

1 Thessalonians 1:5 - 5 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. NASU

A. for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction - Paul goes on here to give reasons for his knowledge of their election as he stated in verse 4, **“knowing, brethren, His choice of you.”** How do I **“know”** you were **“chosen”** by God says Paul, **“our Gospel came in Word, and in power and in full conviction of the Holy Spirit.”** Their conversion was real and everyone knew it because it was plainly evident by the powerful transformation it had wrought in their lives. When the Gospel came to Thessalonica, these people were radically changed from their sinful pagan idolatry to a holy life of worship unto the true God. Note here the convergence of Word and Spirit. The Gospel must come by **“word,”** that is what the **“Gospel”** is, a **“word”** or message about what Christ has done.

James 1:18 - 18 In the exercise of His will **He brought us forth by the word of truth**, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. NASB

But the **“Gospel”** by itself, without the powerful work of regeneration by God, is nothing but words. But when it is combined with the **“full conviction”** that comes from the **“Holy Spirit,”** the result is new birth and transformed lives. This is God’s power in converting His elect.

Titus 3:5 - 5 **He saved us**, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, **by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit**, NASB

1 Peter 1:3 - 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has **caused us to be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **Ezekiel 36:26-27** - 26 "Moreover, **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you**; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "And **I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes**, and **you will be careful to observe** My ordinances. NASB

This **“conviction”** is a powerful work of God’s Spirit whereby He causes sorrow over sin and a longing for reconciliation to God, which result in **repentance** from that sin which caused the sorrow, and **faith** in the life and death of Christ, the only thing that can reconcile us to God. This repentance and faith is the divine power of God which He works by His Spirit in the conversion of every true Christian. True repentance and faith are the marks of salvation, clearly evident in the Thessalonians. When a person is born again by the power of the Spirit, they are changed, as Paul describes in;

2 Corinthians 5:17 - 17 Therefore **if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away**; behold, new things have come. NASB

And so these Thessalonians were by God’s power changed from worshipping and valuing dead and lifeless idols to serve and worship the living and true God.

B. just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake – Paul here recognizes for them that he and Silas and Timothy were in fact examples of this transforming power having demonstrated lives in which the power of God was plainly evident. There are many professing Christians in the world, but fewer who actually demonstrate lives that have been so powerfully transformed by the Gospel and the Spirit so that it is evident to all and so that others **“know what kind of men we proved to be among you.”** The power and conviction of these apostles’ Gospel was plainly evident in their life, and this was **“proved among”** the Thessalonians by their very presence. Consider that Paul, Silas and Timothy had been so changed by the God that they were now devoting their life to preaching the Gospel in places like Thessalonica, literally hundreds of miles from their homes, and in what were many times, very hostile circumstances. All of this they did at great personal cost, but for the **“sake”** of their hearers, as he states **“for your sake.”** The apostles ministry was an amazing story as they would move from city to city, and province to province, preaching the good news that God was now forgiving sin based on repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that this ministry was

now “calling out” God’s church from every tribe and people. This was an amazing display of selfless sacrifice on the part of the apostles who were so devoted in love to the church that they would endure much opposition and at great peril, just to tell people about the great things God has done in Christ.

2 Timothy 2:8-10 - 8 **Remember Jesus Christ**, risen from the dead, descendant of David, **according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. 10 For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen**, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. NASB

This was the command of our Lord being lived out in the lives of His Apostles. They had **“lost their life”** for the sake of Christ and His Gospel.

Mark 8:34-35 - 34 And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.** 35 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; **but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it.** NASB

1 Thessalonians 1:6 - 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, NASU

A. You also became imitators of us and of the Lord – Another reason why Paul knew they were elect. They not only affirmed the truth of the Gospel by their profession, but it was accompanied by changed lives. They **“became imitators”** of the apostles, who had become imitators of Christ. And so this is the case for all *true* Christians, we not only turn our back on the dead idols of our former life, but we now serve the living God. This is our constant pursuit and what it means to “follow Jesus.” It is to live a life mimicking our Lord, and living lives of love as He did.

Ephesians 5:1-2 - 5 Therefore **be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you**, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. NASB

B. having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit - Consider here the amazing example of these Thessalonians who not only turned their back on their idols, but became powerful spreaders of the Word of God in their entire province and the surrounding areas in just a few short months. They truly had become imitators of these blessed apostles. This was clear by the powerful work the Word did in their hearts **“having received the word in much tribulation”** as these Christians endured much persecution for their new found faith. The same hostility which had run Paul out of town was now upon them daily, as they were being severely persecuted which is indicated by Paul’s describing it as **“much tribulation.”** The picture here is not only had they **“received the word in much tribulation,”** but now they were taking it to **“every place”** around them because they had received it **“with the joy of the Holy Spirit.”** They were glad to serve God in this way because the Gospel came to them with the supernatural power of inner **“joy”** that accompanies all true conversions. **“Joy”** is the sweet fruit of the Spirit which seasons our new life with satisfaction and delight in our blessed Lord to such a degree that we are willing to follow Him no matter the cost, even if it is to a martyr’s death! They had become the children of God to their great delight and they were so happy and fulfilled that they couldn’t keep quiet about it. But as is many times the case, Christian **“joy”** over the good news of the Gospel is met with much persecution and suffering. *Evangelical* Christians have long been the objects of suffering because people do not like being told that they are at enmity with Almighty God and in danger of His coming judgment, and they don’t like being told that their false religion is worthless in the sight of a holy God who has provided the only and *exclusive* way to be saved through the death of a Jew, namely Jesus Christ. This **bad news** of the Gospel engenders much opposition and vehement hatred at times which has spilled the blood of the martyrs for centuries and made Christians the subjects of **“much affliction,”** and slander and reviling.