

The Significance of the Gospel (Part 1 of #2)

I Thessalonians 1: 5-10

In our last study Paul had greeted the Thessalonian church and encouraged them in the Lord. He had reminded them of their position, revealed his prayer for them, and acknowledged their labor of love.

Now his attention is turned toward the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is literally the “*glad tidings or good news.*” It is the message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ the Lord. Paul well understood the significance of the gospel and he was very passionate about it. [Rom.1:16 – For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.](#) [1 Cor.1:18 – For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.](#) [1 Cor.9:16 – For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!](#)

This is a powerful portion of Scripture. Through it Paul speaks of the relevance and significance of the gospel in every society and throughout every generation. We are far removed from the time when Paul penned

these words, but the power of the gospel remains. The message of Christ is as needful and relevant as it was then. Tonight I want to begin our study on the **unchanging truths** regarding: **The Significance of the Gospel.**

I. The Authority of the Gospel (5) – 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. Here Paul reveals what separates the gospel from the humanistic teachings of men. The gospel has an authority that no other message can claim. Notice:

A. The Presentation – For our gospel came not unto you in word only. Now, let me say that Paul is not claiming absolute ownership or a divine claim to the gospel himself; he is referring to the gospel he received, the one he is sharing with all who will hear.

- Paul is claiming that the gospel he preaches is not in word only; it is not something that he merely speaks about, but a message that profoundly transformed his life. It isn't something that he only has head knowledge of, but it is a message that lives within his heart.

- Also he was not depending solely upon his ability to articulate the gospel in such a way that it would impact the hearer. Paul knew that the gospel was more than words to hear; it was the means of salvation. (1 Cor.2:1-5)

- We would do well to embrace this fundamental truth. Reaching those about us with the gospel cannot be achieved with simply head knowledge of salvation. We must have the heart knowledge as well. Our words do not possess the ability to persuade men to come to Christ. We need the help of the Spirit in association with practicing what we preach! Understanding the gospel in our head must be accompanied by faith in the heart.

I. The Authority of the Gospel (5)

A. The Presentation

B. The Power – **The gospel came not in word only, but also in power.** That is an interesting statement. Most of us have no problem embracing the power of the gospel. Many of us have experienced that power first-hand in salvation. It is translated from the Greek word *dunamis* from which we get our word dynamite. It is a word that speaks of *awesome, unlimited power. It reveals power*

that exists because of the virtue in the nature of its source. The power of the gospel exists due to the nature of the God who gives it!

- Paul knew that the gospel had power beyond the persuasion of words spoken from the human tongue. It possesses the power of God; power that has the ability to work within the heart to stir, convict, draw, and transform!

- Many today would have us believe that we are preaching a message that is somehow outdated and archaic. They contend that we need something more modern. I would submit that the gospel has not lost its power. The message of Christ is not obsolete; in fact, it remains absolute! There is power in the message of Jesus Christ. It can transform a cold, dead heart into one that is alive and assured of eternity. We possess nothing more powerful than the gospel. [Heb.4:12 – For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.](#)

I. The Authority of the Gospel (5)

A. The Presentation

B. The Power

C. The Person – Paul was also assured of the **superintendence of the Holy Ghost**. His message had the power of God and the working of the Spirit. The message that he proclaimed was directed of the Spirit and that same Spirit carried it deep within the hearts of those who heard. The Spirit works in conviction through the Word and convincing of the Word.

▪ What hope we have in the gospel! I rejoice that I am not depending upon my ability to communicate the gospel in such a way that men will receive it. If I am where I need to be, submitted to the leading of the Spirit, He will take the Word as it is preached and bring about conviction and convincing!

D. The Persuasion – The message of the gospel was also communicated **in much assurance**, *most certain assurance*. Paul was not preaching a message that men had to wonder about. It was a message that could be embraced free of doubt and with certainty.

- As Paul expounded the Scriptures, he did so with full assurance and confidence of its outcome. He was depending upon the work of the Spirit rather than the clever devices of oratory or skillfully prepared outlines. (Consider the comments of John Phillips on pgs.30-31 in *1 Thessalonians: An Expository Commentary.*)
- We ought to consider that in our day as well. We can take the gospel to the masses without fear of failure. God may not work as we think He would or in the manner that we expected, but we have the assurance of His power.
- We don't need skillful, savvy speakers, just Christians who are filled with the Spirit and burdened for those around them. God is looking for vessels to display His mighty power through His miraculous message!

I. The Authority of the Gospel (5)

A. The Presentation

B. The Power

C. The Person

D. The Persuasion

E. The Preparation (5b)

E. The Preparation (5b) – 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. I almost overlooked this significant point in my preparation. Keep in mind that Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, and persecutor of the church. God has now sent him to preach the gospel among gentiles. He was the most unlikely candidate for ministry, but he was not standing in his own ability or worth. He stood before them clothed in the cloak of his calling, anointed with the power of God! The Lord prepared him and enabled him for the ministry.

- The account of Paul's life and ministry remove all excuses for anyone to serve the Lord. We are not asked to stand or speak in our own ability. We are not asked to serve within our own strength. We are simply called to follow the Lord wherever and whenever He chooses.

I. The Authority of the Gospel (5)

II. The Acceptance of the Gospel (6-7) – Now Paul reminds them of the benefit and change the gospel had brought to them. Consider:

A. Their Conversion (6a) – **And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord.** The word followers literally means “*an imitator.*” Those who once had followed the pagan rituals of humanity had now become imitators of the people of God and more importantly the Lord Himself. Paul revealed that he could see a drastic and beneficial change in their lives. The gospel had been heard and received, resulting in conversion and change!

- The power of the gospel is amazing. It has the ability to transform a life from darkness and rebellion to the glorious light of salvation and fellowship with the Lord. It can take a heart that is intent on sin and wickedness and produce one that seeks to be more like Christ!

B. Their Commitment (6b) – **having received the word in much affliction.** Their receiving of the gospel had not come easily or without adversity. The believers in Thessalonica suffered much affliction for their faith.

- Theirs was not an easy existence and yet they persevered in the faith. They refused to let the difficulties of life hinder their service to the Lord. Paul knew their commitment bore witness to their conversion.

- We need that same type of commitment. As I study and learn more of the early church I am challenged in my walk with the Lord. We have faced nothing compared to what these did and yet many today are abandoning their faith and going the way of the world. Many are seeking a reason to avoid church or drop out all together.

- I pray that God will so touch our hearts that we will develop an unhindered commitment to Him and the work that He has called us to. What do we face in this life that should hinder us from serving the Lord? What is possibly more important than fulfilling our calling?

II. The Acceptance of the Gospel (6-7)

A. Their Conversion (6a)

B. Their Commitment (6b)

C. Their Consolation (6c) – And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

Paul knew the secret to their success and perseverance. It was not within human ability or desire to endure as they had. They simply carried on **with the joy of the Holy**

Ghost. When adversity and the temptation to abandon their faith came God filled their hearts with the joy of the Spirit. They couldn't walk away from something that produced such joy. The Lord sustained them in their time of need.

- We too are afforded that same promise. Life is not always easy. Serving the Lord is not without difficulty or controversy. But when adversity comes we can rise above through the presence and uplifting of the Spirit. It is hard to be discouraged and want to quit when you are filled with joy! 1 Pet.1:8 – Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

II. The Acceptance of the Gospel (6-7)

A. Their Conversion (6a)

B. Their Commitment (6b)

C. Their Consolation (6c)

D. Their Communication (7) – So that ye were **ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.**

The lives of the Thessalonian believers were not without benefit. They stood as **ensamples** to all the other believers in the region. That word means “*type*.” It has the idea of “*a mold, a pattern, or a model*.”

- When Paul thought of what a believer should possess he thought of Thessalonica. They served as a witness and encouragement to others. They were looked to for their faith and endurance.
- It is interesting that Paul sent this letter from Corinth, the chief city in Achaia to Thessalonica, the chief city in Macedonia. In essence he was challenging the church in Corinth to follow the Thessalonian example.
- One of the greatest testimonies and influences of modern Christianity is the genuineness of its believers. Those who are committed to Christ are consistent in their lives and their faith. The world and especially the younger generation are seeking something that is genuine.
- How do those who know us view our lives and faith? Are we genuine or are we inconsistent? I desire us to be an example of the faith and trustworthy ambassadors of our King. We need to model the Christian life before others. There is no reason we can't or shouldn't.

(Conclusion)

We will close there and pick up again next week. As we do I want to remind us of the authority of the gospel. We have the greatest news that has ever been told. We have the power and assurance of the Spirit working on our behalf. We have the privilege and opportunity to reach the world for Christ.

I have to ask though, how do our lives resemble those of the Thessalonians? Are we committed as they were? Are we the examples we should be? Have you met Christ in salvation? We need Him more than we need anything. I pray that His Spirit and power will fill us and move us!