***The Gospel and Its Benefits***

**The Gospel Difference, 1 Thessalonians 1:3-10 April 16, 2023**

***We continually remember before our God and Father  
your work produced by faith, you labor prompted by love,  
and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus.  
For we know, brothers 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.***

**Colossians 1:6**

**Why not?**

*Paul, Silas and Timothy,*

*To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:*

*Grace and peace to you*

*2 We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. 3 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, 9 for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.*

1 Thessalonians 1

Some have suggested . . . .

1. that Paul could not have sounded so “Paulish” this early in his writing. Why not?

2. that the Thessalonians could not yes have experienced “severe suffering.” Why not?

3. that the Thessalonians could not have in four months “become known everywhere.” Why not?

4. that Paul’s teaching about the second coming is too well developed. Why not?

Diagram

Description automatically generated

**How the cross and resurrection changed the gospel**

*14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”*

Mark 15:37-47

*When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. 2 As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,” he said. 4 Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.*

Acts 17 (see also the important sermons in Acts: 2:14-39, 4:8-12,   
maybe most importantly 13:16-41, 17:22-31, and the New Testament sermon-epistles)

1. The “good news” has always been that God is breaking into this broken world, but this time is  
going to be different – God himself is breaking in!

2. The early church made the cross and resurrection the center of their “God is breaking in” story

3. Every chapter in this letter touches on the second coming, the cross, the resurrection and how   
these build the faith, hope and love of the Thessalonian church

**Because the gospel came to us . . . .**

*4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.*

1 Thessalonians 1

1. Not only with words

*13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.*

1 Thessalonians 2

2. Power, the Holy Spirit and a new kind of conviction is the foundation of a transformed life

*They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.*

1 Thessalonians 1 (see Romans 12:1-2;

3. Now is when we talk about how the second coming, the resurrection and the cross

*“Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. 27 The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. 28 Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. 29 When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead, 31 and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.*

*32 “We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers 33 he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus . . . .*

*38 “Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. 39 Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.*

Acts 13:26-38

4. This gospel makes Paul, Silas and Timothy so sure about God’s love and our election

***19****Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,* ***20****by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,* ***21****and since we have a great priest over the house of God,* ***22****let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.* ***23****Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.* ***24****And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,* ***25****not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

Hebrews 13

**Resources for reading 1 Thessalonians**

The poster for 1 Thessalonians can be found at [*bibleproject.com*](file:///I:\Lent%202023\bibleproject.com)

Doug’s favorite 1 Thessalonians commentaries include   
Charles Wannamaker’s NIGTC volume (Eerdmans, 1990)  
Hendricksen’s *Expository Commentary* (Baker, 1955)  
Robert Thomas’ volume in *Expositors’ Bible Commentary* (Zondervan, 1981)

John MacArthur has a very interesting sermon, “The Ideal Church” at [*https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/1317A*](https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/1317A)

Spurgeon has important sermons on this text at [www.spurgeongems.org/vols10-12/chs648.pdf](http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols10-12/chs648.pdf) , [*http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols28-30/chs1806.pdf*](http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols28-30/chs1806.pdf%20) and [*www.spurgeongems.org/vols34-36/chs2076.pdf*](www.spurgeongems.org/vols34-36/chs2076.pdf)

Alexander Maclaren has commentary on 1 Thessalonians 1 at [*https://www.preceptaustin.org/maclaren\_on\_1thessalonians#faith*](https://www.preceptaustin.org/maclaren_on_1thessalonians%23faith)

Thomas Schreiner has a wonderful essay on the optimism in 1 Thessalonians at [*http://www.sbts.edu/documents/tschreiner/3.3\_editorial.pdf*](http://www.sbts.edu/documents/tschreiner/3.3_editorial.pdf)

R. M. McCheyne has a wonderful short piece on this text at [*https://www.monergism.com/gospel-not-word-power-1-thessalonians-15*](https://www.monergism.com/gospel-not-word-power-1-thessalonians-15)

# Gospel Not in Word But in Power - 1 Thessalonians 1:5

### R. M. McCheyne at [*https://www.monergism.com/gospel-not-word-power-1-thessalonians-15*](https://www.monergism.com/gospel-not-word-power-1-thessalonians-15)

'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." - 1 Thessalonians 1:5.

Thrice happy minister who can address his people in these delightful words. Oh! that all our ministers could with truth say this. Why is it not so? Surely if we are determined, like Paul, "to know nothing among them but Christ Jesus and him crucified"; if we are filled with the same Holy Spirit, if we live the same devoted life, and carry the same message night and day with tears, we ought to be able to use these precious words. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." The day of Pentecost was the time of the first-fruits. The day of ingathering is yet to come. The apostles had the former rain. We wait for the time of the latter rain.

1. Let us meditate on an unsuccessful ministry. The gospel comes to the people in word only. How often a faithful minister preaches the gospel, and the people seem to drink it in with joy! A beam of natural eloquence lights up all he says, or he has a gentle pathetic strain which rivets their attention. But no saving effects are seen to follow. No hearts are broken, no souls added to the church of such as shall be saved. So it was with Ezekiel: "Lo! thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not" (Ezekiel 33:32). These are they that receive the word into stony places; they hear the word, and anon, with joy receive it, yet have they not root in themselves, but endure only for a while.

Oh! my soul, art thou contented to receive the gospel in word only? Can a hungry man be fed by the smell of the viands? Or can a beggar turn rich by hearing the sound of money? And can my hungry soul find rest by hearing the tinkling of the gospel cymbals? Alas! it is a fearful thing to drop into hell under the sound of gospel mercy.

But there are some who not only hear the gospel, but know the gospel; and yet it comes to them in word only. How many a child is brought up under godly parents, well catechized in divine truth, well disciplined in the Bible? They understand the gospel scheme. They have all knowledge; no point is new to them. And yet they have no spiritual sight; no tasting and seeing that Christ is good; no rock below their feet; no sitting with great delight under the shadow of the apple-tree. Ah! these are the most miserable of all unconverted hearers. They will sink lower than Capernaum. Ah! how many children of ministers, how many sabbath-school teachers, how many preachers of the gospel may know, that the gospel has come to them in word only, and never in power. Alas! how sad is it to perish pointing to the city of refuge, to preach to others, and then to be a castaway. But there is a more excellent way. Turn we now to meditate on -

2. A successful ministry. "Our gospel came unto you in power." What a powerless thing the gospel sometimes appears. The minister is half ashamed of it. The people slumber under its most affecting statements. Again, at another time, the gospel is evidently "the power of God unto salvation". An unseen power accompanies the preached word, and the sanctuary is felt to be the house of God, and the very gate of heaven. Then the word of Jeremiah is fulfilled: "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23.29). Then stout-hearted sinners are awakened. Old, and middle-aged, and little children, are made to cry. What must I do to be saved? An awful stillness pervades the assembly. The arrows of the King of Zion are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies, and the people are brought down under Him. Oh! sinner, has the gospel come thus in power to you? Has the hammer of the word broken your rocky heart? Has the fire of the word melted your icy heart?

Has the voice that is "like the noise of many waters" spoken peace to your soul?

"Our gospel came unto you .... in the Holy Ghost." It is He, the third person of the blessed Godhead, that makes the gospel come with power. It was He who "moved upon the face of the waters", when this world was without form and void, and brought life and beauty out of a dead world, Genesis 1:2. It is He that moves over the face of nature still, when the winter is past, and brings the fresh life of spring out of the cold bosom of the ground, Psalm 104:30. But most of all, it is the Holy Spirit's work to take away the vail from the hearts of sinners, so that they turn to the Lord, 2 Corinthians 3:16. The carnal mind has got such enmity to God, the unconverted sinner is so dead in trespasses and sins, the natural man is so stupid in divine things, that there must be the work of the Almighty Spirit - quickening, enlightening, and making willing - before the sinner will cleave to Jesus.

Oh! sinner, has the Holy Spirit come to you? Sweet is the peace, which they enjoy who are taught by Him. When it is a dry time, ministers labour in vain; they spend their strength for nought and in vain. They feel like one standing on the sea-shore, speaking to the hard rocks, or the raging waves, or the tameless winds. But when the Holy Spirit comes, the weakest instruments are mighty, "mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds". Oh pray for such a blessed time.

"Our gospel came unto you in much assurance." This is the effect on the soul, when the word comes with power, carried home by the Holy Ghost. The soul thus taught has a sweet certainty of the truth of the great things revealed in the gospel. When a man contemplates the sun, he feels a certainty that it is not the work of man but of God. So when a sinner gets anointed eyes, he sees a glorious beauty and fulness in Christ, so that his heart is filled with a sweet certainty of the truth of the gospel. He does not ask for evidences. He sees enough of evidence in Christ Himself. He says, I am all guilt: thou art Jehovah my righteousness. I am all weakness: thou art Jehovah my banner. I am all emptiness: in thee dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine. He feedeth among the lilies." It is this that fills the bosom with all joy and peace. It is this that gives a sweet sense of forgiveness and nearness to God. It is this that enables us to pray. Now we can say, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord". "I know that my Redeemer liveth." "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?" This is the gospel coming in much assurance. Oh! happy minister that can take up these words of Paul, and say, "Our gospel came not unto you", etc. That people is thy joy here, and shall be thy crown throughout eternity.

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