

1 Thessalonians 2

Introduction:

"it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead"(Acts 17:3)

When Lydia heard the gospel message, "The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul" (Acts 16:14)

These two passages from Acts come from Paul's mission trip to Macedonia and they help us understand the way God is at work in Paul's ministry in Thessalonica. The first passage is the summary of Paul's preaching. The second shows how God works within those who believe the message that they hear.

As you read this book you will notice Paul often revisits some of his earlier points as he moves through the book and adds to them
He seems to spiral back then moves forward a bit then spirals back again.

For the purpose of extracting what he is saying in a way that a modern person can easily understand I have decided to break this chapter into three parts which focus on three specific points he is making. You will notice that in order to do this I will not be reading the verses in order. Following the text on the power point will be easier than following it in your bible, and I apologise in advance for anyone listening to this sermon on line if I do not remember to explain which verse I have jumped to as you listen to the passages being read.



Thessalonica is a large city in Macedonia; The part of Greece most famous for Alexander the Great and perhaps most influential because of Aristotle.

The distance from Philippi to Thessalonica is 160km -same as Timaru to Christchurch or Milton to Cromwell. There are some interesting places in-between, one of which is Stagira; the birthplace of Aristotle.

Act 17:1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

Act 17:2 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

Act 17:3 explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."

1: The opposition to the Gospel is:

- A sign we are on the right track
- A way to test our hearts – grow our faith
- A necessary part of the plan of God to further spread the Gospel

Genesis 50:20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive,...

Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

YOU KNOW THAT SOME PEOPLE WILL NOT RESPOND FAVOURABLY TO THE GOSPEL; STICK TO THE TRUTH AND DON'T COMPROMISE; THE SUFFERING IS TO IMPROVE [TEST] YOUR HEARTS. GOD ALLOWS SATAN A LOT OF POWER IN THIS AREA.

The trick is not to be discouraged- take an eternal perspective.

Let me use the passage to illustrate my point.

2:2 But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.

2:3 For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive,

2:4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

2:14 For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews,

2:15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind

2:16 by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last!

2:17 But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face,

2:18 because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us.

Verse two is speaking about Paul's Journey to Macedonia-You can find the story in Acts 16 and 17.

Paul has a vision of a man calling him to ministry in Macedonia- and takes it as a sign from God to go, but after some initial success he is met with huge resistance; Paul and Silas are beaten and put in by the greedy Philippians, subsequently they are set free but the roman authorities were embarrassed. When they found out that he was a roman citizen and they urged him to leave the town. The mission seemed like a disaster, then when he arrived in Thessalonica and again initially things looked good but the town was in a riot within a short period of time and again the authorities were not happy. Paul and Silas had to move on again.

Now 1-3 years later the seed that Paul and Silas planted is taking root in the city but the Devil resists Paul. In these situations it is often tempting to give up, to forget the vision of the call to Macedonia, but God had plans to use Paul's words to the Macedonians, not just for them but for you and me and now as we read the story 1,950 years later we too can see this message was not stopped. God let the Devil keep Paul from going to Macedonia and in his distress Paul wrote to the Thessalonians. Had he made the journey we may not have had the letters today.

2. The motivation to preach the Gospel is that we love God's people

- The hard truth not the soft sales pitch
- No flattery, no tricks just the story
- The story of the life of Christ
- The story of how Christ is in my life
- The love for the church
- Like a mother and a father

2:1 For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain.
 2:5 For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness.
 2:6 Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.
 2:7 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.
 2:8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.
 2:9 For you remember, brothers, our labour and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.
 2:10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.
 2:11 For you know how, like a father with his children,
 2:12 we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.
 2:19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?
 2:20 For you are our glory and joy.

Being gentle certainly does not involve tricks or flattery.

Paul also speaks of being like a mother here, he speaks the truth gently; he nurtures and encourages and comforts people with the gospel.

Being gentle is not the same as being permissive.

Paul is also like a father he does not allow for infantile disobedience

Toby can't play with matches or get too far away from Marcie or I; doing whatever he wants is not good for him.

The same applies to us, Sin is still sin and God knows best.

Bad parents let ill informed children do things that hurt them in the end

-In the same way bad church leaders endorse sinful practices to please society. Remember what Paul Reet said last week – we are not here to for our culture society [we are here as ambassadors of the Kingdom of God]

We have to learn to live in this world of Greek, Roman and Jewish culture, but our heart has to be for a new world, a heavenly world; a redeemed world. Live as if this place is not our home.

I hope when you are in someone else's house you treat it with respect and look after it, but I also hope you don't forget that you actually can't stay there forever.

Life is like that, we look after what God gives us but we can't ever keep it that long. Today Toby is two years old, I remember when Matthew was 2, but now he is nearly 9. I cannot keep time from changing things. I cannot recreate great experiences of the past and expect to feel exactly the same way. And even if I base my happiness on special events in the future [holidays ad weekends] eventually those things will end. My best chance for long term happiness is an eternal investment. -

To store my treasure in heaven.

Notice how the "Glory" is the other people who Paul loves.

Not simply God alone but all those of us who are with him.

Paul is not just looking forward to seeing Christ but he is looking forward to being with other people and with Christ.

The communion of Heaven is a community.

3. The external ministry of preaching only affects those who the Holy Spirit is at work in effecting change

- The external call [preaching/ evangelism]
- The effectual call [Revelation from God]
- The power of the Holy Spirit [potential]
- The work of the Holy Spirit [actual]

Paul and Silas came and preached the Gospel; when you hear someone tell the story of Jesus we call it “the External Call”

Our job as disciples of Jesus is to make sure every hears the outward call of God. This is how God uses us. The external call cannot save you, and as this story illustrates it can cause anger, but it is the medium through which the Holy Spirit can work to change the hearts of men. Our Job is to share the external call to all mankind; his job is the inward call to the people of God.

Please note: I am not saying negative or positive reactions to the Gospel are indications of salvation – often the exact opposite is true. Saying you believe in Jesus after you have heard the external call of God will not save you unless the Holy Spirit has called you from within. Belief is not intellectual assent- it is Spiritual rebirth. Paul himself hated the Gospel with his intellect, but the inward call changed him in a blinding flash of light.

What is the role of the Holy Spirit? -To reveal Jesus to us.

2:13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

KJV = ...effectually worketh in you...

1Th 1:5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in **power**, and in the Holy Ghost,...

Here is the final example of the repetition of the same theme. This time it is the key verse in this chapter that repeats one of the themes raised in chapter one.

The point for us to remember is; to tell the story and leave the convincing work to God. Coercing people to make quick decisions about the argument you have forced upon them is not evangelism it is marketing. The Holy Spirit does the work he asks us to tell the story.

We often use the word power in place of the Greek word ‘dunamis’ and the word work in place of the Greek word ‘energia’.

But there are several other words that could have been used Paul chose to use these two words for his Greek audience as he knew they would be familiar with the teachings of Aristotle [in fact any who could read in the Roman empire probably knew some of Aristotle’s teachings]. But certainly the Macedonians did.

ARISTOTLE TAUGHT THEM DUNAMIS = POTENTIAL AND ENERGIA = ACTUALITY

[REMEMBER ARISTOLE WAS NOT ONLY GREEK BUT HE WAS MACEDONIAN, HE TAUGHT ALEXANDER THE GREAT IN MACEDONIAN AND HE WAS BORN IN STARGIA; A TOWN BETWEEN PHILIPI AND THESSALONICA]

Dynamite is often referred to as an example of what Dunamis means, but not simply because it is powerful; when it was invented it was the most *potentially powerful* substance known to man.

When the dynamite explodes it releases its energy; the potential power becomes actual power

This is the effectual work of dynamite a big explosion; 7000-8000 metres per second expansion.

190gm stick = 1mega joule of energy

How much more powerful is the Holy Spirit

The Potential of the Spirit when he comes alongside the Word is all about this story being alive

The actuality of the Spirit is within the one who hears him and indeed believes

OBEDIENCE AND BELIEF COME FROM HOLY SPIRIT.

What is Effectual Calling?

Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.

Westminster shorter catechism

Question 31

Some of you are under the mistaken heretical teaching that God has given us all by his grace the ability to choose to follow him or not.

The teaching of Paul is that God's grace is your salvation. The Holy Spirit is not presenting the Gospel as an option [although that may be the job of the evangelist]. The Holy Spirit is making us believe the Gospel. He inspired the authors and he inspires the readers- and if he does not no amount of reading or arguing will make them believers.

If you are a Christian then the Holy Spirit is at work in you, if you are not sure whether the Holy Spirit is at work in you then you need Pastoral support. Perhaps some of you have been given the impression that pastoral care is about looking after your financial and emotional wellbeing, or perhaps you have physical needs, marital problems or problems with the kids? But I tell you although these things matter the most important pastoral concern is: Are you actually a follower of Christ?

Do you know that: *"it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead?"*

Christians who doubt this at best are humanitarians who are using the church structures for their own agenda- at worst they are corrupting our mission.

Do you know that the Holy Spirit is at work in your life?

Have you had the experience of Lydia? [Acts 16:14]