

With Power and Full Conviction

1 Thessalonians 1:5

Strong! (Books of 1 & 2 Thessalonians)

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Listen to the words of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

“There is a very real danger of our putting our faith in our sermon rather than in the Spirit. Our faith should not be in the sermon, it should be in the Holy Spirit Himself.” – **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

Introduction: Open your Bible to 1 Thessalonians 1. I want to bring a teaching to you tonight entitled: “With Power and Full Conviction.”

We are going to see tonight that it is vain to use the Word of God as context alone. We do need context. We need to know the histories and surrounding details of the Scriptures. We need to understand what the Lord Almighty is saying to us. But if we stop there, we will remain dead and dry. We must understand the movement of the Holy Spirit. It’s important for our sanctification. And here we are going to see that without the movement of the Holy Spirit, we cannot be saved, converted, regenerated in the first place. God help us to remember that He is a person, not a text book.

Introduction: Open your Bible to 1 Thessalonians 1. I want to bring a teaching to you tonight entitled: “The Maturing of the Saved.” God promises in this miracle of salvation that He will bring to maturity all who are saved to be conformed to the image of Christ.

I. The Necessity of the **Word** in Salvation, 1:5

1 Thes. 1:5, “because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in **power** and in the **Holy Spirit** and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.”

We Need the Word

God’s Word is **to be proclaimed**. Without the Word it is impossible for a sinner to be saved. **Romans 10:14-15**, “And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” It’s a tool! What does it say of **Jesus** in **Revelation 19:16**, “From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.”

God's Word is **planted**. We need the Word to be planted in us by the preacher and by the Holy Spirit. "Some plant, some water, but God gives the increase." **James 1:21** says, "Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the **implanted Word**, which is able to save your souls." Those cut and moved by the Word are like a "tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth fruit in it's season..." (Psalm 1:3).

God's Word is **powerful**. "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (**Heb. 4:12-13**).

God's Word is **profitable**. **2 Timothy 3:14-16**, "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it"¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are **able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.**"¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,"¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

The Word **saves**, and the Word **sanctifies**. How? It's not alone. It is a tool that the Holy Spirit uses.

Lloyd-Jones on the Unction of the Spirit

Lloyd Jones said in looking at this text that there must not only be a presentation of the Word, but also an unction. There must be the unction of the Holy Spirit. The Almighty Spirit who hovered over the waters at creation and brought order to chaos must hover over our hearts.

II. The Necessity of the Spirit in Salvation, 1:5

1 Thes. 1:5, "because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in **power** and in the **Holy Spirit** and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake."

1 John 2:20 says, "But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge." In other words, the Author of the Bible must enter into your soul and your mind and interpret the Bible.

PROCESS OF SALVATION: Drawing, Conviction, Illumination

The Spirit's Role in Dragging us to Christ / Arresting us

One of the most important teachings of Jesus on this matter of regeneration is found in the Gospel of John. "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father" (John 6:65). Earlier in chapter 6 of John's Gospel Jesus makes a similar statement. He says, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44). The key word here is *draw*. What does it mean for the Father to draw people to Christ? It literally means to "drag" or to "place someone under arrest."¹

¹ Sproul, R. C. (1986). *Chosen by God* (p. 69). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

The Quickening of Regeneration

Regeneration takes place through the Word of God (Rom. 10:17) and is always accompanied by the human response of faith and repentance (Acts 20:21; 1 Thess. 1:9). Many metaphors have been used in the Bible to describe it. One of the most common biblical metaphors is that of “*quicken*ing.” or the imparting of resurrection life (Eph. 2:1, 5, KJV). It is nothing less than a miracle of God. Man is depraved to such a degree that he is not simply sick, drowning in the ocean, waiting for the life preserver. He is dead on the bottom of the ocean waiting for the miracle of resurrection.

As Puritan **Thomas Boston** said, “Regeneration is not so much the curing of a sick man, as the quickening of a dead man.”² **Erwin Lutzer**, current pastor of the Moody church in Chicago said: “The regeneration of the soul must be the exclusive and supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. Salvation is by grace alone.”³

As the American theologian **William Shedd** writes, "Grace is imparted to sinful man, not because he believes, but in order that he may believe; for faith itself is a gift of God."

Metaphors of Regeneration

The Bible gives us many metaphors of regeneration. These metaphors draw attention to the glory of God’s grace to powerless sinners who cannot help themselves.

- **Resurrection:** In the new life raised from the dead (Eph. 2:1-6; Eze. 37, i.e. “dry bones”), God brings the dead sinner to life.
- **Rescue of an Abandoned Infant:** In this rescue, the sovereign compassion of God is illustrated to sinners who are as helpless as an abandoned newborn (Eze. 16:6, “And when I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’”).
- **Birth:** In the new birth (Jn. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:23) God makes a new person by conceiving faith in the sinner by the Word of God.
- **Metamorphosis:** In the conversion of heart (Eze. 36:26-27; Deuteronomy 30:6) God transforms the heart of stone into a tender heart of flesh.
- **Wineskins:** In the new wineskins (Mt. 9:17) the new heart is able to handle the ever expanding illumination of Christ’s doctrine (i.e. the new wine). When truth is illuminated, like old wineskins, the old heart does not hold it. A new wineskin must be given (representing the new heart).
- **Harvest:** In the miraculous increase of the harvest (1 Cor. 3:6) Paul and Apollos plant and water, but it is God who gives the increase.
- **Baptism:** In Spirit baptism, the believer is newly immersed into Christ, united with Him spiritually and can therefore “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:1-11; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27).
- **Creation:** In the new creation (2 Cor. 4:6; 5:17), God speaks and creates something out of nothing.

Called From the Womb

When does this great work of salvation begin? God begins calling us from our mother’s womb. In **Galatians 1:15**, Paul says God “had set me apart before I was born, and who called

² Thomas Boston. *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* (Philadelphia: Towar and J. & D. M. Hogan, 1830), 170.

³ Erwin W. Lutzer. *The Doctrines that Divide* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 158. Lutzer was quoting William Greenough Thayer Shedd. *A History of Christian Doctrine*, vol. 2, 3rd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1871), 67.

me by his grace...” and that one day God (vs. 16), “was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles...”

David says in **Psalm 22:9-10**, “Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother's breasts. ¹⁰ On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God.”

Drawing

As soon as you were born, because you are the elect of God, the Lord began to draw you by conviction. This continued until you heard the preaching of God's Word.

John 6:37-39, “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.”

This continued until you heard the preaching of God's Word.

John 16:7-8, “I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

Gripping / Dragging

Without God drawing us—literally arresting us and gripping us and dragging us to Him, we would not be saved. You say, that sounds extreme! Oh, it must be extreme, for listen to what **Ephesians 4:18**. You see without God's intervention, our “understanding” is “darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in” us, “because of the blindness of” our “heart.” So this inward awakening—this calling is absolutely essential if one is to come to Christ.

Not Word Only Preaching – Conviction / arrest

Word only preaching saves no one. The Spirit of God must be involved. 1 Thes. 1:5, “because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in **power** and in the **Holy Spirit** and with full conviction.” God convinces us of the church. The idea is that God “arrests” us.

The Ministry of the Word

The Word of God has a powerful and mysterious work through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 53:1, says, “Who has believed our message?”

Romans 10:17, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

I was with a group of ministers recently, and I was shocked to hear some of them say that the gift of prophecy had ceased. Now I believe I know what they were saying, but they were being unclear. Prophecy is a New Testament gift, and without it people are not going to be saved. People must prophecy or forth-tell the message of the New Testament with the prophetic powers of the Holy Spirit. What they meant is that the canon of Scripture was not being added to. The Scriptures are complete. Of course this is true and is needful to contend against those who would make themselves or their own prophecies a new measuring line or magisterium. Charismatics today are repeating the same error as Rome – they give their own version of papal encyclicals.

Yet and still, the ministry of prophecy has always been alive and well, and it is beautifully illustrated in Ezekiel's 37th chapter.

Ezekiel 37:1-10, “The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ²And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord God, you know.”⁴Then he said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord.”

⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. ⁹Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.”¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.”

Hallelujah! When the Word goes forth, the movement of the Spirit in conversion and regeneration occurs.

Getting to “Power and Full Conviction”

We all know the Word. We’ve all come to that place, I trust, of conversion – experiencing the power of full conviction of the Holy Spirit. But how do we live in the Spirit? How do we walk in faith? I ask you, HOW?

I think we ought to be done with “Word only” living. We need the Spirit’s power and conviction. How do we get there? I think the answer is in 1:2-3, where Paul explains his gratitude to God for the Spirit’s work in his *constant prayers*. We need to be dedicated to praying. We need to have a daily time with God to start the day so that it extends the Spirit’s power upon all of our day.

I trust you are tired of “dry bones” living and “stony heart” decisions. Let us live in the Spirit by fervent prayer which is always blessed by fervent faith, a gift from God.