

# Turning, Serving and Waiting

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let us now read God's Word together. First of all from the Acts of the Apostles and chapter 17.

We'll read the first nine verses of Acts 17. And thereafter we'll read from 1 Thessalonians and chapter 1.

Acts 17 at the beginning. Now, when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews.

And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

[ 1 : 16 ] But the Jews, which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also, whom Jason hath received.

And these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

And when they had taken security of Jason and of the other, they let them go. And turning now to 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1.

The first epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, chapter 1.

[ 2 : 37 ] Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.

Knowing, brethren, beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, as ye know what manner of men we were among you, for your sake.

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost, so that ye were in samples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only 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.

[ 4 : 06 ] For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and through God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom ye raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Amen. And may God bless to us that reading from his holy word. And to his name be all the praise. It is again saying to his praise, this time from Psalm 89.

Psalm 89 and verse 13. 13 to 16. Thou hast an arm that is full of power.

Thy hand is great in might. Thy right hand exceedingly exalted is in height. Justice and judgment of thy throne are made the dwelling place.

Mercy accompanied with truth. Shall go before thy face. O greatly blessed the people are, the joyful sound that know. In brightness of thy face, O Lord, they ever on shall go.

[ 5 : 26 ] They in thy name shall all the day rejoice exceedingly. And in thy righteousness shall they exalted be on high. These tanzas of Psalm 89 verses 13 to 16.

To God's praise, thou hast an arm that's full of power. The last of thy life, the last soul of power.

The last of thy life, the last soul of power. Thy hand is great in mind. Thy hand is great to see. Thy heart is red on high. Die nation shall «Song Essebon caught the god of Jesus 12!!!» The sins and judgment of thy throne are made the family place.

Mercy, I come, I be with you, child, who may for thy sins.

O pray thee, blessed be the hour, the joyful Son of Lord.

[ 7 : 07 ] The brightness of thy lips, O Lord, may ever long shall go.

Live thy cares, O Lord, may rejoice exceedingly.

And in thy eyes just shall we exult in thee, O Christ.

Now as the Lord enables us, let us turn together to the first epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians.

And read again and consider the words we have from verses 9 and 10. Verses 9 and 10. 1 Thessalonians 1 at verse 9.

[ 8 : 29 ] And for they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye 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, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

The Apostle Paul visited Thessalonica on his second missionary journey, probably around 53 A.D.

You remember that he had had a vision. You remember that he had had a vision at Troas. A man from Macedonia saying to him, come over and help us.

And having gone across to Macedonia, he went to Philippi, and much blessing followed his service to the Lord there.

When you think of Lydia, the way with other women, she went down to the riverside to hold a prayer meeting. And as Paul addressed them, her heart was opened by the Lord, and she took heed to what the Apostle was saying.

[ 10 : 13 ] In other words, the word of God lodged in her heart, and her life was radically and savingly changed. That is a change that's often referred to as being a quiet conversion.

But I suppose it's only a quiet conversion when you set it beside the other example of gospel power known in Philippi during that time, when the Philippian jailer came to faith in Christ.

And it's as if the earthquake that shook the very walls and doors of the prison house was, as it were, responded to by an earthquake inside his own heart.

Because he leapt in and asked the Apostle, what shall I do to be saved? It's as if the Lord, by his mighty power, shook him to his very backbone, and he saw no way forward than to believe in the Lord Jesus, which he did, and of which he gave much proof.

Because quite soon after that incident, we read of him washing and bandaging the Apostle Paul's wounds, which he had inflicted himself quite recently before that.

[ 11 : 58 ] And we see now that after they had been to Philippi, they went along, and they came to this place called Thessalonica, or some people call it Thessalonica.

And there was a synagogue of the Jews there. We read that in Acts chapter 17. And as was his custom, the Apostle Paul went in unto them, and on three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ.

And it says, Some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas. Of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

Isn't it interesting? The plain, straight, gospel message. That's what the Lord owned in Thessalonica.

And that's what the Lord still owns. It is the word preached, applied by the Holy Spirit, that will bring that saving change into the hearts and lives of those to whom it is applied.

[ 13 : 21 ] And we see when he opens this letter to the church in Thessalonica, he, at the beginning of chapter 1, now in the first epistle, Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It wasn't just a number of believers in Thessalonica. That was their earthly location.

But their spiritual location and security was much more glorious than that. The apostle says to them that they, as a church, were in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you cannot have greater security than that. To be in Christ. To be in God the Father. To be united in that saving way to God.

And how did that come about? Well, when the gospel came, it says here that it came to them not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance.

[ 14 : 46 ] The word of God came, accompanied by the Holy Spirit's power. And that always has a saving and lasting effect upon those into whose lives the word of God comes in that manner.

It is a saving word. A word that awakens them out of their wordliness and deadness. And unites them to Christ in their effectual calling.

Now, coming to the end of the chapter and these two verses that I highlighted as our text. Verse 9.

They themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you. That was the manner of entering in. That they came with the word of God.

With power, with the Holy Ghost and much assurance. And the effect was this. That you turned to God from idols.

[ 15 : 57 ] To serve the living and through God. And to wait for his son from heaven. And there are these three things I'd like to highlight this evening.

As being a result of the gospel having come in saving power into this place in Thessalonica.

It made its mark in such a way that those to whom it was blessed. It turned them to God from idols.

And then also they turned to serve the living and through God. And finally to wait for his son from heaven. One or two words on each of these three points this evening.

First of all they turned to God from idols. Now being Greeks.

[ 16 : 59 ] They probably acknowledged twelve different deities. Twelve different gods. And they offered sacrifice to them.

Twelve different gods. This was prior to the gospel coming. There were various gods, as it were, taking up their attention for various areas of life.

Whether it was healing. Or marriage. Or war. Or maritime business. Whatever it was. Whatever it was.

There was a God to whom they paid. Well they paid allegiance to them. And they sacrificed to them.

And they sought to please them. And they sought to have their favour. At all times. That is the way they lived. Before the gospel came.

[ 18 : 09 ] They were idolaters. But it says here. But it says here. That they turned to God. From idols. How did that happen?

How was it possible for these people. Who had been so entrenched. In this idolatrous lifestyle. How was it possible that they be turned to God from these idols?

Well the only explanation is that God himself came into their midst. And when God came into their midst.

By his word and spirit. They realised. How wrong their life had been. They saw something of the glory of God.

God. Because that's what the Holy Spirit does. When he enlightens our minds. In the knowledge of who we are.

[ 19 : 17 ] And what we're like. And the plight we are in. As sinners before a holy and a just God. And God came into as it were.

The room of their soul. And shone forth. Not visibly I mean. But he made himself known in such a way. That he showed them.

His purity and glory. And as a result showed them. Their own impurity. And their sinnership. And their lostness.

And their lostness. Maybe there are some people. In here this evening.

Who need to have that same. Revelation of the glory of God made known to them. I mean if I was going to ask you.

[ 20 : 15 ] What kind of idols fill your life. What would you say? There are many people in the world. And maybe money is their idol.

Maybe sex is their idol. Maybe drink is their idol. Drugs is their idol. Maybe sport is their idol. Maybe popularity is their idol.

Whatever it is. That takes up the place that God is meant to have in your life. That's your idol. Whatever it is. Whoever it is.

That is your idol. Maybe it is a car you've got. Maybe it is a house you've got.

Maybe even it is the family you've got. That God gave you. And really. You love them. But sadly. They are taking the place.

[ 21 : 22 ] That God needs to have. If he is going. To be at the centre of your life. And when the gospel comes.

Into a community. With this kind of power. This is the kind of effect. It has. People are turned. To God.

From their idols. I was thinking the other day about this. When Jesus came to Peter. And Andrew. In the middle of their fishing. He said follow me.

And you know. I believe that they saw. The boat as just a piece of wood. And the nets. As twine. And the fish just as.

Something to keep one alive. It wasn't as it were. The be all and end all of their life. Anymore. Because Jesus came. And they saw.

[ 22 : 23 ] Something of his glory. And beauty. And it was easy for them. To drop everything. And follow him. What about Abraham.

In the Old Testament. It says in Acts. That the God of glory. Revealed himself to Abraham. In Ur of the Chaldees.

And the scripture makes known to us. That Ur of the Chaldees. Was a place. That was full of idolatry. And it's easy to believe. That Abraham was. Involved with that idolatry.

The same as everybody else. But the God of glory. Revealed himself to him. And he said. Get out of this place. To a place that I will show you.

And the Bible says. He obeyed God. Not knowing where he was going. Isn't that an amazing thing?

[ 23 : 22 ] He turned himself. Or he was turned by the grace of God. To turn his back upon the idols. That made up his life before that. And he went forth.

Because God told him to. This. Talks about.

A turning. Around. Of the life. It is. It is turning around. A hundred and eighty degrees.

You know. On the compass. If you're walking. East to west. In your idolatrous lifestyle. And when Christ comes in.

And turns you around. You're walking in the opposite direction. You're not walking. One point. Short of a hundred and eighty degrees.

[ 24 : 27 ] You're walking. In the opposite direction. That's repentance. A turning of heart. And mind. In response.

To God's command. And that's what happened here. These people. They turned. To God. From their idols. What more have I got to do.

With idols. Ephraim says. We find that in Hosea chapter 14. At verse 8. And you see. This is what we need nowadays.

That the word of God. Go out. Faithfully. Prayerfully. Among our people. Because that is what will leave this. Lasting and saving effect.

Upon the lives of people. That they will be. That they will be enabled. By God's grace. To turn to God. From idols. The idols.

[ 25 : 28 ] That these people had. Worshipped. And served. And followed. They couldn't depend on them. From one day to the next. Christ. But our God.

Is the Lord. And when he speaks. He speaks the truth. And when he promises. That he can forgive. And will forgive your sins. He will do so.

When he promises. That he will never leave you. Nor forsake you. He will do so. When he promises. That he. Will supply all your needs.

According to his riches. In glory. By Christ Jesus. He will do so. When he promises. I will never leave you. Nor forsake you. He means.

That he will be with you. In life. And in death. And in eternity. As your God. Have you embraced him yet?

[ 26 : 25 ] Have you turned to him? You've heard of him. Often from this pulpit. You've heard of him. And you've heard appeals. To come to him.

An amazing verse there. In the Old Testament. Look unto me. It says. And be ye saved. All the ends of the earth. For I am God. And there is none else. There is no other saviour.

There is no other. One who is able to save you. From your sins. But the God. And the saviour. Of whom the Bible. Here is speaking. And he became personal.

To the people in Thessalonica. They were saved. That was the first thing. The turning. Secondly.

It says here. That they turned from idols. To serve. The living. And through God. To serve the living.

[ 27 : 23 ] And through God. Well. The word used here for serve. Is the same word. As we have for. A slave.

A person who is. Happily engaged. Fulfilling. Fulfilling. The master's. Commands.

And there is a lovely. Picture for us. In Deuteronomy chapter 15. And at verse 17. Regarding.

A man who has been. A slave in a household. A man who has been. A man who has been. And when the time comes. For him. To be allowed.

To go free. It says here. In verse 16. It shall be. If he say unto thee. I will not go away from thee.

[ 28 : 25 ] Because he loveth thee. And thine house. Because. He is well with thee. In other words. The master and the slave.

Have had. A good working relationship. Over the years. And although he is now. Permitted to go free. If he wants to. The slave says.

I don't want to go free. I'm happy to serve you. And then it says. Thou shall take an awl. And thrust it through his ear.

Unto the door. And he shall be thy servant. Forever. Well that must have been. A painful experience. For the slave.

But he loved his master so much. That he was willing to have this. Visible token of his affection. And his commitment to him.

[ 29 : 23 ] Made known. An awl was a very sharp tool. And the awl was put through. His ear. Against the door. Or the door post. And this was a public demonstration.

Of the servant's willingness. To serve his master. All of his life. And it says here.

That these people. Wanted to serve the living and true God. What happened to them.

Was. In a spiritual sense. Their spiritual ears. Had been opened. Because the Holy Spirit.

Had opened them. That they might listen. To the voice of the Lord. And what they heard. Coming from his lips. Pleased them.

[ 30 : 19 ] He was a good master. To them. He gave them promises. He gave them encouragement. He gave them all that they needed. And promised not only.

That that would be so in this life. But also throughout eternity. And they said. I want to serve you. All my days.

Because you are the living God. And you are. The true God. God. This is something that. We are made absolutely certain about.

When the power of God comes into our lives. That we are. Absolutely certain. That the Bible is true. We are certain that the Jesus of the Bible is true.

That the God of the Bible is true. That the word of God is true. And that God who is brought before us in the Bible. The only God.

[ 31 : 20 ] The living and true God. And we love him. And we want to serve him. And worship him. And do what pleases him. Every day of our life. There are different kinds.

Or different ways of serving him. There are some very public ways of serving the Lord. Like preaching. Or witnessing for him.

There are many other ways also. In the secrecy or quietness of your own life. You can serve the Lord.

You can seek by your prayer life. The advancement of his kingdom. You can say a word in season to people whom you meet.

There are so many different ways of serving this Lord. I think I might have told you this story. It was in one of our reading books long ago in school.

[ 32 : 31 ] And this minister long ago. He was very successful in his preaching. And his congregation was expanding.

And the building wasn't able to hold the number of people who were gathering for the services. So they decided they would build a new church. And it was in the days when horses and carts were used to bring stuff up.

And stones and wood and everything else. Anyway as time went on the minister thought. Well it would be a nice idea if I named this church after myself. Like memorial to myself.

Since I'm getting on so well. But on one particular night he dreamed. And a man came to him in his dream. And he said to him.

You'll not name the new church after yourself. You'll name the new church after this lady. In the congregation.

[ 33 : 40 ] And when the minister woke up he realised. It's as if maybe he was being warned. Not to go ahead with his own plan. For his own name on the church.

So he asked. One or two of the elders. What is this old lady? And she was an old lady. What does she do? Does she do anything in the church?

And they found out. That that old lady. Every day. Was coming with some water. And pouring it into a trough.

For the horses that were dragging the carts full of stones for the building. That they might have a drink of water. And that's.

The message that that man got. And he decided not to call the church after himself at all. I don't know if he called it after that lady. But it just showed.

[ 34 : 40 ] That the Lord is aware of. Even the most seemingly mundane activities. That are. Promoting. The cause of Christ in the community.

Even giving a cup of cold water. In the name of a disciple he says. He will not lose your reward. Wouldn't you love.

To be a servant. To that kind of God. The living God. The true God. The gracious God. The God who is able to do for you.

Far above what you are able to ask. Or even think. Because he has done so much for you. What has he done? Well he has sent his son into the world.

And Jesus came into the world. To seek and to save the lost. And he coming into the world. He fulfilled everything that we could not fulfill. In obedience to the law.

[ 35 : 40 ] He took our place. And he died the death that we were. Deserving to die. And he rose again. On the third day.

Who wouldn't want to serve such. An amazing saviour. Saviour. This is what the apostle Paul. Or Saul of Tarshish. As he then was. On the road to Damascus.

And he was there. Full of venom against the church. Going to arrest them. And take them to Jerusalem. But the Lord. Revealed himself to him.

Saul. Saul. Why are you persecuting me? Who are you Lord? I am Jesus. Whom you are persecuting. And then we find Saul saying. Lord.

What do you want me to do? You see. His resistance had been broken. By the grace of God. His. The enmity that he had.

[ 36 : 44 ] And the hatred he had for Christians. That was broken in a moment. Because the grace of God came. Into his heart. And he said. What do you want me to do?

Immediately he became a servant. And that's what these people in Thessalonica became. They served the living and the true God. And the third thing was.

That they. Are waiting for his son. From heaven. Waiting for his son. From heaven. But I'm going to suggest.

That there are two ways. Of looking at this. First. Is that you are waiting for him. As a Christian. As you wait for him.

Day by day. To hear a word. In season from him. As you read the scripture. You're waiting to hear. Is there a word for me?

[ 37 : 43 ] You're waiting to hear. A word of encouragement. A word of direction. A word of rebuke maybe. But you're waiting to hear.

Because you know. He knows you where you are. It reminds me of another little story. I heard from one of the elders. In Cossabust. We used to have.

Can you encased testimony meetings. Every new year. And this man. He spoke. About this young girl. During the time of.

The covenanters in Scotland. And you know that the covenanters. Were hounded. By the soldiers. They couldn't. Have any. One.

Certain place. Wherein they could meet. They used to meet on the moorlands. Here and there. And this day. She knew that there was going to be. A conventicle. Or a meeting. Somewhere away.

[ 38 : 44 ] There she went. Going. Going. To hear the gospel. But the soldiers came around her. And they asked her. Where are you going?

And this is the way she answered. My elder brother has died. And today. They are reading the will. And I want to see.

If he has left anything for me. Now that's a spiritual answer she gave. Christ had died. There was going to be the sacrament.

Of the Lord's Supper. Along with preaching. And she wanted to go. And see. If the Lord. Had left something for her.

For her soul. Well. She was waiting expectantly. Wasn't she? And you yourself this evening. I hope waiting expectantly. To hear a word.

[ 39 : 43 ] In season. From the scriptures. That will encourage. And direct. And comfort you. Waiting. Waiting. For his son from heaven.

But the second. Thing. And more importantly. Is. Waiting for his second coming. This is a mark. Of the people of God. They wait.



For the second coming. Of Christ. Didn't he say to the disciples. I am going to prepare. A place for you. And if I go and prepare. A place for you. I will come again.

And receive you unto myself. That where I am. There you may be also. And what a day that will be. When he comes in his glory.

With the holy angels with him. He will sit on the throne of his glory. The trumpet will sound.

[ 40 : 43 ] And the question is. Where will you be. When the trumpet will sound. Where will you be.

When it sounds so loudly. It will wake in the dead. But where will you be. The people of God. Will be at Christ's right hand.

Come. You blessed of my father. Receive. The kingdom prepared for you. From the foundation of the world. But those on his left.

They hadn't acknowledged him. The way they ought to have done. They hadn't turned from their idols. They hadn't served him. With heart delight. They had served themselves.

And done their own thing. And they died in that condition. Depart from me. He says. You cursed.

[ 41 : 42 ] Into the everlasting fire. Prepared for the devil. And his angels. But the Christian waits. For the son of God from heaven.

Whom he raised from the dead. Even Jesus. Who delivered us. From the wrath to come. Jesus has delivered his people. From the wrath to come.

And they are eagerly looking forward. To his coming for them. Coming for them in the means of grace. And ministering to their needs.

But ultimately and more gloriously. Coming at his second coming. To receive them unto himself. In chapter 4.

We have. This amazing. Word. I would not have you ignorant brethren. Concerning them who are asleep. That he sorrow not.

[ 42 : 39 ] Even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again. Even so then. Also. Those who sleep in Jesus.

Will God bring with him. For this. We say unto you. By the word of the Lord. That we who are alive. And remain unto the coming of the Lord. Shall not prevent them.

Which are asleep. For the Lord himself. Shall descend from heaven. With a shout. With the voice of the archangel. And with the trump of God. And the dead in Christ.

Shall rise first. Then we. Which are alive and remain. Shall be caught up together. With them in the clouds. To meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be.

With the Lord. Comfort. One another. With these words. Are you finding yourself.

[ 43 : 38 ] In these verses here. Are you among those. Who have turned to God from idols. Are you among those.

Who serve the living and through God. Are you among those. Who are waiting for his son. From heaven. May the Lord grant.

That we all be among. Those. Who do all of these things. Let us pray. Help us Lord. To bow before you.

This evening I knew. Knowing that. You are. The mighty God. The Lord. And that you are. Still mighty to save.

Even to the uttermost. Those who come unto God. By Jesus Christ. That you will go before us now. As we come to the conclusion. Of this service.

[ 44 : 39 ] Give us to sing. Your praise. With. Faith. And love. In our hearts. And forgive our sins. Which are many. In Jesus name. Amen.