

Gospel came in power

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- [0 : 00] Will you turn with me this evening to words which you will find in the second portion of Scripture read. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, the first chapter, and read it again at verse 5.
- 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1, and verse 5. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.
- It was characteristic of the Apostle Paul that when he spoke of the gospel, he sometimes associated with himself.
- And called it my gospel. And that was not surprising. For he had come under the power of the gospel on that memorable encounter which he had on the Damascus Road.
- An encounter which was to change his whole outlook on life. An encounter which took him from being the persecutor of the Church of God to being the great apostle to the Gentiles.
- [1 : 57] A work of grace had been brought in his soul through the gracious operation of the gospel. And so the gospel was something which was very real and which was very dear to him.
- He did not feel, however, that he had the exclusive right to this use of the gospel. And so here we find him linking the names of Silas and Timothy with his own.
- And he says, as he writes to the Church in Thessalonica, For our gospel, the gospel which means so much to us, Our gospel came unto you not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.
- And here we have brought before us, right at the beginning of our short study, An inescapable fact.
- And that inescapable fact is this. That there are those to whom the gospel comes, but in word only.
- [3 : 25] Now we gather that by inference. That wasn't the experience of the Thessalonian believers. The gospel had come into their lives with power.
- It had done its work. It had transformed them. And they were living the gospel. But it reminded them, as indeed it reminds us tonight, That there are those of whom it is true, Sad though it may seem unsound, That the gospel has come to them, But in word only.
- They hear the gospel. They may even be prepared to say that they enjoy the gospel.
- And in a vague sort of way, They will even tell you that they believe the gospel, At least as far as the scripture record goes. And yet their hearts are as hard tonight, As they were on the first day, That they heard the gospel proclaimed.
- They have become so accustomed to it, That it ceases to arouse them. And it does not make, Or appear to make, The same impact, As it did in years that are gone by.
- [4 : 57] Now I want you to be honest with yourselves tonight. And I want to ask you this question. Is that true?

In the experience of some of you here. You can look back perhaps to your early days, Or you can look back a few years ago. And you can remember, The gospel being proclaimed, And that gospel seemed to have made such an impact on you, That like Felix of old you said, You know I believe you've got something there.

I believe I need the gospel. But I want to have more time to think over it. I want a more convenient season.

And the more convenient season has never come. And you're still as far from the kingdom of God, As the first night you heard the gospel proclaimed.

Is that something to be proud of? Is that something to glory in? That God in his love and in his mercy, Has brought you under the sound of the gospel?

[6 : 13] Has given you the loving gospel invitation? And you say, No, I have more important things to attend to. I'll just put it into this little shelf here, Into this filing cabinet.

And I'll come back with it someday. And then I'm going to wrestle it out, And I'm going to make up my mind. My dear friend, That day may never come.

That day, I repeat, may never come. But tonight you are in mercy's ground. Today, If any man hear his voice, Let him harden, not his heart.

But do I hear somebody say, Whose fault is it? Who is responsible for the fact That the gospel has not come to me In power?

In transforming power? Is it the fault of the gospel itself? We surely cannot lay the blame At the door of the gospel.

[7 : 29] Because the gospel has proved itself To be the power of God And to salvation To everyone that believeth. There are many here Who can testify to the fact That the gospel has made All the difference in the world To their lives And to their outlook And to that hope which they have.

When life here comes to an end. No, we cannot lay the hand At the door of the gospel. The blame at the door of the gospel.

Can we lay the blame then At the door of the preacher? Well, sometimes that may be so. For we all have to confess That we are not always as faithful To the word as we should be.

That we do not warn sinners as we should. That we do not bring them face to face With their great responsibility. And with the loving invitation Which God gives to them.

And so there is a sense In which we may perhaps Have to shoulder Some of the blame. But I think it is true That in the final analysis The blame lies On your own shoulders If the gospel has not come Unto you in power.

[9 : 01] And yet you don't You don't apply it To yourselves. You believe that the gospel Has a vital message for you. The message which you need.

The message which alone Can save your soul. Oh yes, you are ready To believe that. But then you say Well, I have plenty time. The years stretch out before me.

And so you put it off. I don't want the gospel now. Someday, someday, oh yes. But not yet. That is how solemn it is to think That every time The gospel is proclaimed There may be somebody present Who hears it for the last time.

Wouldn't it be terrible? I repeat Wouldn't it be terrible? If that was to happen here tonight God forbid that it should That there should be somebody Under the sound of my voice And you're hearing the gospel For the last time.

You're being given Your last invitation Are you going to avail yourselves Of it? Tonight Your soul may be required Of you But not only do we have here An inescapable fact We have also A divine visitation It is recorded That the gospel came To the believers In Thessalonica Not in word only But it came in power And that made a difference But I'm going to say Something which may Startle some of you And it's this That it's possible

[11 : 12] For the gospel Sometimes to come in power And yet you remain In your old state You see sometimes The gospel can come In what one might Describe As the power Of a restraining influence There's no doubt There's no doubt about it That the gospel Has a restraining influence If we use it aright There's no doubt about it That when people Are brought up In a Christian atmosphere In a Christian background Although sometimes Like the prodigal They may go astray Yet there's something there Which seems to be Tugging them back Which seems to be Restraining them Because they're fighting Against their conscience Their conscience Tells them that the way Which they are pursuing Is a wrong way That it is a dangerous way That it is a way Of destruction

And thank God My friend If the gospel Has a restraining Influence upon you If it's kept you From going deeper Into sin But you need A greater power Than that Or sometimes It may be That the gospel Has power To instill fear We had an example Of just that When I read to you From the Acts Of the Apostles Felix heard the gospel Felix came under The power of the gospel To such an extent That he literally Trembled He was afraid There's no mistake About that And then he saw A way out He said I'll not do anything About it just now When I have a more

Convenient season And we never read In the experience Of Felix That that more Convenient season Ever came We are told That he appears To have had Meetings with Paul After that Memorable day But no mention Was made About a Transformed life The more Convenient season Never came The gospel Had come in power To the extent That it instilled Fear in your heart In his heart In his heart And yet It remained there And dare I say It that still Happens Some people May even Tremble under The gospel But they get No further And gradually As the days Go by They forget

About it And they put It behind Their backs But when There is a True divine Visitation From on High We read That the gospel Comes in the Power of the Holy Ghost And when the Gospel comes In the power Of the Holy Spirit Then something Is bound To happen And what Happens When the gospel Comes in the Power of the Holy Spirit To begin With It begets A sense Of sin And unworthiness Before that You didn't Regard yourself Really as Much of a Sinner Oh yes There may have Been a few Indiscretions In your life But you Never got Any further Than that You were Quite a good Person by Human standards

And by the Accepted Standards in The community Where you Lived But when The message Of the gospel Comes in the Power of the Holy Spirit Things are Different And like The psalmist You say Against Thee Thee Only Have I Sinned And done This evil In thy Sight You see Life takes On a new Perspective And you Realize That you're A sinner A guilty Sinner In the Sight of God That you're Unworthy That he Should hear You That he Should listen To you We do Not hear Much in These days In which We live About Conviction Of sin But conviction Of sin Is something Which is Very real When a Soul is Found Struggling Under a Sense of Their own

[16 : 16] Sin And of Their own Unworthiness And as The power Does its Work Its preparatory Work If one Might put It that Way There is A sense Of sin There is A sense Of unworthiness And there Is a great Sense of Unhappiness But then Also When the Gospel Comes in The power Of the Holy Spirit It not Only begets A sense Of sin And unworthiness It also Begets A sense Of need Before You felt You were Self-sufficient If there Was any Alteration To be made In your Way of Life Or your Pattern Of thinking You were Able to Cope With it Yourself Yes You could Make your Resolutions You may Have bad Habits I'll get Rid of them I'll do It in My own Strength But you

Were never Conscious Of that Deep Seated Need A need Which God Alone Could satisfy But when the Gospel comes In the power Of the Holy Spirit That's exactly What happens There's that Sense of Need I've got Nothing Of myself Nothing That I can Offer To atone For my Sins I'm Unworthy I'm Guilty I'm Worthless I'm Healthless And then From there The spirit Goes on And it Begets A sense Of wonder Wonder First of All At the Plan Of salvation That God From all Eternity Should have Planned To bring A wayward People Back Unto Himself Wonder

At the Love Of God Manifested On Calvary's Cross Greater Love Hath No Man Than This That A man Lay Down His Life For His Friends But the Love Of Christ Was Greater By Far For while We were Yet Enemies While We were Yet Sinners While We were Yet Estranged From him God Sent his Own Son And his Son Paid the Price The price Of sin On Calvary's Tree And how Wonderful It is When you Have that Sense of Wonder At God's Plan Of Salvation At His Love At His Compassion When you Had nothing To commend You to God God Commended

His Love Toward Us In That While We Were Yet Sinners Christ Died For Us And Coupled With That There Is a Sense Of Gratitude Gratitude For what God Has done In His Love And In His Mercy And You Say it Albeit In a Broken Voice Albeit Not Very Sure Of Yourself To Begin With But You Say I Love Him Because He First He First Loved Me He Came Into This World Because He Loved Me He Died Upon The Cross Because He Loved Me He Invites Me To Come Unto Me Because He Loves Me And

By His Grace You Make The Great Commitment And You Say I Am His Unworthy Though I Am I Am His And He Is Mine Isn't It Wonderful To Have An Experience Like That To Feel And To Know That God Has Been Working Out A Work Of Grace In Your Heart And In Your Life That From All Eternity God Set His Eye Upon You And He Has Pursued You Along The Highway Of Life And At Last By His Grace You Have Been Able To Open The Door And You Have Let Him In And Who Knows But God May

[21 : 22] Be Knocking At The Door Of Some Heart Tonight Behold He Says I Stand At The Door And Knock If Any Man Hear My Voice I Will Open The Door And I Will Come In And I Will Sup With Him And He With Me My Friend Do You Hear Do You Hear In The Silence Of This Evening Hour The Knock Of The Nail Pierced Hand That Hand Through Which The Nails Were Put Upon The Cross On Calvary Because There Was A Loving Savior Who Shed His Blood For You And What Is Your Response Going To Be Throw Yourself Upon His Love

And Upon His Mercy Open Your Heart To Receive Him Pray That He Will Give To You A Vision Of Yourself And Then A Vision Of Himself And May You Be Enable To Bow Down Before Him And To Say My Lord And My God But The Apostle Continues Our Gospel He Says Came Not Unto You In Word Only But Also In Power And In The Holy Ghost And In Much Assurance Much Assurance Now the Word Much Is Interesting And It's Significant The Late Dr.

Martin Lloyd Jones Used To Maintain That There Were Three Degrees If One Might Put It That Way Or Three Different Methods Of Assurance The First And The Most Common Of These Was By Believing And Applying To Ourselves The Words Of Scripture Believe We Are Told On The Lord Jesus Christ And Thou Shalt Be Saved He That Believeth Shall Not Be Condemned There Is Therefore Now No Condemnation To Them Who Are In Christ Jesus And When The Sinner Believes That It Can Bring Him Assurance But Then There Is Something Further If We Turn To The First Epistle Of John We

Find There Certain Tests So To Speak Of Spiritual Life And One Of Them Is These We Know That We Have Passed From Death Unto Life Because We Love The Brethren And There We Are Brought Into The Picture Ourselves By Examining Ourselves Here Is Here Is Proof Here Is Evidence That We Have Passed From Death Unto Life Because We Love The Brethren And We Also Read Whosoever Believeth That Jesus Is The Christ Is Born Of God And If We Believe That Christ Is Born Of God That Serves To Bring Assurance And Then We Are Told That His Commands If We Are His His Commands Are Not Grievous They They Are Grievous

For The Worldly Man But The Commands Of God Are Not Grievous For His Own People And So There You Have Some Comforting Assurance Which Comes Through The Scriptures And Through Your Own Experience But There Is Still A Further And A Greater Form Of Insurance And Paul Expresses It In The Eighth Chapter Of Romans Where He Says The Spirit Witnesses With Our Spirit That We Are The Children Of God And If Children Then Heirs Heirs Of God And Joint Heirs With Christ And Here Is Something Which The Spirit Of God Alone Can Give Us Through His Gracious Operation And When We Read Here That The Spirit Came That The Word

[26 : 13] Gospel Came In Much Assurance Surely That's Exactly What Happened This Must Be The Assurance Referred To In This Chapter It Was A Spirit Given Assurance And It Left Them In No Doubt Where They Stood Those Whom Paul Addressed Had The Fullest Possible Conviction Of Their Interest In The Word Which They Had Heard And Accepted The Word Had Come With Such Blessed Demonstration And Power That It Swept Their Doubts Clean Away Now It's True That All May Not Possess This Degree Of Assurance That This Is Surely Something Which We Should Strive After If We Don't Have It We Should Pray That God Would Seal Us With His Spirit It's Put That Way In One Of The Other Epistles That God Might Seal Us With His Spirit So

That We Have That Degree Of Assurance Which They Had In Thessalonica And We Should Be Ready To Give A Reason For The Hope Which Now What Was The Outcome What Was The Result Of The Foregoing We Go Back To The Previous Verse To The Fourth Verse Knowing We Read Knowing Brethren Beloved Your Election Of God In Other Words The Test Of Election Is The Holy Spirit Blessing The Word And If The Word Has Been Blessed To You My Friend Then You Know That You Have Been Chosen By God But You See You Must Give Proof Of It Your Proof Lies In

The Fact That The Spirit Has Blessed The Word To Your Soul But There Is A Proof Which Must Be Given To The World And We Have That Proof Just Here Also What Happened In Thessalonica Ye Became Followers Of Us And Of The Lord Having Received The Word In Much Affliction With Joy Of The Holy Ghost So That You Were Examples To All That Believe In Macedonia And Achaia But Also In Every Place Your Faith To God Word Is Spread Abroad So That We Need Not To Speak Anything In Other Words The Influence Of Those Believers Was Felt In Thessalonica The Word Sounded Out From Them They Had Turned From God To Idols To Serve The Living And True God There

Was The Proof Which They Were Able To Give To The World That There Had Been A Transformation In Their Lives That The Lord Jesus Christ Now Was The Supreme Aim And Object Of Their Lives That They Were His Followers That They Were Wearing His Uniform That They Were Prepared To Fight His Battles And To Go On In The Strength Of The Lord God And When That Happened Then They Had The Comfort The Comfort Of Knowing And This Is Something Which Worries Many Of The People Of God They For Knowing That They Had Been Elected By Him Now There Are Several Objections Which Are Raised Sometimes Against This Wonderful Doctrine Of Election And One Of Them Is That It Does Away With The Use Of The Means Of Grace But

We Must Ever Remember That Election Does Not Secure Salvation Without Faith And Holiness But Through Them Election Does Not Mean That God Constrains Men The Non-Elector Simply Left Alone Whereas The Elector Made Willing In The Day Of God's Power And To Be Made Willing Takes Away No Man's Liberty So We Cannot Regard That As A Suitable Argument Against This Great Doctrine But Oh Somebody Else Says Surely Election Is Inconsistent With The Free Offers Of The Gospel But The Gospel We Are Told Is For All Men Whosoever Will Let Him Come And Take The Water Of Life Freely And The Decree Of Election Puts No Barrier Before Men Preventing Before Men Preventing

[31 : 16] Them From Accepting The Gospel Any Man Will Be Saved If He Accepts And The Non-elect Are Left To Act As They Are Freely Determined By Their Own Hearts But Why Then You Say Why Then Does God Save Some And Not Others Well Here We Come To A Difficult Question And This Is Something Which Surely We Must Leave To The Wonderful And Mysterious Counsels Of God Surely He Has A Right To Choose Those Who Shall Be Heirs Of Salvation May Not The Sovereign Lord On High Dispense His Favors As He Will Choose Some To Life While Others Die And Yet Be Just And Gracious Still But To My Soul If Truth So Bright Should Dazzle And

Confound Thy Sight Yet Still His Witten Will Obey And Wait The Great Decisive Day But The Sad Thing About This Grand Doctrine Of Election Is This That Very Often It Can Become A Pill For Spiritual Sloth And A Man Says If I Am To Be Saved I Will Be Saved And There Is Nothing I Can Do About It If I Am To Be Lost I Will Be Lost And There Is Nothing That I Can Do About It I Remember Many Years Ago In My First Congregation There Was A Good Man There Who Was A Regular Church Goer But Whenever You Talk To Him About The Matter Of His Soul Salvation He Always

Evaded Or Avoided It In This Way He Would Say Just What I Have Been Saying Just Now You See Mr. Mackay There Is Nothing I Can Do About It If I Am One Of The Elect Then All Is Well If Not There's Nothing I Can Do I Said Well Murder If You Believe That I Take It That You Believe That You Can't Die A Moment Before Your Time That God Knows The Day Of Your Death That Even As He Brought You Into This World So On A Certain Day Did You Take Your Breakfast This Morning He Looked A Little Bit Puzzled But He Said Yes He Said Of Course I Took My Breakfast And I Said Did You Take Your Dinner He Said Yes He Said Of Course I Took My Dinner But What's That Got To Do With It I Said Just This You You Just Told Me That You Can't Die A Day Or A Moment Before Your Time

If That's True Why Then Do You Bother Taking Your Daily Food Can You Not Depend On God To Keep You Alive Until That Day Comes Oh He Said But That Would Be Wrong You See God Has Provided Means For The Sustenance Of The Body And It Would Be Wrong Of Me To Deny Myself Them Exactly I Said And God Has Provided For Your Means For The Means Of The Salvation Of Your Soul And It Is Your Responsibility That You Make Use Of Them Yes That's What It That's That's The Final Analysis At The End Of The Day The Condemnation Is That Light Has Come Into The World And That Men Choose Darkness Rather Than Light Because Their Deeds Were Evil And No Man In That Great Day Can Turn Round And Lay

And Lay Blame At The Hands Of His Maker Because He Was Not One Of Thy Elect The Blessing Comes Through The Preaching And Through The Acceptance Of The Word Of God Our Gospel Says Paul The Gospel Which Brought Us Blessing The Gospel Which Saved Our Souls The Gospel Which Transformed Our Lives Our Gospel Came Unto You Not In Word Only But Also In Power And In The Holy Ghost And In Much Assurance Oh That God Would Give Us A Sense Of That Power Tonight That

[36 : 18] Reviving Power That Spiritual Power Which Alone Can Bring Blessing To Our Souls Which Alone Can Bring Blessing To The Community Which Alone Can Bring Blessing To The Nation And Which Alone Can Bring Blessing To The World And Most Important Of All Which Alone Can Bring Blessing To You To You The Gospel Has A Message For You The Risen Christ Is Pleading With You What Is Your Response Going To Be Surely It Shall Not Be Said Of This Place Of This Place Of Such Great Privilege That The Gospel

Came But In Word Only It's True Of Some Tonight That Up Till Now It's Come But In Word Only It May Have Seemed As You Look Back That There Was A Day When You Thought It Was Coming In Power But You Put That Day Off And In The Good Providence Of God You're Here Tonight As A Monument Of His Sparing Mercy We Then As Ambassadors For Christ Beseech You Beseech You Be Ye Reconciled To God It's The Most Important Thing In Life Far More Important Than Your Business Far More Important Than Your Friends Yes Even Far More Important Than Your Loved Ones That The Soul That The Matter Of Your Soul

Salvation Should Be Settled And That You Might Be Found Rejoicing In Hope Journeying Towards The City Which Has Foundations Whose Builder And Whose Maker Is God It's Most Unlikely Most Unlikely That We'll All Meet Here Again Together My Dear Friend Are We Going To Meet On The Other Side Are We Going To Be Numbered Among That Glad And Glorious Number Who Shall Sing The New Song And To Him Who Loved Us And Who Washed Us From Our Sins God Grant In His Love And His Mercy That You May Be There And That I May Be There And What A Wonderful Day Of Reunion It Will

Be May The Lord Bless Us Each One Let Us Pray O Lord Our God Whose Love And Whose Mercy Is Extended To The Sinful Sons Of Men We Are Conscious Of Our Own Weakness And Of Our Own Helplessness When We Speak When We Seek About The Things Of God But We Thank Thee That The Power Is With Thee And We Pray That There May Be An Outpouring Of Thy Spirit So That Souls May Be Touched So That Some May Go From This Place In A Different Way From That Which They Came Seeking Their

Soul Salvation And Resting Upon The Promises Of God Bless Us When We Go To Rest May We Have Sweet Thoughts And Communion With Thee In The Night Watches If It Be Thy Good Will Open Our Eyes To Behold A New Day And Grant On The Morrow On The Last Day Of The Feast A Sense Of Thy Nearness And Of Thy Presence So That Thy People May Be Found Rejoicing In Hope We Ask This With The Pardon Of Our Every Sin For Jesus Sake Amen