



A LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR: JUNE 2021 by Lee Shipp

THE CHURCH YOU LOVE TO PASTOR

Why does a man become a minister? Although people are a source of joy, gladness, and fulfillment they can also be the cause of inexplicable frustration and grief.

Paul was grieved over his churches. To his horror he discovered incest, immaturity, false doctrines, false teachers, abuse, and the falling away of believers.

Jesus' very own churches in Revelation are filled with problems. Jesus' observations and warnings to the churches in Revelation reveal horrible compromises: division, hate, doctrinal impurity, immorality, false teachers, dissention, haters of God, demon possessed leaders, even the synagogue of Satan.

In a church there are dozens, even hundreds, of diverse personalities. God refers to believers as sheep - which can be stubborn, easily scared or spooked, and misled. The complaints that the preacher must deal with are as numerous as there are people.

Why does a man do it? Is it the money? Is he insane? No! He is called and believes he is the most honored man in the entire world. "God asked me to!" is his reply.

Some of my fondest memories are right here in the church, watching so many born into the kingdom of God, seeing our children surrendering their lives to the mission field, watching as families cry out to God in the prayer meetings, not to mention the memories of working together on mission trips and evangelistic outreaches.

GIVING THANKS FOR THE CHURCH

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in

our prayers" (1 Thessalonians 1:2). Now that is a great church! You know you're blessed as a pastor when you're constantly thanking God for the people you get to pastor.

What was it about the Thessalonians? Imagine Paul out on the mission field, the hardships and trials, toiling night, and day. Sometimes he may have wondered why? But the Thessalonians came to his memory, and he was strengthened and began to thank God.

It gives the pastor great joy to see the life of Jesus formed within those he is called to serve. No doubt Paul received comfort by the faith of those who were steadfast to Jesus, while he suffered from those whose faith was failing.

After a period of at least a year, Paul writes back to them and the note of joy is still in his heart as he thinks about the church of the Thessalonians, "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure"

WHAT MADE THE CHURCH SPECIAL?

There were three things the Thessalonians were doing which summarize their devotion: their work of faith, labor of love, and their patient hope in Christ.

It was seen in the way they received the truth. "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake"

They believed that God was actually speaking through these men. Few things please the pastor more than to know people believe God is speaking. By this, he knows that the intense study and hours of prayer are not falling on deaf ears.

It wasn't "Amen's," that Paul was after. It was not the fact that the Thessalonians agreed with his doctrine, but that his doctrine had a profound effect on their lives causing them to "...become followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost"

TRUSTING THE GOD OF THE PASTOR

Paul was not rejoicing because his ego was being fed. Paul rejoiced that the Thessalonians understood the authority God placed in the leadership. How many times has the pastor counseled an individual or family, providing ample scripture, only to have that person not apply any of his council? Oh, the grief of wasted time and the unfolding misery those people have to live in because they did not continue in his oversight.

*in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you" (2 Thessalonians 3:4, 6-7).*

## **A CHURCH FOLLOWING GOD**

Paul also rejoiced because they followed him and the Lord. *1 Thessalonians 1:6 states, "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord ..." Why did Paul rejoice that they followed him first and God second? Paul's joy was not that he was preeminent over God but that the Thessalonians were maturing in the Lord. At first the baby believer needs assistance, someone physically present in his or her life to encourage, disciple, and teach. But as the believer grows, this type of babysitting is not as essential. The Thessalonians demonstrated this maturity as Paul would demonstrate to them.*

Do you recall the frustration Paul expressed to the Corinthians and the Hebrews because they failed to grow in the Lord and become profitable? Well, the Thessalonians were growing. At first, Paul was very concerned about their walk with the Lord. Because he was forced out of Thessalonica, he wondered about the well-being of the church, *"Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus, ... For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain. But now when Timotheus came from you unto us and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you" (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2, 5-6).*

His fears were removed, and joy settled in as he learned how profitable they had become. They became followers of the Lord, even to the extent that God Himself became their teacher, *"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thessalonians 4:9).*

This brings the pastor real joy in appreciating that the reason the people are giving, tithing, and serving is because God is telling them to and not because he has to keep asking and instructing them.

## **EXAMPLES OF FAITH**

The Thessalonians were also an example of the faith everywhere! *"So that ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thessalonians 1:7-9).*

Imagine having a church affecting your entire city with the reality of God and His gospel. A pastor's joy is strong when he sees his people didn't just stop drinking and smoking, but they stopped doing that to serve the Living God. The believers did not just stop being bad, they actively became doers of faith.

How many people sit on the pews having quit bad habits but never going on to do things for God. How grievous this is to the minister. Church members may not drink any more, swear any more, and smoke anymore; but please don't just sit there – serve God. Do something for the kingdom. We Christians are Christians first and everything else after that. Our first allegiance is to the kingdom of God. Our citizenship is in heaven.

The Thessalonians were the talk of the town! No, people were not talking about their music program or youth group. The word around town about the Thessalonians was not in regard to the new lighting the church bought or how many people were now attending, or how wonderful their new dramas were. People were not talking about their pretty pews or beautiful new sanctuary. These "User Friendly" gimmicks don't matter to God and dead men.

## **A JOYFUL CHURCH**

Paul said that the Thessalonians were known for their benevolence, gospel preaching, abounding love to all men, honesty, refusal to render evil for evil, rejoicing all the time, praying without ceasing, refusing to quench the Spirit, and thanking God in every situation! This is the church you love to pastor.

This demeanor is not easy. It certainly is contrary to our flesh. However, if we live by the power of the Holy Ghost, it is possible! George Mueller would not preach until his heart was happy in the grace of God. It is well known that the expressed joy in the Moravians convinced John Wesley of the reality of their religion and helped to

bring him a short time later to a state of true conversion.

Churches who realize they owe it to the world to be supernaturally joyful are the kind of churches that make pastors rejoice evermore. Ours is a day of gimmicks that don't work. And when men's hearts are failing them for fear of those things that are coming upon the earth, we Christians are strategically placed to display a happiness that is not of this world and to exhibit a peace that will be a little bit of heaven on earth.

## **A LIVING CHRIST IN A LIVING CHURCH**

Christ in you is still the test of a true church. True peace comes, not by a retreat from the world, but by the overpowering presence of Christ in the life. One prophet of old said, *"I reject a heaven that I must enter by shutting my eyes to the sufferings of my fellow men. I choose a broken heart rather than any happiness that ignores the tragedy of human life and human death. I am determined that I shall go down to the grave or up into God's heaven mourning for the lost and the perishing. If I cannot prevent their moral suicide, I shall at least baptize them with my human tears."*

The Thessalonians lived expecting Jesus at any moment. When you have a church living like that, how could there be anything else but joy? Imagine how differently the people would live today if we really believed Jesus was about to come. You would never have financial problems in the church because people would give generously to lay up treasure for themselves in heaven. The prayer meetings would be packed. Our hands would be free of the blood of all the men around us because we would believe that time is of the essence, and we cannot delay the work of the kingdom any longer!

Oh, for church people who know they are not home yet. Like the veteran missionaries who were coming back to the States. The couple had lived their lives for God on the field. Their time overseas had come to an end. Their bodies could go no further. Their bodies were scarred by the rigors of sacrifice and toiling for souls. The gentleman's wife had contracted a sickness. They had to come back to the States. An Olympic team of athletic heroes also occupied the plane they charted. As the plane taxied to the terminal, it was an overwhelming sight to see the crowds of people gathered to cheer and celebrate their Olympic champions. The doors to the plane opened, the crowd became frenzied, and out strolled the Olympians. Oh, it was a sight to behold. However, as the seasoned missionary disembarked, his wife could tell that something was disturbing him. She questioned him, *"Dear, what is bothering you?"* He replied, *"Oh, I am all right. Just a little shaken up inside. You see, these Olympians are heroes. They won a game and the all the people back home come out to cheer and celebrate. We have won souls for the last thirty-five years. Nobody is here for us. There is no celebration or joyful welcomes. It's just a little difficult right now, but I'll be fine."* His wife took his hand and holding it tightly gave this stirring reply, *"Honey, we are not home yet!"*

Our motive as the church is not to please the preacher. We certainly live only for the pleasure of God. However, it is a pretty good sign that if the man of God is well pleased, then the God of that man is being glorified!

## **FOOTNOTES:**

*-Pastors are the men sent by God to watch over our souls (Ephesians 4); we honor God by honoring them.*

*-The pastor is there, not for a job or for the easy life. He has the most demanding of all jobs, the oversight of the body of Christ. Most pastors will live with incredible abuse, rejection, and opposition. He does not become a pastor because it is lucrative or good for his health. He becomes a pastor because he has been chosen, called, and commanded to the highest honor on this planet – to watch over the souls of God's dear children (Hebrews 13:17). However, those pastors who persevere and by faith see the grace of God transform their congregations (into mature believers who love and seek after God) will enjoy many rich and eternal blessings.*

*-Believers are to obey those who have the rule over God's House, considering the word pastors speak and following the faith they demonstrate.*

*-Disrespect towards the pastor brings damage to the individual who refuses to obey their oversight (Hebrews 13:7,17).*

*-For the pastor to know that the reason people are giving, tithing, serving, and preaching is because God is telling them to and not because he has to keep asking and instructing them to do so brings great joy.*

*-A pastor's joy is strong when he sees his people didn't just stop drinking and smoking, but they stopped doing that to serve the Living God. The believers did not just stop being bad, they actively became doers of faith.*

*-Churches who realize they owe it to the world to be supernaturally joyful are the kind of churches that make pastors rejoice evermore. Christians are strategically placed to display a happiness that is not of this world.*

*-True peace comes not by a retreat from the world but by the overpowering presence of Christ in the life. Oh, for Church people who know they are not home yet!*