

A Model Church

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Bible Text: 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10

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Please take your Bible with me and turn to the first epistle of Thessalonians. We have begun a study in this wonderful book. I look forward to continuing it with you today.

We discovered that the city of Thessalonica was very much like New York City. It was on a major trade route, a very large influential city. We looked at the history of Thessalonica. It even has an unbroken history coming even to this day. It was named after the wife of a man who...the wife was the half sister of Alexander the Great. It was the capital city. We made reference to the fact that New York City is the fourth largest city in the world, the largest city in America, a very diverse city just like Thessalonica.

We discovered in our study that this church was founded during Paul's second missionary journey and he was there for just a few weeks. And because of the opposition, had to leave and he had sent back individuals to check in on the new believers. And he was thrilled when he got a report back that they were standing strong for Christ.

As you read this letter and we study it together we are going to discover some of the things that they were facing and some of the instruction that the apostle Paul had for them. I think it is a very practical book.

Last week we looked at the opening verses. We entitled our study, "A Life of Gratitude: Living with an Attitude of Gratitude." And we saw in verse two that Paul says, "We give thanks to God always."¹ And then we noted the participles. Paul says, "We give thanks to God... making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith."² And then, finally, that fourth one, "knowing brethren, your election by God."³

And we stopped there last week and I would like to pick up there in verse four.

Knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; for our gospel did not come to you in word only, 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.

¹ 1 Thessalonians 1:2

² 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

³ 1 Thessalonians 1:4

You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 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. 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, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.⁴

As we begin studying this letter we noted that the reference to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is found in every single chapter of this letter. This is the earliest letter that the apostle Paul penned. And yet the passion that he had to share with these believers is that Jesus Christ is coming again. And I look forward to preaching about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from these letters.

But there are also other words and subjects that are emphasized here in these letters. The word “gospel” appears over and over again. In a moment I am going to make reference to the word “brethren.” It is found 28 times in the eight chapters of these two letters. Very prominent word here in the text.

But I want to focus today on the concept of the gospel. What do you and I focus on in our ministry? There are a number of things we need to and one of them is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is by way of a quick review. In chapter one and verse five the gospel has to be given to people. And we are going to enlarge on that today. You study chapter two and verse two you discover that the gospel is to be shared with boldness no matter what the opposition is. In chapter two and verse four the gospel is something that God has entrusted to us to give out. In chapter two and verse eight the gospel is shared because we value people and we are going to enlarge on that today. In chapter two and verse nine the gospel is given freely. We don't charge for the gospel. Chapter three and verse two the gospel is shared by many different workers and it is with great joy that you welcome fellow laborers in the gospel. What a joy for those of us here in New York to welcome these Christian people from all over the United States who are coming to be with us and share the gospel of Christ. There is room for us all in the gospel ministry.

In chapter two we discover that the gospel is God's message. It is God's gospel. It is the news that God wants shared. We also know that it is the gospel of Christ. It is the gospel that concerns Christ. It is the good news of Christ.

2 Thessalonians you discover that the gospel is to be obeyed. And 2 Thessalonians chapter two and verse 14, the gospel is God's means of calling his elect. And that brings

⁴ 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10

us right back to the text that is before us today. Paul was full of gratitude because he knew that these brethren were loved by God and chosen by him.

Now how do you know that people are God's elect? He is going to amplify on that in the balance of the chapter. You know that people belong to God, that God has chosen and redeemed them by the fruit in their life and what takes place. And Paul was rejoicing that these people had a faith that worked, a love that labored and a hope that was patient. And he said as you look at their life you discover something about them. These believing people were very busy and aggressive, though they were a very new young congregation, a congregation that's younger than our own congregation. They were very active and aggressively getting the gospel out everywhere. And it is because of that he knew that they were the elect of God.

And he continues to write here and he discovers that they had turned from their idolatry to serve God. And that is why he knew that they were part of God's elect. And they were also a people that were waiting for the coming of Christ. Their hearts and minds were focused on Christ and his return. And that is how he knew that they were the elect of God.

There might be many people that say, "I belong to God, that I am a believer." And yet we must look at their life. Do they have a faith that works and a love that labors and a hope that is very patient? Have they turned from their idolatry? Are they busy serving God? Are they getting out the gospel? Are they anxiously awaiting the return of Christ?

You see, that is true of God's elect. And so this morning I want to preach a message entitled, "Let's be a Church that Models a Ministry of Evangelism."

In verse seven Paul could say of this church in Thessalonica that they had become an example or a pattern or a type or a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. They were a model church. And they demonstrated how they and you and I are to model the ministry of evangelism.

What is the crown of the Christian life? If you look at chapter two and verse 19 Paul says this.

For what is our hope, or joy [or what?] crown of rejoicing. Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy."⁵

What is Paul saying here? He said, "What is the crowing achievement of my life? What is going to be that thing that I can cast back at Jesus' feet?" And he looks at these Thessalonian Christians and he says, "You are the crown. I came to you bringing the gospel of Christ and you are going to be with me in glory in the presence of the Lord. You are my crown. You are the one for whom I labor."

⁵ 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

What on earth has value? What can you and I bring to glory?

You and I are [?] and the Lord tarry. None of us are going to take a thing with us.

And all these Pharaohs they built all these pyramids in Egypt and they actually killed people and put them in the pyramids and gathered all the Pharaoh's gold and food and put it there so that he could have something to take him into the life to come, into the world to come. And the archaeologists began to dig and go into these tombs. What did they find? The gold was still there. They took none of it with them.

In Luke 16 the Lord, speaking to Christian people said, "Listen. People in the world are wiser than you are because they have business dealings in which they make friends with their money. And they have established these connections with their money. They have got these friends who will receive them in a very difficult time."

And then the Lord turns around and he says, "What you and I need to be doing is investing our time, our talent and our treasure in order that when we go to glory we will be received by the friend we have made with our investments in the everlasting habitations."

And it is an incredible invitation for God's people to invest in the gospel ministry.

Pastor Brame prayed about the huge mortgage payment that is going to be due two months from now. I have right now absolutely no idea how the Lord is going to pay that. We will be here as long as the Lord pays the bills. Three years ago when the first payment was due it was \$77,500 and the Lord brought it in. The next year it was \$100,000 that was due and the Lord brought it in. Last year it was \$125,000 and the Lord brought it in. This year it is \$560,000 and as of this day I have absolutely no idea how it is going to be paid. And in addition to paying those yearly bills, the Lord sent in monthly bills, \$5000 a month, \$3000 a month. I have no idea what God is going to do. But you know last week we were standing in front of FA Schwartz toy store, 5th Avenue, 48th Street—no, excuse me, 58th Street—having an open air meeting, preaching the gospel of Christ. Playing, singing, talking, beautiful location. And I noticed a very tall businessman that was standing on the stairs. He stayed for 20, 25 minutes. Listened to the gospel message, listened to the singing. I noticed him.

Pastor Mark went up and began to speak with him, discovered that he was the grandson of Armand Hammer. Have you ever heard of Arm and Hammer baking soda? He is the grandson of Armand Hammer. He is Jewish. He is a Christian.

As you minister among the Jewish people this week you are going to discover they are going to tell you that you can't be Jewish and be a Christian. You know, you can be Buddhist and be Jewish. You can be Jewish and be Buddhist. They call it...literally they call them Bu-Jews. But you can't be Christian and Jewish. You can be an Atheist and Jewish. But you can't be Christian and Jewish.

When the Messiah comes that they are waiting for you can believe in the Messiah and you can still be Jewish, but if you believe that Jesus is Messiah you can't be Jewish.

But here was a believing Jew who is the CEO of the Armand Hammer Foundation. And there is a whole lot of money rolling around in that foundation. I have no idea if God will use someone like him or some other person to take care of this.

I quit worrying about it a long time ago. I worried about last year's payment of \$125,000 and wound up going into the hospital because of it. You know, I get anxious, yes I do. But I believe that if we will give ourselves to giving out the gospel of Jesus Christ, that God will take care of his people and care of these needs. And if God chooses to make that payment it is going to be with great joy and rejoicing as we announce that.

God can meet the needs here and we must continue to focus on getting out this gospel. And there are a number of things that I want to call your attention to from this text.

Number one, a model church knows—which, by the way, that word “know” is found many times in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. There is something that we know. A model church knows that the gospel is God's plan for saving his elect. You see that in verse four. God is graciously gathering a family. I wish we had the time to look at all of the references to the word “brethren” that are found in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 28 times in these eight chapters. He is focusing on the fact that we are all a part of the family. And this family is a family that God loves graciously. And the way that he is gathering this family together is through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In 2 Thessalonians chapter two, I do want to read that text again.

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this He called you through our gospel.⁶

As we get out and evangelize and preach the gospel of Christ, God is using that. God has chosen to use the foolishness of preaching to save the lost. God has chosen to reach down and touch the lives of those who are not and have nothing to confound the wise.

Sometimes I take comfort in the fact that I am out on a street corner, that God has chosen the foolishness of preaching because it is foolishness to most people. We were out on 48th where...well, your group won't be there this week from the Free Church, but last week, 48th and 49th, across from Radio City Music Hall, Avenue Six. I've got to try to remember all these places we are.

Several weeks ago and the news anchor for Fox News, a lady who anchors that came out with a group and wanted to interview. Brought in a big gold camera. They put it right on

⁶ 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

Mark and Tricia as they were singing, right up in their face. They taped the music, taped the message and then they wanted an interview.

Well, you always discover toward the end of the interview what they are really all about. They kind of just make you feel real comfortable and stuff and we talked about the ark of the covenant. We talked about the tabernacle. She made some comments of, "It was such a bloody religion."

Yes. God was communicating there through the tabernacle that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, that it takes death for transgression. We were able to share this with all of her and when we got to the very end then she raised the question. She said this. She said, "You folks really aren't accomplishing anything out here, are you?" She said, "The people are just walking by and no one is stopping. You have not gathered a crowd."

It is as if to say, "This is really foolishness."

And about five minutes after she left one of the pastors from the Greenville church who was with us came up to me and introduced to me a man that had just put his faith in Christ.

We were at 40th and Broadway and a Jewish man who was disturbed, agitated by what we were doing came up and wanted one of the gospel booklets. He said, "Can I have more than one?" And he began and he pulled all the gospel booklets out of this rack as quickly as he could and I knew that he really didn't want more than one. And he started to scurry away and I walked after him and I said, "Excuse me, sir."

And he started to run. And he ran as fast as he could to a trash can and threw them in a trash can. When no one was looking I reached down into the trash can and pulled them out. Don't take any of the ones that have bubble gum on them or ketchup or anything like that. Leave those in the trash can. But I brought those back to the outreach, put them back in the rack and before I could get them all back in the rack three people came up and said, "Can I have one of those?"

You see, to the world it is foolishness. But it is the method that God has chosen to save his elect. And so it is upon us to go and take the gospel to every creature.

But a model church also knows that the gospel must be taken to people. He says, "Our gospel came to you."⁷ Lost people are not flooding into our churches. It doesn't matter what church you have. All over America they are not coming to us. We must go to them. The gospel is something that is to be taken. And this is exactly what they were doing.

⁷ 1 Thessalonians 1:5

And they were taking it in word. And as they went out Paul would make this comment, “That our word of the gospel came to you and it came to you with great power.”⁸ And it must be our prayer this week that as we take the gospel of Jesus Christ that it has about it the very power of God. Do you believe that the gospel is powerful?

The Bible says:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the [what?] the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein [that is, in the gospel] is revealed [what?] the righteousness of God.⁹

The power is found that God has brought righteousness to men who have none of their own.

Did you know among Jewish people in this city and around the world you will discover that they teach a religion of works? I just had a conversation last week with a Jewish man in Home Depot, a young man getting ready to be married, married in five days. A wonderful conversation, we spoke for over an hour in Home Depot. And he told me that I had to buy a book and the title of that book is *26 Reasons Why Jews do not Believe in Jesus*. It was written this year, 2007. It has become the polemic for Jewish people. It is being encouraged in the synagogues. It is being encouraged in the Yeshiva schools.

Well, I went out and I bought the book. I have read half of it. He promised me he would call me in two weeks and have a conversation making certain I had read the book. For he said that messianic Jews have read it and they have left Christianity and come back to Judaism. But as I read that book something was plain and that is this, that they are still teaching the Jewish people that they can get their righteousness and promise in the world to come by keeping the 10 Commandments.

Well, that is exactly what God promised. But by giving them the covenant he showed them they couldn't do it. And that is exactly what Paul does in the opening chapters of Romans where he takes the Jews to the law. And they can't keep it. And the Gentiles to the law and they can't keep it and every mouth is shut and every man stands guilty in the presence of God. There is nothing wrong with God's law. The problem is with us. And Paul would say to them, “Those of you that teach that a man shouldn't steal, do you steal?”¹⁰

And that same message we can bring to the Jewish people this week, their inability to keep the covenant. And then we introduce them to the covenant keeper who atoned for sin. But we have got to take it out. We have got to pray that the Spirit of God would use us.

⁸ See 1 Thessalonians 1:5

⁹ Romans 1:16-17

¹⁰ See Romans 2:21

You read the book of Acts you discover that every time someone was full of the Spirit of God they were doing something. They were always sharing Christ. And we need the filling of the Spirit of God to enable us to speak of Christ with great assurance.

But, my friend, the gospel has got to go out there.

Last week because of the rain we invited...we have a noon meal here in our assembly. We eat after our fellowship down here. We fellowship around a table. The leftover food we have been taking into the park with gospel tracts to feed folks, many of which are poor or homeless. Last week because of the rain we invited them to come in here with the intent to have a service for them. Well, this was the first time I had done anything like that and I tried to preach a message while folks were coming in. It didn't work. Right in the middle of trying to share the gospel—even though I had some folks seated here and they were answering questions from clear in the back, questions I was raising—it was a little disruptive. But we saw something beautiful happen. After, oh, I guess nearly 30, 40 minutes, folks had eaten. Many of them slipped right out of here, but they had about 15 or 20 of them that were left. And until four o'clock people were talking one on one with homeless people and poor people. And at the very end I was able to come back up here in total silence and preach the gospel of Christ a second time.

And as those dirty folks began to funnel into this room the place was full. They came in here. And I thought of that text when the Lord said to go out into the highways and the byways and to compel them to come in that the house would be full.¹¹ And as pastor Brame prayed that on the Lord's Day and in our service that this would be full.

My friends, you have got to take the gospel. A model church does that.

But a model church also knows that the gospel is shared because we have the best interest of others in mind and we want everyone to know the Word. In verse five, "You know what kind of men we were, that we have proved to be among you for your sake."¹² What moved him was people. We have got to come to the place in our lives where we are not as selfish as we are. And we have a compassion and a passion for people. The Lord said, "If you will save your life you will lose it. But if you will lose your life for my sake and the gospel, you will save it."¹³

We need to think about other people and not ourselves. It is a selfishness if we keep this good news to ourself.

I love what is found in the second chapter in verse eight. "Having so fond an affection for you we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us."¹⁴

¹¹ See Luke 14:23

¹² See 1 Thessalonians 1:5

¹³ See Matthew 16:25, Mark 8:35, Luke 9:24, 17:33

¹⁴ 1 Thessalonians 2:8

A lot of different types of people outside the walls of this building. Last Thursday night we had a cola war in the park. I had a number of teenagers, most of whom had never participated in one of our cola wars. I don't know if I saw a teenager who had been to any one of our cola wars. As we preached the gospel I used two of these young men as an illustration of the two Adams. I didn't know it when I chose one of them that his name was Adam. The other little boy came up, too, and he represented the second Adam.

We got done preaching that gospel message. Adam and another teenager whose name was Dread—he had dread locks down to about here, his name was dread—really, his name was Christian. And he told me, he said, “You could have used me for the second Adam.” But both of them put their faith in Christ.

The gospel has to go out and a model church will do that. And they will take it because they love people. If you don't love people, you won't get involved. But you have got to see people for whom Christ died. You have got to know that God has a people out there and he is going to use the preaching of the gospel to draw them to himself. And who are we to say who they are?

”Well, I don't want to take the gospel to that group. I'm not going to take the gospel to that group.”

God has chosen the are-nots and the have-nots.

A model church knows that the gospel brings joy from the Holy Spirit regardless of the tribulation. And Paul, wherever he went, he faced tribulation, didn't he? He faced opposition. We are going to face opposition. Listen, you are just going to face opposition.

I remember the first cola war we had over here in the park, right in the middle of the preaching of the gospel a real tall man from next door came out to the edge of the park right where we were having the meeting and he cried out, “You have no right to proselytize in this park.”

I guess he didn't know we live in the United States of America. Yes, we have freedom to do this, my friend. And you can also get a park permit. You can come out here and set up a sound system and you can tell anybody here in this park whatever you want to tell them. And I have no right to go up to you and tell you you have no right.

And I want to tell you something. There is a whole lot of darkness going on over here in this park.

As the preacher continued to preach the message a second man came up and he stood on the sideline and began to mock that we would preach of hell. And then a third person came out and told us the sound was up too loud. Turn it down.

We had an open house here last week and a lady came in with her friend. She was disruptive and one of the ladies went over there and just kind of engaged her in

conversation. They talked politics. And while she was being engaged and distracted, the gentleman had the gospel shared with him and he took a Bible and he left. And she was so agitated by that that she had to come back and she saw me outside this building. I have never met her before in my life. I didn't know her name. She walked right up to me and she looked at me and she said, "Who did you vote for?"

I said to her, I said, "Ma'am, you know, this is America. We have secret ballot. I mean we don't have to announce who we vote for."

She said, "It shouldn't be that way. We ought to know whoever we vote for. Do you live here?"

She knew I had a group from out of state and she just... "I can't believe these people are coming here."

You know, she probably went back home and this man started to talk to her about what he had heard that night and the Bible he had in his hand. And she got real agitated about that. "And who do you think you are?" she said, "Bringing in all these groups from outside New York City. They probably all voted for Bush," is what she told me.

And I looked at her and I said, "Ma'am," I said, "our passion here is that everyone would hear the gospel of Christ."

There is going to be opposition and yet you don't allow the opposition to take away your joy. And you realize that the message that you are giving out is the message that is going to bring joy. They need Christ. And you look at all the downcast faces and the defeated people. They need Christ. And when they have him they will find great joy that comes from the Spirit of the Lord.

A model church knows that the gospel is to be shared with a boldness and a confidence. In verse eight he uses this word, "From you the Word of the Lord sounded forth."¹⁵ It was trumpeted out. It means to make a loud noise. It means to reverberate. It is one of the reasons when we go out into the open air we take a sound system with us. We want folks to know that we are here. We want to broadcast this sound as far as we can. We want to call attention to the message.

It was sounding forth from this group of believing people. And they also increased their circle of influence. You see, a model church knows that the gospel is shared in an ever increasing circle of influence. This Macedonian church had given the gospel not only in Macedonia, but they had given it in Achaia and not only that. In verse eight the Bible says, "but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything."¹⁶

¹⁵ 1 Thessalonians 1:8

¹⁶ Ibid.

And the gospel is preached inside this building. The gospel is preached in the park. But we don't stop in our own neighborhood. We'll go into places like midtown Manhattan. Why are we there? Because there are people that work in midtown Manhattan from all over New York City and we want to touch them. We are going to go this afternoon again to Coney Island. Why do we go out in Coney Island? Because out there New Yorkers gather on a nice beautiful day like today and enjoy the ocean. And so we are going to touch a great amount of people from New York City there. But we don't only go there. Why do we go a place like Battery Park?

By the way, Monday or Tuesday this group is going to have another opportunity to be in Battery Park. You go to a place like Battery Park. These ferries go out every 30 minutes. They are full with 300 and 400 people. Well, these people are from all over the world. And we go in those locations because as you share the gospel of Christ in that location you are increasing your circle of influence and the people not only in our own community, but not only in New York City, but in the world. And these churches that are with us this week have come because they want their gospel testimony to be taken also into the world.

Do you know that the Bible says that the message of the gospel will be preached in every nation before the time of the end? And the Bible speaks of the angels during the period of Jacob's trouble preaching the everlasting gospel to every creature.

You see the intention is God that we would increase our circles of gospel influence. A model church does that. A model church knows that the gospel brings a change in one's life which will be noticed by people.

I shared with Eddie last Sunday when he stood up in the afternoon and gave a very brief testimony to the homeless drug addicts that were in this building. I told him afterwards, "I think, Eddie, what you said probably touched more of them than anything I said." He shared with them how he used to roll around out in the street. He used to be the drug dealer. He has been at the island. But Eddie stood in front of them and said, "But here I am and my life is changed and I am redeemed and I am growing in my knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."

My friends, the gospel brings change. And only the gospel can. And it was noticed. It was noticed.

A model church knows that the gospel is a message of repentance and faith that turns people to the living and true God by the power of the Holy Spirit as the message of God's Son is preached.

Do you see here in the text? We read of their repentance. They turned to God from idols. You read of their faith in verse eight.

The message of the gospel is a message to invite men and women to turn from their sin. We need to speak to people about repentance. I am finding myself doing that more

frequently with great freedom, not with this judgmental spirit, but to look at them and say, “My friend, when are you going to repent and believe the gospel?”

The gospel turns people from their false concepts of who God is back to the one and only true God so that they would serve him and then to wait for his Son from heaven. And the gospel involves preaching a message of God’s Son. The gospel concerns his Son.

And whether you are ministering to Jewish people or Muslim people, they will tell you God doesn’t have a Son.

In this *26 Reasons Why Jewish People do not Believe Jesus* they bring out that Jesus is not the Son of God, that all of those texts in the Old Testament are speaking of Israel. The nation is God’s Son.

The Muslims will say, “Allah has no Son.”

What do you say when they tell you Allah...

I know. That’s fine. Allah doesn’t have a son, that’s fine, that’s fine. We’re not talking about Allah. We are talking about the God of the Jewish Scriptures who made heaven and earth in six days and, yes, that God has a Son. That is what the Jewish Scriptures say.

And, my friend, you had better kiss the son lest he be angry and you perish in the way.¹⁷

You see, You read this text and you discover a lot of things about God’s Son. We preach that God’s Son died in the place of sinners as was so beautifully sung today. We preach that his Son was raised from the dead. That is in verse 10, too, the resurrection of his Son. It is one of the reasons I am a Christian is because of the resurrection of Christ. You show me someone who can conquer death. I’ll follow him.

We preach that his Son returned to heaven in verse 10. We preach that his Son is coming back again. You see the Jewish people are looking for the coming Messiah. Well, so are we. And we believe this same Jesus will come again. They don’t think he will. It will be someone new. When God delivered the nation from Egypt it was their first redemption. Jewish people today will speak about their second redemption. They say, “When Messiah comes, it will be our second redemption.”

My friends, when you read the book of Isaiah you realize that God says this. He says, “The day is coming when you will no longer say and talk about this great redemption from Egypt.” He said, “The day will come when you will speak of the redemption in which I gather you from all the nations of the world. All around the globe I will gather you and bring you into the light.” And that is going to take place at the Second Coming of Christ and it will be their second redemption.

¹⁷ See Psalm 2:12

So we preach that. We preach that God's Son rescues us from the wrath to come and we preach that God's Son is Jesus.

What a message. May God fill us with an understanding of the work of God's Son on our behalf? And let us announce to people that they have a part in the world to come, not because of their keeping of the law of Moses or Gentiles keeping the covenant of Noah or Muslims keeping the five pillars. But let us announce to them that the blood has been shed and the gates will open because of the righteousness and the atonement of our Messiah, God's Son.

Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we read of these wonderful believers in Thessalonica 2000 years ago that became a model and a pattern to other people. Father, I pray that you will use this fellowship in New York, the many fellowships that are represented from South and North Carolina, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, that you will make all of our fellowships models for giving out the gospel.

And, Father, we pray that you would be pleased, pleased to save sinners. Father, if there is someone here today that does not know personally your Son, who has not repented of their sin and put their faith in your Son, I pray that your Spirit would convict them of their need of the righteousness of Christ and, God, that you would be gracious to grant to them repentance and faith. So do thy work I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.