
- B. Imagine the growth. From the 12 to 120 in that upper room, to 3000 on the day of Pentecost, to upwards of 25,000 in Jerusalem alone!
- C. Then on to Antioch, Iconium, Thyatira, Philippi, Athens, Corinth, all the way to Rome.
- D. In spite of the barrier of distance, the entire Mediterranean are became the cradle of Christianity within 25 years!
- E. In spite of the cultural differences and the hardships and persecutions, the gospel continued to penetrate into ungody societies.
- F. Some of the greatest testimonies to the courage of the missionaries we have are those given by their enemies. **Acts 4:17** *But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."';* **5:28** *...saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!";* **17:6** *But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the*

marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

III. CONSIDER THE DANGER OF TRYING TO SHOW THE EARLY CHURCHES AS PERFECT, WHEN THEY WEREN'T.

A. The writers of the NT reveal to us that the early churches faced serious problems from within.

B. Lying, racism, and uninformed leaders were major problems to be encountered.

C. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he shows their imperfections:

1. Divisions. 1:10
2. They were exalting human wisdom. 1:18
3. There was spiritual immaturity. 3:1
4. There was gross immorality. 5:1
5. Lawsuits were being brought between church members. 6:1
6. There were wrong ideas about marriage. 7:1-2
7. Problems arose regarding food offered to idols. 8:1
8. There were complaints about paying preachers. 9:1
9. Drunkenness in the church. 11:21
10. Jealousy over spiritual gifts. 12:1
11. False teachings about the resurrection of Jesus. 15:12

D. We might not consider them to be a scriptural church today, but even with all their problems and sins, Jesus considered them to be scriptural. **1 Corinthians 1:1-2** *Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:*

E. To hold the NT as our guide in church growth would NOT include emulating those practices of the Corinthian church.

F. Rather, it is the teachings of the Word of God concerning the errors of this, and other churches, that helps us in our direction today.

Conclusion:

1. What is needed today is not emulation of those churches, but sold-out, committed church members, believing that the same Holy Spirit who empowered those early churches still empowers churches today.
2. What is needed is church members partaking in the ministry, doing the work God intends them to be doing. Witnessing and leading people to Jesus. Getting to know your neighbors and co-workers, and them being bold in telling them of the Savior.
3. Only when you truly believe and are committed, will this church become effective in this community.