

Sermon Outlines The Church's Report Card

Reading:

2 Thessalonians 1

This chapter, which we are calling a report card on the congregation, is divided into three parts:

- a) Thanks (v. 1-4)
- b) Troubles (v. 4-10)
- c) Trophies (v. 11-12)

We can use this chapter to prepare a report card on our own congregation while we reflect on the Lord's dealings with us over the last year or so.

In verse 1 three pastors give their thanks for this church at Thessalonica. Paul, Silvanus and Timotheus are in agreement to send this word of critique.

Churches are always under assessment. We are not robots, nor factories turning out materials or physical goods. We are Christians. We are worshippers and we align ourselves with the church of Christ to enter into her witness for the Lord. The church is a living organism. She is like a tree that must grow, a sheep that needs shepherding, a vine that needs dressed, and a child in God's family that needs love and guidance.

How are we doing as a church? What does our report card look like?

Thanks (Verses 3-4)

- 1) For growing faith (v. 3)
 - a) How would that be known? How is it evidenced? It was not a hidden thing, for it was growing exceedingly. What is on the inside comes out. You cannot hide the new nature. You cannot suppress the grace of Christ in the believer's soul. When you are saved you will know it and you will show it.
- 2) For charity abounding (v. 3)
 - a) That is the love "toward each other." This was practical Christianity. It is real, deep, meaningful. It is more than Hi and bye. It is caring for each other's Christian witness. There have been no fights. There have been no offenses. God's grace is enabling us to show true Christian love to one-another.
- 3) For patience and faith (v. 4)
 - a) These two graces are put together. This is the Christian attitude to troubles. It is testifying to God's peace and contentment in the midst of disappointments and trials. You pass the test of a grace-filled believer. I can bear witness to this too and thank God for your testimony and your steadfastness and patience - steadfast endurance.

Troubles (Verses 4 -10)

What are the things you endure while part of this small church?

- 1) We endure smallness.
 - a) Attendance can be erratic. People come and go. We think we are building numbers up then they drop down again.
 - b) Prayer meetings are attended sporadically. On Sunday afternoons especially, prayer times before the evening service only a faithful few come to pray.
- 2) We endure sameness.
 - a) We have traditional worship with the same Bibles, same hymns, organ music, same times, same format.

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- b) We keep to the three P's - praise, prayer and preaching.
- 3) We endure shame for Kingdom's sake (v. 5)
 - a) Because you identify with Christians and with God's people and the call to righteousness, which is to live godly.
 - b) We put our lives on the line to serve a holy God in a wicked and fallen world.
 - c) To stand out from the wicked who know not God and are under God's vengeance (v. 6-10)

Trophies (Verses 11-12)

- 1) "Worthy of this calling" - Fitted to glorify the Lord.
 - a) The preacher has a calling to proclaim Christ.
 - b) The elder has a calling to faithfully shepherd the flock.
 - c) Members have a calling to support the ministry of the church - for their own good and for the good of the whole congregation.
- 2) **All for God's good pleasure** (v. 11)
- 3) **All for Jesus' name** (v. 12)
- 4) **All through Grace** (v. 12)
 - a) All of our worship and ministry is through the power of the Lord working in us.
 - b) We are trophies to the Lord's power at work in us.
 - c) This is our strength for the tasks to which the Lord has called us.
 - d) His grace, or power, working in us enables us to glorify the Lord in our service for Him.
 - e) Past help gives us future hope.

We are waiting for the return of the Lord (v. 10). We are trophies for His glory.
"When He shall come to be glorified in His saints . . ."

We can turn this to prayer for God to "fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness" in us (v. 11). So, as we have reflected on things of the past year, let us pray on and work on for God's grace to serve Him. It shall be worth it all when we see Christ!

. . . . Ian Goligher