

# Church Unlimited

## Real Church – Part 8

In one way or another Satan has always tried to limit and contain the church. However, it is a historical, verifiable fact that Jesus' real church is unlimited and uncontainable. The gates of hell cannot prevail against the church.

### Opening Text: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-8

They were an uncontained church. From them the word of God '*sounded forth*'. Their faith in God had '*gone out*'.

This is a great example of an unlimited, unrestricted, and uncontained church. They became an example to all the other churches. They are a great example for us to follow today. They experienced much affliction but they were not restricted by the pressure they experienced.

Now in verse 3 Paul says, "*remembering without ceasing*". There were at least 5 wonderful things worth remembering and studying about this church.

### 5 things were remembering:

#### 1. Their uncontained faith

**v. 3** - *remembering without ceasing your work of faith*

**v.6** – *your faith toward God has gone out*

They did not lose their faith amid pressure, but their faith was working. Their faith was alive and in operation. In fact, their faith was growing in the middle of difficulties:

**2 Thessalonians 1:3-4** - *We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, 4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure*

#### 2. Their uncontained love

**V.3** speaks of their "*labour of love*". The text we read in 2 Thessalonians 1:3 says, *the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.*

Their love was worth remembering. They were known and remembered because of their love. They kept loving in the face of affliction and their love was not just in words. It was also in actions – "*remembering... your labour of love*"

**1 John 3:18** - *My little children, let us not love in word or tongue, but in deed and in truth.*

- **John 13:35** - *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

- **1 John 3:14<sup>a</sup>** - *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.*

I believe that we all need to take intentional steps to grow in this area.

### **3. Their uncontained hope**

**V. 3** - *remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope*

Their hope, their “expectation of good”, was uncontained. Their expectation was unrestricted. They abounded in hope and patience.

### **4. Their uncontained joy**

**V.6<sup>b</sup>** - *... having received the word of God in my affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit*

Their joy was not contained, suppressed, or limited by their afflictions. Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit in us and does not depend on favourable circumstances. This is a supernatural joy – it comes from the Holy Spirit.

The joy of the Lord is our strength. It is not just a silly emotion but a powerful spiritual force in the tough places of life.

### **5. An uncontained Gospel**

**V.5** - *For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance,*

- a) The Gospel among them was not limited to words only. Not. It was demonstrated in its fulness: *in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.* This was a full gospel!
- b) ‘Uncontained’ also in the sense that when this Gospel was announced to them, it was not restricted by their unbelief but was received with faith. **1 Thess. 2:13** says that they welcomed it and they believed it. Unlike the Jews:

**Hebrews 4:2** - *For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.*

Unbelief could have limited the impact of the Word in their lives (**Psalms 78:41** - *they limited the Holy one...*) but it didn’t. They received the word with faith.

- c) Lastly, this Gospel was ‘uncontained’ in the sense that it didn’t stop with them but was released from them to other places. It went from Thessalonica to Macedonia to Achaia and from there to every place.

**V.8** - For from you **the word of the Lord has sounded forth**, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. **Your faith toward God has gone out**, so that we do not need to say anything.

They did not keep the Gospel to themselves. It went forth – *in every place!*

The real church has an ‘expansive vision’! That is why we consider every CG an open door of the church in the community. We want to continually enlarge our network of Connect Groups across our city and communities.

The Gospel did not stay silenced in their hearts but is **sounded** forth. The great 19<sup>th</sup> century preacher Charles Spurgeon, said, *they became trumpeters of the Gospel.*

*Your faith has gone out* - beyond the walls of the church. God wants us to be a church without walls.

**Zechariah 2:4** – “*Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it*”

The idea of a city so large that walls couldn’t contain its people, is a great picture of the vision of Jesus for His church: so far reaching and large that no one building can contain it: a church without walls!