

# Ryan Clarke 25 April 2021

## (Sermon Summary)

### 1 Thessalonians 1: The Gospel comes with power

#### Background

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter from Corinth around AD 49-51. Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia (north-east Greece) and had a population of over 1000. Egyptian cults and other forms of paganism were prominent, and there was also a sizeable number of Jews. Acts 17 described how Paul, Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy preached there over three Sabbaths, leading to the conversion of both Jews and Gentiles. The three men were accused of treason and had to leave the city following a disturbance. Paul sent Timothy back to visit on the young Christians at Thessalonica, and this letter followed on from Timothy's report.

#### Themes of the epistle

Christ is the overall subject of this letter, but there are other themes:

- God's wrath will be poured out on unbelievers
- Christians must lead holy lives (chapters 3-4)
- Christians have been saved from God's wrath
- Jesus' death and resurrection are the basis of our hope, a hope that cannot be taken away
- Christians who have died will participate fully in Christ's second coming.

#### Verse 5: The Gospel came in power

First of all, v.5 refers to Paul's example of godly behaviour. This was crucial to the credibility of his preaching.

Paul's gospel did not come 'in word only' - but this does not mean that no words were needed! The Gospel is communicated through the preached word (Romans 10:14). Preaching should take first place in our services.

However, words alone are not enough. The gospel also came to the Thessalonians 'in power'. The Apostles may have performed miraculous signs, but this is not the kind of power that is being referred to here. Neither is it the power of great oratory and preaching skill. In 1 Cor.2:1-3, Paul says that he 'did not come with excellence of speech or wisdom', and his speech and preaching 'were not with persuasive words of human wisdom'.

Rather, the power is the power of the Holy Spirit, power from on high. We should not let charismatic error in other churches make us afraid of using such terms.

## **Evidence of power**

Paul's coming was not in vain: he knew that the power of God attended his preaching because people turned to God from idols. This is the quickening power that saves sinners and makes dead bones live, that brings us from darkness to light, and from hell to the everlasting kingdom of His grace. It is the work of the Spirit.

## **Overcoming discouragement**

We feel anguish at the weakness of our churches today, and at our lack of Gospel success. But we must not lose faith in the Gospel. Churches can become inward looking; Christians can be more taken up with reading good books than preaching the gospel. We long, not just to read of past revivals, but to see God at work in our own day.

If you are a Christian, you have seen the saving power of God at work in your own life. So be steadfast and look to Christ. Turn to Him if you are not yet a Christian. Ryan believes that the restoration of our chapel is a witness, showing that God still has work for us to do.