

1 Thessalonians Ch1v6-10 - Gospel Church

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Date: 02 February 2025

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[0 : 00] in our Bibles again. We're going to have two readings this morning. First one, we're going to go back to the Psalms. And not too far. We start on page 602.

We're going to go to page 603. So not too challenging this morning. We're going to look at Psalm 98. Sorry, Psalm 98.

If you're using the Church Bible, it's page 603. So we're going to read Psalm 98, and then we're going to turn to 1 Thessalonians. So again, two readings this morning before Johnny comes to preach from God's Word for us.

So Psalm 98 and reading from verse 1. Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

The Lord has made known, has made his salvation known, and revealed his righteousness to the nations. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to Israel.

[1 : 16] All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Shout for joy to the Lord. All the earth burst into jubilant song with music.

Make music to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn. Shout for joy before the Lord, the King.

Let the sea resound and everything in it, the world and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands. Let the mountains sing together for joy.

Let them sing before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.

And now turn to 1 Thessalonians in the New Testament and chapter 1. So 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, the Red Church Bible is page 1186.

[2 : 13] We're going to read from verse 6, 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. Reading from verse 6, You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering 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.

We pray that the Lord will bless the reading of his word. And Johnny, we thank you for preaching for us this morning. Thank you. And thank you, Ralph, for leading us this morning.

[3 : 43] Good to see you all today. Let's keep our Bibles open in Thessalonians. We've just started our new series in this letter.

If you missed the talks, they're on the website, so I encourage you to go there. Thanks to Christopher, who puts that together for us. So before we look at God's word, let's pray and ask for his help.

Let's do that now. Lord, help us by your Holy Spirit.

May the word of God come to us with power so that it changes us and motivates us afresh to honour you and to serve you.

May this all be for your glory, for the fame of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that his name would be known across this world.

[4 : 56] Help us, we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, something very exciting is happening today.

You won't hear about it on the 6-1 News, but it is being celebrated in heaven. It's not going to be talked about in the Dáil, but it is literally being talked about around the world.

As we alluded to in our announcements and prayer time, a church has started meeting in the town of Carrick Toole. From today and every Sunday going forward, you will find a gathering of people who love the Lord Jesus Christ and who have committed themselves to one another.

How did this new church begin? Where did it come from? Well, another church in Middleton began to reach out and began to pray for the community and share the gospel with others.

And as people heard and believed, they have joined with each other and so a church has started. You see, the gospel forms the church and the church now spreads the gospel.

[6 : 22] The gospel forms the church and the church now spreads the gospel. That's what happened in Thessalonica. Paul and his team spread the good news about Christ and so a church was formed and that very church began to share the gospel with others.

And it's no different for Carrick-A-Line Baptist Church. This is how we came into existence. The gospel, the good news, formed the church and we have the wonderful and awesome privilege of telling the gospel to others.

In this way, we become a model church. So look at verse 6. Paul says, you became imitators of us and of the Lord.

So just as the Lord Jesus Christ came and preached the gospel and just as Paul and his team preached the gospel, verse 7, and so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

They followed the example of Christ and of Paul. They heard, they received, and they began to tell. So what will it look like for us today to be a model church?

[7 : 52] Well, there's nothing difficult about this morning in what we're going to look at. Two things we're going to see. The gospel is heard and the gospel is seen.

The gospel is heard and the gospel is seen. Look at verse 8. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, your faith in God has become known everywhere.

So three things, very simply, we're going to learn from this verse. And first, the gospel is a word about Jesus.

Look at verse 8 again. the Lord's message rang out. You see, the gospel is a message. It's a word about Jesus.

Have a look back at verse 5. He says, our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power.

[8 : 58] Yes, with power but not without words. the word had to be told. So look at chapter 2, the end of verse 2.

Chapter 2, end of verse 2. He says, with the help of our God we dare to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition.

Or go down to verse 9, the end of verse 9. We work tonight and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

So what's this word that is being told and being preached? Well, look at chapter 3, verse 2. We send Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service, in spreading the gospel of Christ. You see, the gospel word is a good news announcement about Christ. A declaration of what God has done for us.

[10 : 09] It's a message about Jesus who is the Christ, God's King, come to restore and renew this broken world and our disordered lives.

It's a word about how Jesus, the King, has given his life for you and has defeated death for you so that people like us might share in his eternal kingdom.

You see, the gospel is communicated in word and we have that good news message to tell about Jesus.

So it's a word about Jesus, which is second, declared to all people.

A message about Jesus declared to all people. Look at verse 8. The Lord's message rang out. Literally, it echo, echo, echo.

[11 : 14] It reverberated all around. In verse 8, Macedonia, which was in northern Greece, and Achaia, which is southern Greece, your faith, verse 8, in God became known everywhere.

It was like a foghorn. The sound, the message of the gospel, it just kept on traveling from one place to another. It's like what scientists call the butterfly effect.

A butterfly supposedly flaps its wings in South China, sets off a current of air, which in turn becomes a hurricane in the Indian Ocean.

Don't know if that's true or if it's made up, but it's a good illustration, isn't it? And that's what happens when the gospel is declared. It's impact. It's just spoken, and it goes on and on. It reverberates all around. The message, the good news about Jesus rang out. So a word about Jesus to all people through the church.

[12 : 29] Again, look at verse 8. The Lord's message rang out from you. The means that God uses to announce the good news is the church.

People just like you and me. Now I find that extraordinary. Gospel telling is done through ordinary people, ordinary sinful, suffering, struggling people like us.

God could have used mighty angels. He could have used special prophets. He could have said, I want you to hire professionals, but none of that.

Instead, God chose you and me, this church, to share and to tell the gospel. Maybe you've heard someone say or you've read somewhere, maybe you think it's a verse in the Bible.

Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words. Well, it's not a Bible verse and it's very unhelpful.

[13 : 45] Words are essential. Without words, we cannot communicate the amazing love of God who redeems us from sin and reconciles us to himself.

But the word is also necessary because the gospel word, the good news about Jesus in and of itself as it is spoken is a powerful word.

It changes and transforms lives. Look at chapter 2 verse 13. Chapter 2 verse 13.

We also thank God continually because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as it is the word of God which is indeed at work in you who believe.

It's not just a made up word, it's not just an ordinary word, it's a God word and God's word has power, it works in people's lives, it's living and effective, it's like a seed planted in the ground that grows and produces a fruitful harvest.

[15 : 08] Now amazingly this gospel word is is not just for you and I, it's for the community of Carragalline, the county of Cork, the island of Ireland, for asylum seekers in Sheffield, for the unreached people in Kashmir.

It's a message for all because God's heart is for all the nations. And it's not just a responsibility but it's a privilege for us to be involved.

God has formed us. This is no mistake. He's formed us together from different places and different backgrounds, united us together in Christ and to each other for the purpose, verse 8, that the Lord's message would ring out from you.

And that's what happens every week in this church. On Thursday morning, this hall is transformed into polo.

On Friday, the rock and rooted and Sunday evening, core. God's word about Jesus is faithfully declared by you to others.

[16 : 31] But it's not limited to just these events. Think about where you live. God has you where you are in the community with the people.

He's given you the friends and the family that you have so that the gospel message, the Lord's message, would ring out from you.

That they might turn and see the wonder and the beauty of who Jesus is and come to know him. It's very simple, isn't it?

The gospel is heard. Second, the gospel is seen. Look at the end of verse eight.

He says, your faith in God has become known everywhere. This people had heard the gospel, it had taken effect in their lives, and as they came to believe it, they were being transformed, they were being changed.

[17 : 38] but what I want us to notice is how their faith became known everywhere. How did their faith become known everywhere? Yes, it rang out from them by word, but look at verse nine.

For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell. you see, this wasn't self-promotion on behalf of the church.

The change in their lives had been observed by others within their community, and it was them, unbelievers, that began to tell others about these new Christians and the transformation in their lives.

Verse nine, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. they had become the gossip of the town. Did you hear about that group who meet in the Carragoline Community Centre? I know some of them. They're different folk. They take this Jesus seriously. And their lives, they're kind of different.

[18 : 58] So what changes and effects should we see as the gospel takes root in our lives? Well, very simply, first, we have turned from idols.

We've turned from idols. Let's read again verse nine. For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols.

idols. Now, idols aren't just figures that are carved out of wood or stone. An idol can be anything or anyone that is more important to you than God.

So an idol can be a good thing, like a job or a hobby or a loved one or a desire. But we take those things and they become a God replacement or a God substitute.

So what I want us to do is to think about this morning, what is your idol? What is my idol? Tim Keller, a pastor and writer now with the Lord, wrote a lot about this and he spoke about two questions that are helpful to identify your idol.

[20 : 23] And here's the first question and I want us to think through what the answer might be for ourselves. What do you think about most of all?

What do you think about most of all? When you daydream, like when I'm speaking for example, where do your thoughts go to?

Where do your thoughts go to? When you wake up first thing in the morning or go to bed at night, what's ticking over in your mind? What's consuming your thoughts? Maybe it's the job, maybe it's the longing for the holiday, maybe it's for a friend.

Here's the second question, what do you most fear losing? What do you most fear losing? If it was taken away from you, it would leave you absolutely devastated and broken.

So maybe it's your health you fear losing or a loved one. You see, the answer to these questions reveal our idols.

[21 : 34] Instead of looking to God for our joy and our happiness and our security and our hope, we look to other things that take the place of God. As I thought about this, I thought about an idol that certainly is in my camp and maybe in yours as well.

We carry it with us every single day. If we can't find it, we panic and we stress. When we want comfort, we watch it.

When we want advice, we listen to it. It has our attention first thing in the morning, last thing at night. It is, of course, our mobile phones.

It consumes our every day. We wait listening for that ping. Somebody sent me a message. We are waiting for those two blue ticks.

They've read my message. They're longing for a happy emoji. They love me. We can't live without it. We serve it daily, scrolling, flicking, downloading, playing.

[22 : 55] Don't believe me? Turn off your phone now and don't touch it for 24 hours. You can't. It's an idol.

It's got a hold of you. But look what happens when the gospel takes effect in our life. Verse 9, they turned to God from idols.

They turned. They repented. They reordered their lives around God. Not that phones are all terribly bad.

But what people see is when the gospel takes effect, people can see a difference. Instead of people being consumed with social media and living your life according to what others say and becoming and looking like what everybody else say you should look like.

Our hearts are now consumed with the God who made us, who loves us, and speaks to us. you see, when the gospel takes effect, we turn from idols.

[24 : 06] Second, to serve God. Look at verse 9. They tell how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

When the gospel takes effect, we realise that the idols that we cling on to, well, what they really are like. My idols, the things that consume me, are ultimately dead and false.

They can't give you life, and they only tell you lies. In its place, verse 9, instead of an idol that is dead and false, we have the living and true God.

God is the living one. He's the creator and sustainer and provider of your life. He rules over you, which means I can trust him.

And God is true. He not only does what is right, he only does what is best for us. He knows me intimately, therefore I can trust him.

[25 : 17] This is a God who I can give my life to. You see, God alone is worthy of our service and is deserving of our worship. And that's what happens when the gospel takes effect.

People see, people noticed. Instead of pursuing my own desires and my own wants, we become a people who seek God's desires and what he wants.

No longer driven by selfish desires, but serving the living and true God. So we turn from our idols to serve God.

Third, as we wait for Jesus. Verse 10. Turning from idols, serving God, and to wait for his son from heaven whom he's raised from the dead, Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath.

You see, if you're a Christian, this world and the home that we're going to go back to is not our real home. We're waiting for a true and eternal home, God's eternal kingdom to come.

[26 : 41] You see, one day, the risen Lord Jesus is going to come back again and he's going to put everything right.

He's going to fix things. How do we know it's true? Well, look at verse 10. The son whom he sent from heaven, whom he raised from the dead.

There's the proof. There's the evidence that Jesus is coming. Jesus has risen from the dead. His power to crush and defeat death means that one day he is going to come in awesome power.

And when he comes, verse 10, he's going to rescue us from the coming wrath. Yes, judgment will fall.

One day we will all stand before God and have to give an account. This world is not going on forever. It's not a cycle that just goes on and on and on. A day is coming when Jesus will come and God's wrath will fall.

[27 : 50] Not his anger in terms of his temper, but his just, fair, and right response to a world in rebellion who have rejected Jesus, the King.

but for those who trust Jesus, for those who turn continually on a day-by-day basis, turn from idols and seek to serve the living and true God who love Jesus, we will be rescued from that coming wrath.

Look at chapter 4, verse 16, to get a sneak peek at what it will be like when Jesus comes for the believer.

Here's how he puts it, chapter 4, verse 16, for the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ, the Christians who have died, will rise first, and after that we, and those who are still alive when Christ returns, and are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will be with the Lord forever.

Is that good news, or is that good news? You see, that's what happens when the gospel takes effect. People will see and notice that this world does not dictate how we live, but the world to come, will show us how we live.

[29 : 47] Rather than a people without hope, we live as people with eternal hope. No longer do we live in fear and despair, but we live with joy and peace. An idol isn't going to do that for you, but the living and true God does.

You see, a church changed by the gospel is a beautiful thing. in fact, this church is God's display piece, his treasured new creation that he sends out into a watching world and it's as if the world is there to watch and see who we are.

Because as the good news takes a hold of our life, it begins to change us and transform us day by day. people will talk about that bunch of Jesus people rattling around in the community centre.

They will see that we're not consumed by a longing for success. They will observe that we're not chasing that perfect dream. They'll watch that we're not strangled by fear and crushed by despair.

Instead, they will experience a people who are wonderfully secure because they have everything in Christ. They will fill with joy because we know that we have the living and true God and who live peaceful lives because they have the hope of Jesus' return.

[31 : 26] Isn't that amazing? This church didn't organise in Thessalonica a social media campaign. They didn't have special eye-catching websites or great flyers to hand out or tea and coffee.

Maybe they did actually. I'm not sure. No programmes or ministries are listed here and enticing people with games and food. Of course, they're all good and they're great things and we do them. But people simply taught. Go back to chapter 1 verse 9. For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us.

They tell how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven. Unbelievers saw the effect the gospel took and they began to tell others that something has happened to them.

My question to myself and to you this morning is this. As we've gone through our text, we have heard the gospel.

[32 : 51] If you are not a Christian today, what is your response to this gospel? Are you ready to meet the coming Lord Jesus?

Have you turned from your idols to serve the living and true God? That's a serious question. We need to be ready for the Lord.

If you are a Christian, well, how is the gospel changing you and how is it changing me? Are we identifying the idols in our lives?

Are we putting them to death? Are we seeing the wonder and the beauty of the living and true God and serving him? Let's just take a moment's quietness for each of us to reflect and to respond. as God leads. Talk to God where you are and ask for his help in your life.

[34 : 04] Amen. God that you have been pleased to show us the wonder of Jesus through your word, through the gospel.

Father, please help us that we would keep on putting our idols to death, that we would turn from that which is unhealthy, that we would listen to the true and living God and to know the hope afresh that Jesus is coming.

Please continue to change us and transform us, make us more beautiful, make us more like Christ. And we pray that through each one of us the gospel would ring out to this community to further afield, that many more churches will be planted across this island and across the world.

Thank you, Father, that your will and your work will be done and nothing and no one can stop it. Praise God.

Amen.