

You Welcomed the Message

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 July 2012

Preacher: Ralph Depping

[0 : 00] And speak, the first reading is in Acts 17, where we were a little bit earlier. Acts 17, it's on page 1113 if you've got a red covered Bible.

Acts 17, and we're going to read verses 1 to 10.

These readings introduce to us a new series as we go through the book of 1 Thessalonians. So all those who are going to be speaking through the summer, different people, will be taking a section on 1 Thessalonians.

This first reading tells us how the church started in that city. So Acts 17, starting at verse 1. When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue.

As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days, he reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead.

[1 : 25] This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ, he said. 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.

But the Jews were jealous, so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace. They formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.

But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting, These men, who have caused trouble all over the world, have now come here.

And Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another one called Jesus. When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil.

They put Jason and the others on bail and let them go. As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue.

[2 : 37] So that's Acts, and then if you go to page 1186 to Thessalonians. It's on page 1186.

And it's 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, the first 10 verses. Page 1186, 1 Thessalonians chapter 1.

So this is a letter written back to the church that was started. Paul, Silas, and Timothy. To the church of the Thessalonians. In God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

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.

[3 : 53] You know how we lived among you for your sake. 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.

And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 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, 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 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Ralph. Ralph. Can I pray for you and for us? Yep. That won't upset you, will it? That would be great.

No? Okay, so I'm going to pray for Ralph. This is Ralph Depping. He watches television all day. That's his work. And he's also an elder, one of the leaders in the church.

[5 : 05] So I'm going to pray for him. Father God, we thank you so much for Ralph. We thank you for the gifts that you have given to him. We thank you for his love.

We thank you for his care for this church family. We pray for him now as he speaks, that you would fill him with your Holy Spirit, that you would fill us with your Spirit, that we may receive your words, hearing clearly what you are saying, changing us, transforming us, and teaching us what it is to welcome the gospel in our lives.

So bless him, and bless us also in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Of course, I've got to clarify what exactly it is I do now, don't I?

My current work involves working for Sky Television, so that's why I get to watch Sky Telly all day. Not quite, but it's a little bit of my job.

So we're going to be moving a little bit between Acts 17 and 1 Thessalonians this morning, mainly in 1 Thessalonians, but we're referring back to Acts 17, so keep your finger at Acts 17 as well.

[6 : 26] I don't know if you've ever had a phone conversation quite like the one that I had last Saturday morning. This is kind of how it went to start, but anyway. Can I speak to Ralph, please?

What's this in relation to? I need to speak to Deppie and Ralph. This is very urgent. What's this about? I need to speak to Deppie and Ralph, sir.

It is an urgent message. I am from Microsoft. Your computer is infected with viruses. We are calling to help you stop your computer sending out viruses.

I said that was the call that I had last Saturday morning at home. Someone was calling me with an urgent message, demanding that I respond and answer them, confirm who I was, and hand over control on my computer.

If the message is true, well then I do have a serious problem with my computer, and this man, who is phoning me up, is here to help. But if the message isn't true, if the message is false, then he was trying to trick me into believing him.

[7 : 33] And you know what? That was the thing that was going to create the serious problems, wasn't it? Where none existed before. How I welcomed that message was going to be absolutely critical to the rest of my day.

Could I trust the message? Could I trust the messenger, the one who was bringing it? What evidence was there this was really someone from Microsoft calling me up with a message, an authentic message, that I should believe?

Now, I'll leave you in suspense for a little bit. I'll let you know later on how I got on with that phone call. We may not have had such phone calls or experienced conversations like that, but I think in a lot of ways we're in that very position here this morning, right now.

You see, I'm bringing you a message, and it's an urgent message, and there's a serious problem. And I'm asking you to believe the message and to take action.

But who am I? Why would you listen to me? What's the message? Why should I welcome it? I know for a lot of people, this isn't your usual church here this morning.

[8 : 45] And so, you're going to be extra wary, aren't you? The person up the front and what they're saying. Well, I just want to encourage you that you're right to be wary. And even for the people that are regularly here, you're right to listen with that kind of slight wariness and listening carefully.

Because the message of the gospel, the message of a church, is a serious business. It's not to be taken lightly. You see, the message of Jesus makes bold claims, and it demands a radical response.

And if we get it wrong, if we get the message wrong, if we get our response to the message wrong, the results are serious. We could end up ignoring this great news of salvation, of being saved from the coming wrath of God.

Or on the other hand, we could be tricked into believing and to living for something that is just a complete sham. So the stakes are high, how we believe and how we welcome the message.

So the way I want us to consider the message this morning, the message of Jesus, is to look at the Bible record that we have with us. We're going to look at how that same message came to a church in Greece.

[10 : 03] The church we want to look at is in the Greek city of Thessalonica. It's still a city in Greece. You can go there today on your holidays and spend some euros. I know it would be very welcome there.

But we're not looking at the church in Thessalonica as it is today, but as it was 2,000 years ago. We're looking at the very first time that the message of Christianity reached the city of Thessalonica.

So it started in the Holy Land, in Israel, and it began to spread out and eventually it spread to Greece. And we're looking at how that message came in order to read about this church and how it welcomed the message.

We're going to look at the first person accounts that we have from that time as they are written for us in the New Testament. So we've read the account, haven't we, in chapter 17 of Acts and how the church was established.

And what we've read in 1 Thessalonians, it's a copy of a letter that the founder of the church, Paul, the messenger that brought the message, is writing to the congregation.

[11 : 04] So the person who established the church, who brought the message, the messenger, is writing back to the church to encourage them and to help them and help them in their understanding. And I think what we get in chapter 1 is kind of a reorientation or a recap of what has happened in Acts chapter 17.

So Paul is linking back to the time that he spent with them, how the message came, and how the church was established. And I think it's worthwhile to us just to look briefly at chapter 17 in Acts, so page 1113.

Paul and his companions had come to the city of Thessalonica. I mean, Scripture is rooted in history, it's rooted in geography, it's rooted in real places. And you'd see that they passed through a couple of different towns and then they came to Thessalonica, which was a strategic city.

It was about the size of Cork City and was an important place in the Roman Empire. And there they preached in the local Jewish place of worship for three Sundays, or three Saturdays, the Sabbath, in a row, the synagogue.

And that was their custom, wasn't it? They would go to a city and they would seek out people that were already expecting to hear about a king from heaven that had come to rescue them. And this was the message that Paul had and he sought out people that were willing to receive it.

[12 : 23] So in the synagogue, Paul tells the Jews about Jesus, that Jesus is the one. Jesus is the long-promised King of God that has come to restore all things.

And this was the message that the Jews were waiting to hear. But instead of restoration through conquest, instead of restoration by ridding Israel of all her enemies and freeing Israel from the Romans, the message of Jesus is restoration through suffering, restoration through death, restoration through resurrection.

We read in verse 4 that some were persuaded in the synagogue, along with a large number of God-fearing Greeks or Gentiles, non-Jews, and also a few prominent, not a few prominent women, so a large number of prominent women.

But then do you see what happens from verse 5 onwards? The message and the messenger comes under attack. The message is not welcomed by everyone. It's not universally accepted, is it?

Even among the Jews who are meant to be waiting for this message of a Messiah that had come. Verse 5, we have bad characters. We have a riot. If we go to verses 8 and 9, there's turmoil.

[13 : 42] The Christians have to be put on bail. And then in verse 10, we have Paul and Silas having to slip away under the cover of darkness in fear of their lives.

I don't know how you feel about this, but I think there was a very real risk that the message, the word that was being scattered among the Thessalonian people would be strangled by thorns of persecution and suffering.

It's a little embryonic church, the word being planted, and all these persecutions coming in on top of it to strangle it. So I think it's some relief to Paul and to us this morning that we have the letters to the Thessalonian church.

From what we read in chapter 1, we find a church that has not only managed to survive, but has actually become a model church to the whole region and beyond.

But we read in Acts 17 of the kind of persecution and the church has survived and has become a model. Why did this church, in the midst of such chaos and opposition, manage to hold fast to the message?

[14 : 53] I think the answer is, or the one that we're going to look at this morning, is right bang in the middle of chapter 1.

If you look at verse 6, and there's just one phrase, and we have it up at the top as the title this morning. And verse 6 says, You became imitators of us and of the Lord in spite of severe suffering.

You welcomed the message with joy, with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. Do you see that phrase? You welcomed the message.

So I want us to look and focus on the two verses that just go before, verse 6, so verses 4 and 5, and use them as the starting point or the branching out point to look at the rest of chapter 1.

Because I think we want to understand the message, don't we? What is this message that we're talking about? That's important. How it came, and then how it was welcomed by the believers there.

[15 : 56] For we want to have confidence that we have welcomed the right message, the real message, and that we're not just following cleverly invented myths.

What confidence do you have this morning that what you're hearing is true? Or whichever church you go to normally or wherever you are, how do you know it's true? And I think we should have confidence because what we're talking about is serious business.

Firstly, verse 4, For we know, brothers, loved by God that He has chosen you. God, God is at work.

God is at work. And God must be at work. For if God is not the person behind the message, then what's the point?

What's the ultimate meaning or impact or purpose of the message if God Himself is not the one behind it? But we read in verse 4 that God is the source of the message that came to Him.

[17 : 00] He is the one that loves them. He is the one that has chosen them. All responses to the Christian message begin with this, God's loving initiative towards His people.

He is the one. He is the one who rescues us through Jesus Christ from the wrath that is coming that we read about in verse 10. Every Christian story, every church plant begins with the same truth.

You know you are loved by God because He has chosen you. And His choosing means there's no grounds for boasting. There's no grounds for self-congratulation, for patting yourself on the back, for feeling better than the person over there or over there or outside the door.

There's no barriers. It can be erected between us. If God has chosen us, there are no barriers. He loves you. He has chosen you.

The initiative comes from Him. I wish we had time to dwell more in verse 4. I really wish we had. There's so much just in that one verse that we could take this morning.

[18 : 20] But please just take this point as we go on that God loves you and has chosen you. I ask that we move to verse 5 and onwards that we hold verse 4 very dearly. For we can argue, can't we?

And we get confused at times between God's calling and our response. God calls and we respond. And Christians argue which is more important, that God calls or that we respond?

And who really makes the decision when those two things come together to believe? Is it God's decision or is it my decision? And I think we need to know this, that both are very clear and both are there in Scripture.

Verse 4, God has chosen you. And in verse 6, you welcomed the message. Do you see? The two go together and we try to push them apart and say this is it and this is it, but the two are there.

So we start with 4 and we move to 5. And verse 5 has that great linking word, because, because, because. We say that we are loved and chosen.

[19 : 25] How do we know this? Because, because, because. We know we are loved and chosen because of what comes in verse 5. Firstly, the gospel came to them, verse 5, not simply with words, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.

And when you read that, it's tempting, isn't it, to skip the, the not simply bit. You kind of, you know, you're eager to get into things. You say, oh, not simply, okay. So we'll get on to the bit that follows because that's the complicated bit and that's where we need to be.

But we'd be wrong to skip this part of the message coming. Yes, there was more than words at work in the gospel that came to the church in Thessalonica. But it's never less than words.

For words, the content of the message is absolutely, they're absolutely critical. Imagine if my phone conversation continued like this. Sir, you have a problem with your computer.

Okay, I'm not going to tell you who I am, but what is the problem? I can't say. Sorry, you're telling me there's a problem with my computer?

[20 : 37] Well, what kind of problem? I can't say. I don't, I don't have any words. I've nothing really. It's a problem with your computer, sir. You have to listen to me. This is very urgent. What kind of a message would that be?

What kind of a conversation would that be if there was no content, if there was no words, if there was no information communicated? And a word of warning, as we were here this morning, we must not assume the message.

We must not assume the content. We mustn't sit here on a Sundays and treat what we do as some kind of social gathering where we drink cups of tea and we welcome one another and we sing songs and head off and those things are great and all those things are critical to what we do, but because they're infused with the message.

We're not a social club. That's not what it's about on a Sunday. As good as these things are, without the clear retelling of the gospel each week, they are meaningless. It's as if God wasn't there or wasn't behind it.

And we need to not just do this retelling on a Sunday. We need to do it throughout the week. The words of the gospel, the message, the content need to be heard and shared.

[21 : 47] Pastor and author Kevin DeYoung put this very well and I just read it during the week and thought it fit very well and he puts it this way and it's up there if you're able to read but you can just listen as well.

What he says is don't assume, articulate. The first generation receives the gospel. The second generation assumes the gospel. What happens? The third generation loses the gospel.

We must not only affirm the gospel when we're having it presented to us like what's happening now. We must teach our people to articulate it. we must sing it strong and preach it loud.

We must be passionate about clarity and be clear with our passions. It must be clear and we must be passionate and those things must go together. Words are important.

We see that in the Bible again and again. God reveals himself to his people through words. The words of the prophets, the words of the apostles, they're written down in the Bible. Paul, when he came to Acts, he reasoned from the scriptures.

[22 : 51] And not only that, but Jesus himself is identified as the word of God. The ultimate revelation of who God is. The ultimate word.

The ultimate communication by God of himself to his people is Jesus. Jesus is the word made flesh, made human. Look at the chapter in front of us.

Verse 5. What he says, our gospel with words. Verse 6. It says you welcome the message. If you skip down to verse 8, speaking of the Thessalonians, the Lord's message rang out from you.

The gospel. This message is the theme of the whole of the scriptures. It fills each and every page of the Bible. And what we believe is of first importance.

For there are many groups and many churches that are church only in name. For they no longer hold to the clear message of the gospel. The message they have is a different message, a different gospel with a different focus.

[23 : 58] And it's one that's not fit for purpose. Because the message we need to hear is one that saves us from the wrath of God. and we need a message that will rescue us from the coming wrath.

Look at verses 9 and 10. Second half of verse 9. They tell how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Verse 10. We read about Jesus, the Son of God that has come from heaven. God who comes into a broken world from the kingdom of heaven and he comes as a man.

The same God-man, it says, he dies and he's raised to life again. He's resurrected. But why? The clear message to save us from the coming wrath.

That's not a popular message. It's not when you hear a lot. It's even when you don't often hear a lot of in churches, believe it or not. But it's important because you see, God cannot continue to forever tolerate a broken world.

[25 : 18] God can't continue to put up with the suffering and injustice and rebellion that is against him. So his wrath, his perfect justice, and his punishment against rebels is coming.

If that is true, what is the message we need to hear? We need a rescuer. We need a rescuer. Jesus, the one who delivers us.

So here in verse 10, we have a summary, a snapshot, if you like, an instant picture of the message. And this was the word that was preached to the Thessalonians and the one that we seek to continue to preach as followers of Jesus, the words that came.

Have you welcomed this message? And again, we must not sit here this morning and just nod our head in agreement. As Kevin DeYoung tells us, don't assume the message.

Articulate it or speak it out. Speak to each other. Speak to people that don't know it. Speak it on Facebook, on email and Twitter. Say it again and again and again.

[26 : 30] Learn the message. Speak the message. Learn the message again. Speak the message again. Paul puts it like this elsewhere in the Bible. For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance, that Christ died for sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried and that he was raised again on the third day according to the scriptures.

The gospel message needs to be heard. Back to verse 5. The gospel that came to the Thessalonians, as it says, was not simply with words, it also came in power.

Not simple words, but words with power. Now what does that mean? What does it mean here when we say that the gospel came in power? Because we come across ideas in the Bible that have lots of meanings and lots of expressions and the way we use English, we understand that a word like power can mean lots of things.

So we have to look, I think, for the clues to get some understanding in the passage. Well, what is the meaning? And on power, I don't think we get any direct comment from Paul about what the power means.

It could mean that there were powerful signs and wonders that accompanied the message as it went to the Thessalonians. And we see that in the history of the early church in Acts.

[27 : 58] Often there were signs and wonders that went with the gospel, powerful signs to confirm the message. But we don't actually read of any of that in Acts 17. So I think rather than the power in this case being powerful signs or wonders, which is one possibility, it seems instead in the context of what Paul is writing here in verses 4 and 5, that the power is the intrinsic power of the gospel to save people.

Paul makes this, I think, quite clear, this idea in Romans. You don't need to turn to it, chapter 1 and verse 16. Paul says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew and then for the Gentile.

And as we saw in Acts 17, that's what happened, isn't it? That the gospel came in power, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles and everyone, regardless of being Jew or Gentile, was saved by the gospel message.

It is the power to bring about rescue and deliverance from the wrath of God. Isn't that the power that we really need if the wrath of God is coming?

And this is what we find, this is what we find in chapter 1 and all the verses in Acts 17. people that are being saved by the power of the gospel. So the message didn't just come simply with words, but it was accompanied by saving power.

[29 : 27] We see it in verse 9 again, don't we? They tell how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God. people responded by the power of the gospel and turned instead of living for self, they literally did a 180 and they began to live for God.

That's the power of the gospel and well, it's incredible. The gospel coming in power. People who were looking to idols are now looking to God.

Man-made comforts. Little idols were ruling them. But when the gospel came, they turned. We may, of course, want to object at this point to what happened or maybe we're thinking in our heads, we have a little comment.

Yeah, I mean, the simple, superstitious first century Greeks, you know, their little wooden idols, their little clay idols. So, okay, they gave up them for some invisible God who lives in heaven.

Big deal. That's not very powerful. They just gave up one religious superstition for another religious superstition. Little wooden idols for invisible God. I mean, you know, it's not very convincing, is it, to read that.

[30 : 45] But you've missed a point and you haven't looked carefully enough, I think, because this isn't some small change of allegiance between competing sellers of religion. for the message, verse 6.

Do you see the context? It's been welcomed in the midst of severe suffering. Remember back to what we read in Acts 17. The Christian message is turning the world upside down.

This message, which is taking over the whole world, has come to our city. What are we going to do? Yes, the idol makers are going out of business. Sorcery books are no longer being purchased.

In fact, they're being burned as what we read in Acts. The temple prostitution business is now at risk as people have stopped going to the temples and taking part in all that happens there.

The whole sordid order of society is being left behind for a God who, in verse 3, promotes love and promotes faith and promotes hope.

[31 : 45] A message that changes priorities of people to no longer live for self and pleasure but instead they can welcome suffering and disgrace because they're looking for a saviour from heaven.

This is the power of the gospel to turn people away from idols and to turn them to serve the true and living God. We may scoff at the idea of bowing down to little idols now.

You know, we think it's ridiculous but how many of us bow down each day to our TV idol? How many of us bow down to our computer idol, our phone idol? We may not have little statues that we fear and we appease but we fear losing our internet connection for a day.

We appease our God of stuff and gadget by making them the focus of our energies and our time and our money. Or maybe not, maybe for others it's your work, your desk, the importance of your desk at work, the fields you work in as farmers.

You're so eager to do our jobs that we don't have time for the true and living God and they're our idols. Or we worship people, we worship our partners, our spouses, our children, they rule our lives and we fear messing them up or we fear messing up the relationship and that dominates us.

[32 : 57] We have to appease them. We, I, am the superstitious 21st century equivalent of the Thessalonians.

We are the simple creatures with our created gods, worshipping them instead of turning to the living God and serving Him.

We need the power of the gospel to rescue us and to turn us towards the Savior from heaven. Verse 5, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power with the Holy Spirit.

So what's up with the Holy Spirit then? Why does he get a mention? We know the content of the gospel, we've spoken about that, the words, we see the power of the gospel to change lives and then we hear that the Holy Spirit is part of this message coming.

There's lots and lots and lots we could say about the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing the gospel message. He convicts people of sin, makes them aware of their sin.

[34 : 04] He brings about the new birth, the change inside where people are able to follow God and he comes to live inside the believer and empower them. I'm not going to try and squeeze all that in here because we know that the work of the Spirit is so massive in this whole area.

But let's look for why I think Paul included this here. Again, trying to stick to the context of the passage and what it says rather than reading in all that we could to see what it says.

Let's look for the clues. It's verse 6, I think. I think verse 6 is a big help in understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in the message coming.

You became imitators of us and of the Lord in spite of severe suffering. You welcome the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. You see the two things linked? The message, the Spirit.

And the reference to the Holy Spirit brings us back to the context again of the letter and the context of how the church was born and it makes sense. The church was born in severe suffering.

[35 : 09] Churches do not always start out or indeed continue in prosperity and blessing. In fact, many churches are born in suffering. Paul suffered.

Acts 17. The local believers suffered. They were arrested. They faced being dragged from their homes and brought before the magistrates. They had enemies who were actively seeking to persecute them.

They were suffering for the gospel and because of the gospel. Think about that. In order to welcome that message, what that meant, in such circumstances, would you welcome the message?

Would you be so quick to switch your allegiances? Seriously, why ditch your current kind of harmless idols maybe, you know, from what you can see, things you can control, and bring such suffering on yourself because of the Holy Spirit.

The end of verse 6. They endured all of that suffering with joy. With joy given by the Holy Spirit. Ah, come on. Suffering?

[36 : 19] Okay. With joy? Really? No one. No one finds joy in being dragged before the courts and having to be bailed out in order to keep the peace. But that's exactly what this is saying.

The Holy Spirit enables joy in suffering. And it's one of the things, one of the qualities, I think, of the Christian message that makes it unique. it's not a message primarily of success, of wealth, of healing, of conquest, of achievement, of ultimate victory in this life.

Because that's what the Jews were expecting, wasn't it, from the Messiah. But Paul taught them in the synagogue that the Messiah must suffer. It's a message of joy, yes, in suffering.

Of a Savior who suffered and died. And it's such joy that characterizes the Spirit's work in bringing the gospel. It's a joy that welcomes the message of a servant king who was spat on, who was whipped, who was beaten.

Jesus was devoid of property and health and well-being in the end. He was actually stripped of his last clothes as he went to the cross.

[37 : 38] He hung there naked, naked on a tree. a torture instrument for the world to mock. We need the Holy Spirit. We need him to bring about joy in such a spectacle.

For there's no human joy in looking at the cross. There's no human source for that joy in the sufferings of Christ. Or there's no human joy to want to follow that.

Or to want to suffer like that. Can the followers expect it to be treated better than their master? Oh, that the message of the cross, the message of the cross would go hand in hand with the joy of the Holy Spirit so that when we see Jesus, we see a glorious suffering king.

back to verse 5 and the final thing that the gospel came with, the message. The gospel came to you not simply with words, but with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction.

The final piece for the Thessalonians was that it came with deep conviction. This, I think, shifts our attention somewhat from the message to the messenger. And it's something if you're reading Thessalonians as we've read chapter 1 this morning, we're going to be going through it for a couple of months, that we can't get away from.

[39 : 01] The who is so very important to this letter. Paul reminds them, doesn't he, in the latter part of verse 5, of what deep conviction looks like.

You know how we lived among you for your sake. Full assurance by Paul in the message. You see, Paul isn't some hired sales rep for the latest religious fad that he's trying to sell into these new places that's come out of the Holy Land.

You see, Paul is fully assured of his message and deeply convinced that it is the power of God for salvation, the only message worth bringing. So Paul not only shares the message, but Paul shares his very life with the believers.

He is willing to model Jesus to them. So that in verse 6, the Thessalonians become imitators of Paul and in turn imitators of the Lord. And again, how did Paul imitate his saviour?

Through his joy in suffering. Jesus poured immense, immense sufferings into the life of Paul. Remember Paul, his old name?

[40 : 11] He used to be called Saul. And Saul used to go around persecuting the Christians. He presided over them being killed. He was on a mission to eradicate the church and God changed his life.

The most unlikely person to change allegiance was Saul. But he was transformed by meeting Christ. And Christ told him he would suffer greatly for the gospel.

Christ poured his sufferings into Paul and Paul received him with joy as he went through beatings and imprisonments and shipwrecked. He had deep conviction as he was hounded from city to city, keeping one step of the people that would kill him for preaching this gospel.

Going through this, it asks a question of me. It asks a question of us all. How important is the messenger then in bringing the gospel? Does the messenger matter?

For I am no Paul as I stand here this morning. As the gospel is spoken in our service, it's coming with words, it is coming with the power to save, and the Holy Spirit is there for us if we would receive him so that we can receive the message with joy.

[41 : 19] But what about the deep conviction? And I stand exposed for the call of God on all of us and on me in particular as I stand here is to live among you, to live among you for your sake, to allow my following of Jesus, as it says in verse 6, to be an example that can be imitated by others.

And this makes it very personal, doesn't it? And as I say it, I feel weak and unable for my conviction waivers and my example is not always one to imitate, but the message must be lived out in a community.

We're not 100-meter sprinters competing against one another to get to the end. If anything, we're like three-legged racers in a marathon holding each other trying to get there.

So I look to you as you look to me as we all look to Christ together. The gospel is about deep conviction to the message and deep conviction to other people.

It's chapter 2 and verse 8 which is such a great summary. I had to go ahead and pluck it out. Apologies to whoever is preaching on chapter 2 and verse 8. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well because you had become so dear to us.

[42 : 53] The messenger is part of God's purpose. Not that God is dependent on us for he can and he sometimes does use different means to reach people but I think his normal method in building his church is person to person and we have to be that daily example of Christ and his selfless suffering to each other.

Are you willing to share your life with the person next to you? The person behind you? The people that are out in junior church and up in creche?

How deep is your conviction? Maybe it's just enough to be here on Sunday for a couple of hours. That's good.

It's a good starting point but I'd ask you not to stop there. Build on it. Grow it. Look to others for an example of what it means to have deep conviction and for aim as we see what happened here is not just to be an example to one another but for the message to go out as it did in verses 7 and 8.

Do you see that? It went out from Macedonia and Achaia which is basically the whole of Greece and as Paul went around not just to other churches but he says everywhere.

[44 : 04] So Paul went to cities where there was no churches and Paul says verse 8 we do not need to say anything about it for they themselves report the kind of reception he gave us. So the reputation of the church in Thessalonica it went out it went out everywhere and people knew of the church.

Ah the message yes we've heard the message I know you're the first person to bring it to us but we've heard the rumours and the stories of these people that have turned from idols to serve the living God and who are awaiting a saviour to rescue them from the coming wrath we've heard that message and wouldn't it be great if that's the kind of reputation that we had as a church that we went to Kinsale or around Cork or Waterford or Wexford or Dublin or Donegal or further afield that yes the church in Carragallion we've heard of them they love Jesus and it all starts with this welcoming the message in the midst of severe suffering.

I've gone well over my time but I have to tell you about my Microsoft caller don't I? Leaving you in suspense that wasn't very fair. Needless to say he was a scammer trying to part a fool from his money I didn't give in his aim was to get control of my computer at which point he would then install the viruses on us and then charge me for the privilege of removing them.

You've been warned. His message was a lie. The words he spoke they were all wrong. He had no power to fix my computer and I can tell you if he got hold of it I wouldn't have any joy in the suffering that was going to follow.

And I was completely unimpressed by his lack of assurance when I began to question him of his own message and he struggled to convince me. So in the end I lost nothing by ignoring it. In fact I was better off.

[45 : 53] So what are you going to do with the message you've heard this morning? You can treat it in exactly the same way. You can treat it as a scam and dismiss it. Or you can weigh up the evidence the words the power the work of the spirit and the deep conviction of the people that believe.

You know our church isn't perfect the Thessalonians we're going to see aren't perfect Paul has to rebuke them as well as encourage them. But we must come back time and again and ask of our church and of ourselves about the gospel we believe.

Does it have word? Does it have power? Does it have spirit? Does it have conviction? If the evidence is there believe the gospel and look to heaven for a saviour from the coming wrath of God.

Thanks Ralph.

Well in response to what we've heard we're going to sing our final song He is the Lord and He reigns on high If you look at the second verse if you could flick that up and He comes in power the next one sorry there we are Your gospel O Lord is the hope for our nation it's the power of God for our salvation so let's stand as we remind ourselves and sing of how great our God is.

[47 : 25] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. He is the Lord and He reigns on high He is the Lord He's been to the darkness created the light He is the Lord Who is like unto Him ever ending in days He is the Lord And He comes in power We call on His name He is the Lord Show Your power O Lord our God Show Your power O Lord our God O Lord our God

Your gospel, O Lord Is the hope for our nation You are the Lord The power of God For our salvation You are the Lord We ask not for riches But look to the cross You are the Lord For our inheritance Give us the lost You are the Lord Show Your power Show Your power Show Your power O Lord our God Show Your power Show Your power O Lord our God Show Your power

O Lord our God O Lord our God Please do take a seat Just a couple of instructions And then I'm going to pray And we're going to have lunch now Which is going to be served over where the hatch is And so there's going to be tables there So a couple of volunteers to get the tables that are behind the screen Put them there And anybody who can help bring the food out If you've got children If you could kind of look after them And then we're going to form a nice orderly queue As we always do Over that way to there Pick up your dinner A drink And then just sit around And chat To people as well So I'm going to give thanks to God For the food that we're going to have now And please just use this time just to chat We're here to celebrate the arrival of Ben

Celebrate Peter and Maeve are leaving in the right way You understand that But let's pray Father thank you so much for your goodness Thank you most of all for the gospel For that message that has come to us We pray that you would work it into our lives Convincing us of its truth Changing us and transforming us We thank you now for the food that we are going to enjoy together We thank you for the reasons that we are having this lunch For little Ben For his family Thank you that we can celebrate these great gifts that you give to us Thank you also for Peter and Maeve And we pray your blessing on them So we thank you Father For each and every one of your good gifts In Jesus name Amen Thank you I thank you for the puppy that we are letting■■■■INE

[51 : 43] For their family to pursue Seymour In Jesus name Amen So we sharing the information that we are going to estudium Angelus Who's going to get to find the School of Housing What other things are trying to do here Those children,...

A mother Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[55 : 07] Thank you.