

## in this issue >>>

News Brief  
Spiritual Encouragement  
Major Prayer Needs  
Zoom Meetings



Issue

**SIXTEEN**

Ebenezer Baptist Church,  
6858 Fraser Street,  
Vancouver, B.C.,  
V5X 3V1

Tel: 604-324-7674  
www.rockofhelp.com

Friday, August 14, 2020 – Ebenezer Baptist Church, Vancouver

# EBC Update



## News Brief

- ❖ **Online:** Our services are all available [here](#) on YouTube. To subscribe to our YouTube channel, go to the same link and press the “subscribe” button. Services can also be accessed through our Facebook page and website. The next will be on [August 16 at 10:30 a.m.](#) Pastor John will be speaking on “The Most Positive Ambition” (Mark 10:32–45).
- ❖ **Public Worship:** We resume on [September 13](#). Please watch this space for further details.
- ❖ **Prayer Chain:** Confidential prayer requests can be made by phone or email to Sharon Iseli (604-244-1636) or Freda Ross (604-326-5123).
- ❖ **Pastoral Care:** Pastor John is on vacation from [August 17-September 8](#). Please contact the church office or one of the Elders in the event of a pastoral emergency.
- ❖ **EBC Update:** The next issue of “EBC Update” will be published in mid-September.

## Spiritual Encouragement

*“For we know, brothers [and sisters] loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.” (1 Thess. 1:4-5)*

No-one needs me to tell you that it’s sometimes neither easy nor uplifting to be part of church life. When times get really tough, some may even wonder why they bother at all

But do you know what I do, whenever I’m tempted to start thinking that way? I try to remember the basics of gospel ministry, as the apostle Paul describes some of them in the first chapter of one of his earliest letters, 1 Thessalonians.

The church in Thessalonica is clearly one that Paul founded and he is both proud and thankful for it. So he begins his letter, in verses 2 and 3, by thanking God for the people’s “work,” “labour” and “endurance” in their faith.

More than this, the apostle praises the Thessalonians for their willingness to respond to and live out the gospel. He commends them for their discipleship in verses 6 and 7, and he tells how they’ve become a role-model to other congregations in Macedonia and Achaia.

They have no real need for his personal commendation, Paul says, although he freely gives it. For as we read in verses 9 and 10, others have taken it upon themselves to share the story. “They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,” the apostle says, “and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath.”

Later in 1 Thessalonians, Paul has some strong meat to share, as he warns them about various doctrinal dangers. But his opening words are very affirming and conciliatory. As he so often

does in his ministry—and we could all learn from his example—the apostle builds people up and encourages them before he starts trying to recommend change of any kind.

And what is the main cause for praise? We have already seen that it's ultimately the Thessalonians' positive response to the gospel. But we can also trace Paul's argument back one step further.

For why did they respond so well in the first place? Not because of any inherent virtue or good works on their part. Like the rest of us, they were all spiritually helpless before they came to Christ. And they had no hope of salvation without God's direct intervention.

No, what made the difference was the good news of the gospel itself and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in opening them to and convincing them of its truth. Which brings us back to the verses that I quoted at the outset. "For we know, brothers [and sisters] loved by God, that he has

***"Our message came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction."***

chosen you, because our gospel [message] came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction."

"Our message came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." There surely lies the ultimate prayer wish of every minister worth his salt, for without the Spirit's work through our ministry, it will achieve very, very little. Yet there also surely lies our greatest source of encouragement, whatever our situation.

If the business that we're in is God's business and if the work that we're about is God's work in and through us, then it will bear fruit, and fruit that will last. Our calling is simply to be faithful to what God asks, trusting God to bring the increase.

That's what Paul did in Thessalonica and he was able to rejoice in the outcome of changed hearts and transformed lives that we read about



in 1 Thessalonians 1. And God is doing the very same things today.

Whatever may be happening in the church or anywhere else, it can do us all good to go back to basics. It can be vital to remember how priceless and powerful, how radical and renewing, how rich and rewarding gospel ministry can be.

After all, that's how the Lord changed our lives when we first came "to serve the living and true God" of verse 9. And as we are faithful to his leading, that's what he promises to do and is doing for many, many others as they get to know Christ for themselves.

***Pastor John Oakes***

## Major Prayer Needs

1. Our sick & shut-ins
2. Our online services
3. All who are anxious, depressed, or lonely
4. Government leaders
5. Doctors, nurses and care workers, especially those from our own community
6. The complete defeat of COVID-19



1. All Ebenezer children are welcome to join a weekly half-hour Sunday School on Zoom at 11:00 a.m. every Sunday. Please contact the church office or Sharon Tobert for more details.
2. The Ebenezer youth and young adults weekly Zoom online fun night on Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. is now on summer break and will resume in September.
3. The Friday Zoom Bible Study and Prayer Meeting is now on summer break and will resume in September.
4. The Zoom Women's Prayer Meeting, hosted by Rhea Ravanera, which has been meeting Saturdays at 5:00 p.m. is on summer break. Watch this space for details about future prayer meetings.