

The Glory of the Gospel

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Bible Verse: 1 Thessalonians 1
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We said that this time of national and even worldwide disruption is a gracious warning from God to the world about the nature of coming judgment by pressing upon men the undeniable reality that they are not in control of their circumstances, that their lives are vulnerable to sudden loss, and their livelihoods are shaky given the reality of how things can change so quickly, we've seen that God has rather shaken things up in order to prepare men and to give men a new openness to understanding the importance of the Gospel, a gracious warning from God to disrupt us out of our normal routine that we might consider things from beyond the nature of ordinary day to day life. We saw also that this was a time where God had stopped not only the world but he's also stopped the church, the church broadly speaking is predominantly what I have in mind as I say this just now, he stopped the church and disrupted it in all of its vain pursuits and the many things that it has taught and pursued in recent years that are contrary to the purity and the simplicity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We realize that we corporately as an individual local body, have responsibility to examine ourselves, that we personally in our individual lives have a responsibility to examine ourselves, and we recognize that there is the lost world that God is addressing, we recognize that there is the true body of Christ that he is addressing and there's also kind of an overlapping segment there of nominal Christians that should be warned and should take things to heart recognizing that Scripture speaks often of the reality that people profess to know Christ when in fact they do not possess him, and that this is an opportunity for lukewarm casual Christians, so called, to examine themselves to see if they are really in the faith, 2 Corinthians 13:5.

Now why is this so important? Well, on Thursday we looked at a very sobering topic, Thursday we considered the reality that there is a genuine real place called hell that God has appointed for the infliction of eternal punishment on everyone who rejects Christ. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. All are liable to that eternal punishment and Christ himself spoke on this so frequently throughout his earthly ministry that to deny the reality of hell is simply to deny the Lord Jesus Christ himself. We saw that hell is real, that hell is painful, and that hell is eternal, and we could have gone a step further, I suppose, and said that hell is essential, it is necessary for the vindication of the justice of God for those that have violated his law. So that's why a warning from God is so important at a time like this, is that hell is coming and hell is real and therefore it behooves everyone throughout all of the world to pay fresh heed to the Scriptures, the 66 and no more books of the Bible, and to pay fresh heed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ that

we might have opportunity while we are alive and able to repent to consider the claims of Christ and to make certain of our calling and the fact that we truly belong to him.

So that's why these things are so urgent and that's what we have opportunity to consider as our lives have been stopped by God. On Friday night, on Good Friday, we considered the work of Christ for us. You see, it's such a wonderful thing about the nature of God that he wasn't simply satisfied to execute his justice on us and without mercy give us the due fruit and the due consequences that our sins deserve, rather the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth in love, he left the glories of heaven in order to come to earth to live a perfect life, and to offer that life as a sacrifice to intervene on behalf of sinners like us, and I might say more directly sinners just like you, that he shed his blood for sinners like you in order to, if we want to reverse engineer what we've been talking about, in order to deliver us from the penalty of hell that our sins deserve and to see that the warning from God to the world and to the church at this time as we filter it through the reality of the doctrine of hell, we realize that it points us to Christ and the fact that Christ has intervened and done something to deliver sinners like us from that certain doom that we otherwise would have experienced. Christ lived a perfect life. Christ gave that life on the cross for us, and in the perfection of his righteousness and in the perfection of his sacrificial death on our behalf, what we find is that God has acted to save us from our sins and it is that same message of the Gospel, of the good news that Christ has done that, that we now proclaim to the world that we renew emphasis in the church to bring people to the recognition that the Gospel of Christ is the only thing that ultimately matters and how you are related to Christ, whether you are separated from him in your sins and under still his wrath, or whether you have been reconciled to him. And throughout these messages, throughout these messages the word of God has come in a way where Christ has been appealing to you and pleading with you to be reconciled to him. The call to repentance, the call to faith has been emphasized throughout this time as we've considered these themes as God has given us a window of opportunity to focus on the reality of the Gospel. And what we find as we continue our study of Scripture, what we find is that the Gospel is glorious. The Gospel is wonderful. It is an amazing piece of good news from God and that what the Gospel is and what the Gospel does and what the Gospel reveals are things of great infinite worth, and that's what we want to consider here ever so briefly here this morning from God's word as we look at this passage from 1 Thessalonians 1. The Gospel is glorious and from this passage very briefly, we're going to see seven different aspects of the Gospel that show forth the glory of the Gospel, that show forth the glory of Christ and that should be sufficient to encourage us and give us stability in this time of disruption that we are going through. We turn now to God's word to forget about ourselves and to see the glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We read the text earlier, I'm not going to repeat it this morning, but just to summarize, when we preach the Gospel, when we preach the good news of Jesus Christ, we are declaring that Jesus Christ is God Incarnate, he is God in human flesh, and he came to earth to live a perfect life, he gave that life on the cross as a sacrifice for guilty sinners to satisfy God's wrath against them. In the Gospel, 1 Corinthians 15, we declare that Christ is risen from the dead, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that that resurrection shows him to be Lord of all. The fact that he did what no one else

could do, he conquered death by his own power, displays him to be the Lord of all. We sang just a few moments ago, "Crown Him Lord of all," and we sang of the glories of Christ as his resurrection especially reveals them. Now Christ is ascended into heaven, he has told us that one day he will return from there to earth for his saints to gather them up and that they might be with him where he is, that you and I who belong to him, that we might be with him where he is, and also to introduce a time of judgment upon the world that will result in the everlasting destruction of Satan, demons, and all unrepentant sinners throughout all time. The consequences of the Gospel are just really staggering and it's so important for us to come to God's word study to it and to understand it, and it's so important for us to ask for the help of the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and to illumine our understanding that we might appreciate these things in the right way that they ought to be done.

You know, there's something else that I want to say. You know, I know that I'm speaking to many people who are not Christians as I say these words as they'll be heard on subsequent media; I know that that's true and I just want to tell you that you have a particular responsibility even as an unsaved person to consider these things because Christ commands people like you to strive to enter through the narrow door, to look for this salvation, to call out for him for help to help you find that door which alone leads to life. You see, you cannot be passively indifferent to these truths that I've been speaking about. This has eternal consequences for you and as a result of that, it is incumbent upon you, it is your responsibility to seek them out and to seek Christ for the well-being of your eternal soul. You know, if you could hear these things and just kind of shrug your shoulders and walk away from them and say you're not interested in these things, you don't care about these things, you know, some people blasphemously say, "Well, I want to be drinking beer with my buddies in hell rather than to go to heaven with Christ." Oh, oh, the thought of that, all we can say is, "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're saying. They don't realize the consequences of what they're saying." Whatever else other people say about it, you yourself, you individually need to take these things to heart and say, "Let me seek the Lord while He may be found." And that's the benefit of being under God's word as we turn to it here this morning because we are offering, more importantly and more accurately, Jesus Christ himself is offering eternal life to you, he's offering the forgiveness of sin to you, he's offering deliverance from hell to you, he is offering the eternal blessedness of heaven to you in the words that we're going to be considering here today, and so there is a great opportunity for you to make this the day of your salvation. Christ is willing to save you, as we will see. Christ desires your salvation and he offers himself freely to you without cost and calls you to come to him that you might be saved. So the Gospel is glorious. It's glorious in a cosmic sense and, my unsaved friend, it's glorious for you in a personal individual sense, that right now is being presented to you the difference between eternal hell and eternal heaven and the opportunity is laid before you plainly for you to repent and come to Christ and be delivered utterly and completely that you might know the greatness of Christ and the greatness of eternal life. That's nothing less than what we have before us here as we turn to this text and how much we need the help of the Holy Spirit to communicate and to help us as we turn to his word now.

The Gospel is glorious. We are considering the glory of the Gospel and so we ask this question: how so? Why is it glorious? What is it about the Gospel that is glorious? We're going to see seven aspects of that from today's text, seven distinct reasons for us to esteem the Gospel, to cherish it, and to proclaim it in humility with confidence that the Lord would bless it to the souls of everyone who would hear.

First of all, the first distinct reason that we consider the Gospel glorious is this, first of all, the Gospel changes lives. The Gospel literally changes lives. Certainly Christ has changed my life from what I used to be and I know many of you that are members of Truth Community Church, you rejoice in remembering how you are not what you once were and the difference is the fact that Christ came and Christ saved you. Well, let's reflect on that as believers now and realize the wonder, the glory of the fact that the Gospel changes lives. The Apostle Paul opens this chapter by giving thanks to God for the Thessalonian church that he is writing to. These Thessalonian believers used to be utter, thorough pagans but now their lives have been utterly transformed by the power of Christ and by the power of the Gospel that was brought to them.

Now look at verse 2 as we'll open up there, verses 2 and 3 from 1 Thessalonians 1. the Apostle Paul says,

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father.

Notice what Paul says. He describes three different aspects, three different ways in which their transformed lives have been manifest in a way that he could give thanks to God for because God was the one who by his power had produced this result in their lives. He speaks of their work of faith, their labor of love, and their steadfastness of hope. That is the visible fruit of the Gospel. Their lives were changed from their prior idolatrous ways and they were now manifesting, faith was producing itself, was producing work and visible work in their lives, they were bringing forth spiritual fruit. Their lives to one degree or another were manifesting the fruit of the Holy Spirit that Paul spoke about elsewhere in Galatians 5:22 and 23: love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Their lives had been transformed. They were showing forth love to other believers, and not only that, not only that, there was the certainty of confidence that they had in the ultimate outcome of their salvation. There was a steadfastness of hope that they had that Christ was going to fulfill all of his promises to them, and so their lives were aflame with the glory of the Gospel. From their prior darkness, they were now walking as children of light. The Gospel had changed their lives.

Now we're going to go through these things rather briefly. We just want to see an overview here today but, secondly, the Gospel does something else that is glorious in that the Gospel reveals God's love. The Gospel reveals God's love. It's not just that the Gospel changes lives, it reveals God's love and I think that it's probably fair to say that the most

famous verse in all of the Bible is John 3:16 that focuses on the love of God, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only gotten Son that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life." You see, that's what we've been talking about all week, isn't it? The love of God warning sinners and also having sent Christ deliver us from hell, is all an expression of the love of God, and when we speak of the love of God, what we're talking about in this context is the fact that God at the cost of self-sacrifice, that the Lord Jesus Christ at the cost of his own blood, sought out our best interest. Christ sought out our eternal well-being and this is not a mere sentiment of feeling, this is the deliberately chosen path by Jesus Christ that he undertook in order to save his people. It shows us how wonderful our Good Shepherd is, that he would do this for us; that our Good Shepherd at the cost of his own life, at the temporary sacrifice of his glories in heaven by which I mean simply that he left behind the glory that he was entitled to in order to walk as a humble carpenter on earth, that in that Christ sought out our well-being, that he identified with us in our humanity, that he identified with us in our afflictions and sorrows, and that at the cross he took our sins into his body and suffered the penalty that they deserved. There is no greater love than this, there is no greater love than the fact that Christ laid down his life for us, that he did it for sinners like you and I.

So what we see here is that the Gospel is revealing the love of God to us, and if you look at this in verse 4, you can see it when Paul says,

4 knowing, brethren [here it is] beloved by God

We are on the receiving end of the love of God. He has made us the objects of his concern. Whereas we were children of wrath even as the rest, even though we were under the lordship of Satan, the father of lies, even though you and I were dead and lifeless in our trespasses and sins and there was nothing about you, there was nothing about me, there was nothing about us to attract God to us, there was no goodness in us, there certainly was nothing remotely approaching an equality of essence, an equality of holiness, none of that existed. We were dead, we were separated from God by our sins, and yet while we were like that is when Christ came, it was when we were in that condition that the Spirit came and applied the Gospel to our hearts and brought Christ to us. Don't you see, my friends, don't you see, my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, that whatever else is happening in your life, we can always go back to that orienting place in our minds, that place that gives perspective to everything else, and to recognize the great love of God that he has put upon us in our Lord Jesus Christ. We are beloved by God. God has shone forth his love for us in a way that brought the Gospel to us with power, that genuinely saved us, that actually made us a new creation in Christ and set us on a path that leads certainly and without fail to heaven. Don't you see it, my friends? Don't you see how effusive and how overflowing and how abundant beyond words, beyond measure the love of God is for those who belong to Christ? We who deserved that hell of which Jesus spoke now are on the receiving end of the fullness of his blessing, having received every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. That's what God has done for us. Consider what he has done and realize what he has done testifies about who he is and his perspective on his people. His actions reveal the greatness of the love that he has for us. What Christ has done shows forth the pinnacle of love through all of the

universe for all of time and eternity. "In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

You see, that's what the Gospel reveals to us, it reveals the love of God and, my Christian friend, let's just step back and consider our Christian lives for just a moment here. Do you realize that God loved you when you were a sinner, that's true, when you were separated from him, but do you realize what this says, that God loves you and is keeping you and is seeking your well-being even in your most imperfect Christian life, even in your times of indifference, God is still loving you with that great unchanging immutable love? In those times when you've rebelled and sinned against him either in your thoughts or in your actions toward his people or even in just doubting him and questioning him and rejecting his word and its application to your life from time to time, do you realize that through all of that the love of God is still being manifested as he continually cleanses you from all of that sin? That he keeps you? That he does not send you away in that kind of indifference and rebellion? That he continues by his indwelling Holy Spirit to work to sanctify you, to guarantee that you would ultimately arrive at that destination that he set apart for you before the beginning of time? Do you see how much the love of God abounds upon us as believers? How much it abounds upon you? Can you remember times when God came to you graciously when you were so discouraged or when you were so rebellious and God brought a word to you, brought a friend to you, brought a Scripture passage to you that altered your outlook and where once there had been anger and discouragement it was replaced with joy and peace? Even in your Christian experience, friend, that is the display of the love of God for us, and one day when we are in heaven and we see Christ face-to-face, and we see all of the glory that now we only see darkly as if in a darkened mirror, when we see the fullness of the glory of what God has done for us, we are going to spend all of eternity exploring the infinite depths of the great love that he has had for us and exploring the great infinite glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. It will never get old. It will never be stale to us. We will never tire of it, as the Steve Green song, our hearts will never tire of Christ and of what he has done for us. This is a manifestation of how great the love of God is. This is how much he has loved us and the Gospel displays that for all of us to see. "We've been loved with everlasting love, led by grace, that love to know. Precious Spirit from above, thou hast taught me it is so," as the hymn writer said. So in light of this everlasting love, we see the glory of the Gospel which points to the glory of Christ and it is that love, it is that power that has changed our lives and enables us to step back here this morning and whatever else is happening, we can say with confidence and with full affirmation and joy in our hearts, "The Gospel is glorious. The Lord Jesus Christ is glorious. Look at all that He has done for me in love." So we love him for that, that Christ has sought our interest at the cost of self-sacrifice. It is established in our hearts never to be questioned again that our God is a good God, he is a loving, gracious, patient God, and we love him for it and the Gospel is what's made that known to us.

So we consider the way the Gospel has changed lives, how it reveals God's love, thirdly, the Gospel is glorious because it reveals God's sovereignty. It reveals his authority over all and the free way that he has to operate however he chooses. As we continue in this passage in 1 Thessalonians 1, Paul traces the salvation of the Thessalonians all the way back. He traces it back to God's electing love for them. Notice what's happened here, that

in those opening two verses he spoke of their labor of love, their faith, their hope. He takes it back and says it's obvious that God has loved you, you are beloved by God. He takes it all the way back to its original source, where it ultimately came from, and we see that in verse 4 when the Apostle Paul says,

4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;

Salvation was a divine selection of believers. Scripture is very clear that we love because he first loved us, that God was the originating source of salvation, that salvation was entirely his idea. If it had been left to us, we would have gone into our hopeless, sinful, wicked ways and ultimately have perished forever, but it's because God loved us before the beginning of time that he worked in us and chose us before time that we might experience these blessings of which we have spoken.

Salvation originates in God's choice, not in yours. For those who consider the time in which they believed and speaking very loosely here, the time where in their conscious experience they yielded to Christ, in a sense they chose Christ, understand that behind that choice was a prior choice by God that determined that outcome, and so salvation was God's sovereign purpose we love because he first loved us. And I'd invite you to see a parallel passage that expands on this in 2 Thessalonians 2. 2 Thessalonians 2 in verse 13, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul is again giving thanks for these believers in a subsequent letter and he says this, he says, "we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because," here it is, the thanks goes to God because of what God did. We should give thanks to God for you "because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth." It was for this he called you through our Gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. No man has a right to salvation because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. What the Gospel reveals to us is that despite our guilt and rebellion, despite our lostness and deadness in sin, God in love chose us, sovereignly by his free will according to nothing in us, no foreseen faith, no preparatory works, nothing of the sort, by his sheer pleasure and his sheer love, God sovereignly chose us to enter into this salvation that Christ so graciously purchased for his people.

So this is an act of distinguishing loved by God. He has set goodness, he has given us an unspeakably great gift that we did not deserve, that we could not have earned, God has given to us that out of the freeness of his love and the freeness of his mercy, and all we can do is say, "Wow, that is glorious. I remember something of what I used to be. What a wretch and a rebel I was and now to be on the receiving end of this gift and the love that is behind it from the great Creator and the great Redeemer of mankind, what love." The Gospel reveals that and makes it known to us in a way that draws us to worship, that draws us to adoration, that consumes all of our affections and draws us to fear him in a manner of reverence and respect and gladness and wholehearted life worship in response to him. That's what the Gospel does, it changes lives, it reveals God's love, it reveals his sovereignty, and as a result of that as we've said many times over the past week and further back into the past as well, as a result of this we understand that there is nothing for us to boast about that we are Christians, there is nothing for us to call attention to

ourselves or to take pride in. We are gladly and thoroughly humbled before Christ, gladly and thoroughly humbled before the Gospel, and we understand that it is solely Deo Gloria, to God alone be the glory, that we enjoy this great gift of salvation. And on this day in which we remember the resurrection of Christ, how fitting it is for us to give the glory to God on a day where his resurrection is remembered and where this text reminds us of all that he has done for us in the Lord Jesus.

Now, my unsaved friend, I'm still not done talking to you. As long as you're holding out, I'm going to keep talking to you about it as well. Understand that God is graciously again bringing to bear upon your mind and on your conscience to come to Christ. In all of the meager earnestness that I can muster and all of the limitations of my human language in dependence upon Christ and his Holy Spirit, I call you again to come to Christ, to come out of your sin, to come out of the world and to come to this Christ who loves sinners just like you and freely offers himself for the forgiveness of your sin and for eternal life. I know I'm starting to repeat myself not only in this message but over the course of what I have said, if you're going to repeatedly reject it, I'm going to repeatedly say it until something changes, until the Lord somehow blesses you and blesses his word to the good of your soul. Why would I stop simply because you're resistant if matters of great eternal consequence are here and Christ is seeking your well-being and offering you the eternal blessedness that he reserves for those who love him? Oh, my friend, lay aside the weapons of your rebellion and bow the knee and come to Christ. In the Gospel you can see that there is a genuine love for your soul there that seeks your well-being and will secure it if you will repent and turn to Christ in faith.

Well, there's a fourth aspect of the glory of the Gospel that is revealed to us and it's this, it's that the Gospel reveals God's word. It reveals God's word and it reveals it in this sense, it's that God's word is what reveals to us the Gospel, in that in the hands of the Holy Spirit it is strong and powerful to save. Scripture says that the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and that it pierces to the division of soul and spirit, of bone and marrow. So great is the power of the word of God that it can pierce through the fog of a dead mind and a dead heart and breathe life-giving power through the application of it by the Holy Spirit, and this is what we see Paul talking about as we go back to 1 Thessalonians 1, 1 Thessalonians 1 1:5. Look at this where Paul says this. He says,

5 ...our gospel did not come to you in word only [in other words it wasn't simply by the power of man that the Gospel came to the Thessalonians] but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

Paul preached the Gospel to them. They believed in response to the word of God and, you see, this is one of the things that is so central to understanding the hand of God, the way of God, and the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God does not randomly, arbitrarily zap sinners into salvation, it's not that something happens that is apart from the human mind or human reason, rather God's word comes to us, God's word comes to you and the Spirit of God applies it to your heart with power. Those of you that are Christians

can remember quite likely a time in your life where you had heard truth before and it never affected you, but then there came a time, maybe a moment in time, maybe a season in your life where all of a sudden the light started going on, your understanding started to develop and you started to see things differently. Well, this was the Spirit of God applying the word of God to your heart with the kind of power with which Paul speaks here, and it shows us this, that the preaching of the Gospel is a necessary part of the salvation of sinners and that is why we preach and that's why I plead with you again and again is that this is the means by which God calls sinners savingly to himself, he does it through the proclamation of his word.

Now let me give you an illustration, then we'll look at a couple of parallel passages here. God, we could say, is the one who gives the harvest to the farmer, and when farmers reap their harvest, they should gladly give thanks to God who has given them such a bounty of blessing, but God does not do that apart from the means of farming, apart from the means of plowing and planting and the cultivation of the soil and the plants until the fruit is given. Yes, God gives the harvest but the farmer is responsible to do his work that makes the outcome work. God works through the actions of the farmer in order to produce that harvest. He gets all of the glory because it happens by his power, and yet there is a human responsibility involved without which the outcome would not take place. Well, in a same manner, God chose who would be saved but he calls upon us to preach the word of God, and it is through the means of preaching that God accomplishes his goal of saving sinners.

Look back at Romans 10, Romans 10:14 when Paul says this, he says, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!' However, they did not all heed good news; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." It is through the proclamation of the word that the Spirit of God works faith into the human heart, and so we see in this passage from 1 Thessalonians that God blessed the Apostle Paul's preaching to the Thessalonians, brought it to them with power as his word was preached and proclaimed to them, and the power of the word of God is displayed in and manifests the glory of the Gospel.

Now in like manner in 1 Corinthians 3:5, Paul says this, "Who then is Apollos? And who is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one." Building on that farming analogy Paul says, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth." God brings forth the fruit of the Gospel through the preaching of the Gospel. God gets all of the glory. The human preacher, the human instrument is simply the means that he uses. God is the one doing it. The Gospel reveals that. Paul emphasized that in his letter to the Thessalonians, showing them the centrality of the word of God in their conversion.

Now that has an application, that has a meaning and a significance. I alluded earlier to that verse from Luke 13 where Jesus commanded the world to strive to enter through the narrow gate, and we often talk about the fact that you as a sinner, you do not have the power, the ability to convert yourself. You do not have within you the intrinsic power of repentance or faith. And so someone might ask, "Well, then what's the point? Then what am I to do? Am I just to wait until God does something to me?" No, that's not the case. You're not to be indifferent, cold, passive and simply go about your life in this way, you know, in a way of indifference and rebellion toward God. No, these realities are designed to stir you up to see what your responsibility is and what you should do in response to it. It has been shown to you today and shown to you repeatedly that salvation is found in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is revealed in the pages of Scripture in the 66 books of the Bible. This is where God makes Christ known in his special revelation, in the place where he has uniquely revealed salvation and how it is to be found. Well, your responsibility then as an unbelieving person, knowing that God condemns you in your sin, knowing that there is a Gospel of good news for the deliverance of sinners, and knowing that that Gospel is found in the pages of Scripture and in the preaching of God's word, then your responsibility is this, your responsibility is to place yourself under the teaching of God's word, to seek out Christ in the Scriptures, to read the Gospels, to read the Gospel of John, to read the book of Romans, to read other aspects of God's word because God has shown you that this is where he does his work, that it is through his word and through the proclamation of his word that God exercises his saving power to sinners just like you. So you are to strive to enter through the narrow gate by which Scripture indicates that you should be seeking this out in the word of God, going off by yourself, reading the word of God and asking God to help you understand that you know that you're a lost sinner, that you know you can't save yourself, and you're pleading with God to have mercy on your soul because if he doesn't, you'll be eternally lost.

Now why wouldn't you do that? Why wouldn't you do that? If you were dying of thirst and someone said there is a fountain of water over there, wouldn't you go to the fountain and turn it on and try to drink from it? How just is the condemnation of God upon those who hear these things and just harden their heart and turn away and reject any effort at seeking for Christ in his word, and seeking him in the proclamation of his word? There will be no excuse for you, my friend, if that's your response to these things, and I fear for the outcome of your eternal soul. I fear for you when God is separating the sheep from the goats and telling people to, "Depart from Me, I never knew you." Friend, I don't want that for you. I don't want that for you. You may not care but I care, and more importantly Christ cares and that's why he's presenting himself to you in this way, and it's your responsibility to go to his word and to seek it out and to ask God to open your mind that you might repent and believe, and to place yourself humbly at his feet, place yourself where God has said, "This is where I do My work. Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ." It should be your most urgent priority and life to be under the word of God until you know that you have been saved by the hand of God through the power of the glorious Gospel.

Well, fifthly, what we see is this, is that the Gospel reveals God's power. It reveals God's power. The testimony of the Thessalonians in that day was widespread. Many throughout

what's the modern nation of Greece had heard their testimony, had heard about them. Paul seized their spiritual witness echoing throughout the world and finds another reason to give thanks to God for them.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1, beginning in verse 6. 1 Thessalonians 1:6. He says,

6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 for the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.

God's work in the church at Thessalonica, the way that he had changed their lives had an explosive impact on the world around them. The unbelieving world heard about it. They talked about it. They realized that there was an undeniable change that had taken place in those pagans, and it was a manifestation of the power of God in their lives, and this is a further revelation of the glory of the Gospel. Their testimony in that day hung in the air like a trumpet blast. A trumpet had sounded and the echo, the echo was reverberating, the echo being their changed lives as others observed it and saw the continuing impact of this converting power of God upon them, it was a testimony so much that people were talking to Paul about it. Paul did not have to expand on it, it spoke for themselves and it spoke of the power of God in salvation. And you know, one of the ways in which the power of God is shown is that the Gospel transcends geographic boundaries. The Gospel is a Gospel, Christ is a Savior for the whole world on every continent, in every country, in every language. By every metric that you could possibly consider, there is only one Savior and Christ is that Savior for every nation, people and tribe throughout all of the world. And in that, in the fact that people from all manner of different backgrounds, some wealthy, some poor, some Jews, some Gentile, some noble, many more of simple mind, every aspect and every end of every spectrum finding people, finding individuals who find their salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ and God changes their lives in accordance with the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. So we see that the Gospel reveals the power of God in that it changes lives and then it transcends geographic boundaries and becomes the Gospel which is alone the Gospel for the entire world. This is what it means when the Bible speaks about Christ being the Savior of the world, he is the only Savior that the world has. There is no one else. There is no other name given to us by which we must be saved, and the fact that the Gospel saves people in such diverse economic and cultural and geographic and political contexts shows us the magnificent transcendent power of God in the glorious Gospel as it continues to save men and is continually expanding throughout the earth.

Well, that brings us to our sixth point this morning, our sixth point this morning and it's this, that the Gospel humbles man. The Gospel is glorious because of the way that it humbles man. The Gospel comes to us, it comes to you and it tells us that you cannot save yourself. You cannot be good enough for God. Your present works cannot erase the consequences or the stain and guilt of your past sins. There is nothing that you can do to

prepare yourself for God to save you. You are not righteous. You have not sought for God. You do not understand as an unbelieving person, and the book of Romans 8 says that the carnal mind is hostile to God and toward his Gospel. So the fact that anyone is saved, the fact that you and I, my Christian brother, sister, the fact that you and I have been saved gives all of the glory to God and eliminates any cause of boasting in us. Jesus Christ must save you or you will not be saved and that is so humbling.

Look at verses 9 and 10 of this chapter. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 and 10 says,

9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead,

The Thessalonians in response to the Gospel, in response to the work of the Spirit of God that we saw earlier in the chapter, the Thessalonians repented from their empty lives. They repented of their paganism and they turned from all that they had loved before in order to embrace Christ and to be vessels of God's glory. They had to leave behind everything that they had ever once been. They had to leave behind their prior gods, their prior affections, their prior priorities, you could say. They left all of that behind and turned solely and exclusively to God as he was revealed in Jesus Christ in the glorious Gospel that Paul had preached to them.

So we find in this, see the humbling recognition that everything about our prior lives had to be abandoned, had to be left behind in order to singularly embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and so it's humbling to recognize these things. And let me remind you of that famous passage in Ephesians 2 which testifies to these things, "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith," by grace, an act of God's goodness, a gift from God, "For by grace you have been saved not as a result of works lest any man should boast, that not of yourselves, it is by grace you have been saved and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not as a result of works lest any man should boast." So here in time, here on earth, we understand if perhaps somewhat imperfectly, we understand that we have no grounds of boasting before God; that God saved us and there was nothing about us that contributed to our salvation, purely a free gift from God that he worked in our hearts to bring to us.

When we get to heaven, one of the things that I am most looking forward to in heaven, there's so much to anticipate about heaven, central to all of it, of course, will be the Lord Jesus Christ, but one lesser aspect of heaven that I'm going to be so glad for is that there will be no braggarts in heaven. There will be no egotistical men in heaven. There will be no men and women who are talking about themselves and promoting themselves in heaven. Everyone's going to understand that we're enjoying the vastness, the eternal nature of this blessing all as a result of the glory of Jesus Christ. No one will be boasting about themselves, instead all of the glory will be going to Christ alone. I can't wait to get out of this proud world and this self-boasting, self-congratulating world and be in a realm where the pride of man has been abolished and the glory of Christ is 100% supreme in

the eyes of all that see him. That's going to be wonderful and what we realize is that the Gospel has humbled us. We left our life behind. We left any claim of righteousness behind. We realize now that we've been saved by grace alone, we realize that we will be delivered into heaven by grace alone. That humbles us. It excludes boasting in us, and yet what's replaced in its stead, instead of boasting about self, we're boasting in Christ, we're boasting in the majesty of our Lord. Paul said in the book of Galatians, "God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ," that place where he accomplished redemption representative of the fullness of all of the work that he did for us. "God forbid that I should boast about anything of myself, let me boast about the greatness and goodness alone of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Gospel is glorious. That's what it brings us to. It transforms a man of boasting into a man who gives all of the glory to Christ. Nothing else does that. Nothing else is like that. Every other religion is a religion about self-attainment and being good enough through your rituals or your morality or giving so that people congratulate themselves about their goodness. You ask them why would God receive you into heaven? "Because I've been a pretty good person." What is that except saying, "Look at me. Look at what I've done. Look at who I am. I'm good enough." The Gospel rejects all of that, overturns all of that, denies all of that, crushes that and says that no one breathing thoughts of their own goodness is entitled to the kingdom of heaven. We're brought low by the Gospel but it's a glorious lowness that it brings us to, a glorious lowness that lets us see the truth about our prior self, the truth about Christ, and to embrace that, that it's Christ alone that I find my hope, it's in Christ alone that I find my righteousness, it's in Christ alone that I find my title deed to heaven. Nothing about me, all about him. That's what makes the Gospel glorious.

Well, we have said six things here about the glory of the Gospel. We've said that it changes lives; it reveals God's love; it reveals God's sovereignty; it reveals God's word; it reveals God's power; it humbles man; we come now to the seventh and final point of the glory of the Gospel in this text anyway, and it's this, it's that the Gospel reveals final redemption. The Gospel shows us what the outcome of salvation is for everyone that Christ has saved, for everyone who has believed. The outcome is final, glorious, wonderful redemption. God will punish the world for its rejection of Christ, we've covered that in recent days and I won't dwell on it any further, but Christ delivers us from that wrath of God that is to come, and the Gospel assures us of that deliverance from God's awful judgment.

Look at verse 10 where Paul says the Thessalonians, they turned to God, to serve the living and true God, and then in verse 10,

10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead,
that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

These Thessalonians were waiting on Christ. They realized that there was more to come in their salvation and that while God would bring one day judgment on the world that is still future to us today, they realized that they were safe in the hands of Jesus; that the one

who died at the cross for their sins, the one who is raised from the dead and ascended into heaven would by no means cast them out, and that no one would ever pluck them from his hand. That's true for us today. We are waiting for Christ not to give us our best life now but to deliver us into that life for which he saved us forever and ever, and though there is a time of coming wrath upon the world, we recognize that Christ is going to keep us and deliver us so that we are safe from that and that we are not harmed by that judgment to come because by his grace we are utterly and completely saved, so that while there is a cataclysm coming upon the world in the future, it will not singe a single hair of those of us that are in Christ. The Gospel is glorious because it assures us and gives rest and comfort to our souls that we are safe, that we are secure, that our deliverance is utterly complete in the Lord Jesus Christ, and so we look at that and we say that, that is glorious and we patiently wait and trust for it to come.

In 2 Thessalonians 1:9 and 10, Paul said this speaking about the unsaved. He says, "These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed." Christ will be glorified as he redeems his saints in that final day. We will see him in his glory. We will praise and magnify him for it. Philippians 3:20 says that he has the power to transform our bodies into conformity with the body of his own glory, and that we will see him in heaven. 1 John 3 speaks about how we will be like him because we will see him as he is. We are only receiving a foretaste of the wonders of salvation right now, that when we are fully redeemed, when we are glorified with Christ, it will infinitely and exponentially and geometrically explode; what we found so glorious here, it will yield into the greater glorious for which we have been fully and finally saved. To know that and to enter into it, then we will know more fully, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, we will know more fully the greatness of the purposes for which Christ saved us.

So the outcome, the glory of the outcome, the fullness of the victory is still to come and yet we enjoy the firstfruits of it now, we enjoy the foretaste of it now, and we have the indwelling Holy Spirit as God's promise to us that what he has begun, he will certainly complete. My Christian friends, my brother and sister in Christ, do you see how glorious the Gospel is? Do you see how even in a time like this that we have surpassing, glorious, infinite reasons to rejoice in our Lord and to go forth in hope and in joy and in the fullness of the Holy Spirit? The Gospel is glorious and if you are in Christ, God graciously brought it to you so that he could gladly, lovingly share it all with you. In response, we give him our worship and our praise, especially on this day when we remember the resurrection which was the crowning proof that Christ had done it all, that the fullness of Christ, the fullness of salvation has been accomplished and now we rest in him and we trust him until that final day.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You for the mercy of Christ and the hope of heaven. Because Christ lives, we also will live. And we thank You for the glory of the Gospel, for how it has changed our lives, how it has humbled us. We pray for the completion of that humbling

sanctifying work that You would do in us, but in the meantime, Father, we look at the Gospel, we look at all that we've considered here today and we give You thanks. We give You praise and we ask You to extend the power of the Gospel still more to those that have not yet believed. Father, just as You had mercy on us, have mercy on them unto eternal life. We pray these things in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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