

Gospel, Word and Power

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Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

- **Pray that Jesus would always be the focus of everything we do at Brookwood.**
- **Ask God to help you follow His Word, even when it is hard to do.**
- **Pray that our church actively seeks the lost and opens our arms to those who feel unloved.**

Scripture Reading:

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 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. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-10 (ESV)

A. Introduction

Now, if you have been at Brookwood for a while, you have probably heard people ask about our denomination. Have you noticed how many denominations are out there? It's overwhelming, and so many people don't really understand the different beliefs that each denomination has.

A pastor I knew once told me this...

He said he grew up in a Baptist church, and he looked forward to the day when there would be no more division.

He said:

Lutherans would be there represented by Martin Luther.

Methodists would be there represented by John Wesley.

Catholics would be there represented by the Pope.

And the Baptist would be there represented by Jesus.

Come on... everyone thinks their way is the right way, and Jesus is on their side, their denomination.

Now I have bad news: denominations aren't mentioned in the Bible...

But it is important to define what you believe, and that's what I want to do today, because some of you are trying to figure out who we are denominational.

I see that we read the Word of God at the beginning; are we Baptists?

We see people raising their hands in worship, and we anoint people with oil; are we charismatic?

Some people will say we are really involved in the community; are we a non-denominational church?

So, if you've been here since the beginning, or if this is your first time here, you've picked a great week to visit, because I really want you to see the kind of church I believe God is calling us to be.

And so if you ask me, *Hey Bryan, what kind of church are we?*

This is what I'm going to say we are: a 1 Thessalonians 1 church. Let me break that down very clearly for you.

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 Thessalonians 1:5 (ESV)

So, the Thessalonian church is one of the only churches that Paul and Scripture praise.

Remember, it is mentioned in Revelation... Jesus has a whole lot of harsh words for the church, but in 1 Thessalonians, we see a blueprint of a church- a model church.

A pastor I know in Texas really helped shape some of this talk for me, and I'm grateful for his ministry.

So, when I say we are a 1 Thessalonians 1 church...

B. Gospel, Word and Power

(1 Thessalonians 1:5)

1. We are a GOSPEL church.

(Luke 19:10. C/R: 1 Thessalonians 1:8)

We want to live for the mission of God.

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 Thessalonians 1:5 (ESV)

Surrendering your life to Jesus is the most important decision you can make...

Gospel. I love how Tim Keller says it... *The gospel is that you are far more flawed than you ever could have imagined, but you are far more loved than you could have ever hoped for.*

The Gospel is good because it goes into bad places...think about all the bad news and bad things that happen.

The Gospel is good because it goes to those places... and it's news because it's true, it really happened...

I want you to think about this... why did Jesus come to this Earth?

"For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."

Luke 19:10 (NLT)

He had a mission, and He has given us that same mission... to reach those who are far from Him. See, we believe the story of Jesus is too good to keep to ourselves... and we believe that is one of the things Brookwood is called to be: a Gospel of Jesus.

Now, listen, when I first became a Christian, anyone who had a pulse... I would talk to about Jesus... like, remember when AOL was a thing? I used to get on an atheist chatroom and just say, *God loves you...* and then there would be a pause, and it was like... ding ding... die...

I was in class, and I would look at someone and say... *Hey, I noticed your pencil is broken. Did you know your soul is broken?*

See, the church in Thessalonica was planted by the Apostle Paul, but he had to flee due to intense persecution. As a result, the church faced resistance, yet they remained faithful and continued to share the gospel.

And now the word of the Lord is ringing out from you to people everywhere, even beyond Macedonia and Achaia, for wherever we go we find people telling us about your faith in God. We don't need to tell them about it,

1 Thessalonians 1:8 (NLT)

See, they understood the mission...

As I wrote this message... I was at a coffee shop, and the server was so kind. After everyone checked out, he would ask if he could pray. He talked about Jesus every second he got... and one person in the line was so rude... she looked at me and said, *Don't talk to him, he won't stop talking...* he goes on 90 miles an hour, and he keeps talking about Jesus... and I thought I have that same problem... ☺ I love Jesus and I love to talk.

I have been here for 3 years now, and you haven't run me off, so I think it's time to accept that 10:15 is the new time... It's time to accept your new reality... some of you set alarms for 12, and it feels a little passive-aggressive at this point. ☺

But as I watched this guy talk about Jesus ... he came up to me, and he said, *Are you religious?* I said, *Yeah, kind of...* but he prayed for me right there and asked for the peace of the Lord. I watched him get rejected by most people he talked to, but there was one man who he talked to about Jesus for over 30 minutes, and I thought, Lord, give me a boldness like that. And the joy... he wasn't there just to serve coffee; he was there serving the joy of the Lord.

Why are we so afraid to be "that Christian" ... what a blessing if people go, *You know that guy, or that woman, they are always talking about Jesus.* We want to be gospel people.

But it can't stop there.

2. We are a WORD church.

(Matthew 7:24. C/R: Hebrews 4:12)

We are a Bible church.

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 Thessalonians 1:5 (ESV)

So, the church in Thessalonica was a Word church; they loved the Word of God...

We believe it takes a whole Bible to make a whole Christian.

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock."

Matthew 7:24 (NIV)

I shared this before. Thomas Jefferson, the third president, loved the teachings of Jesus, but he didn't like the miracles of Jesus. So he cut out specific passages he found difficult to make it more palpable to him and others.

We gasp at the thought of someone literally cutting out passages of the Bible... but so many people do this, maybe not literally, but metaphorically, they cut out passages they don't like.

Can I be honest? There are passages I don't like, there are passages I would skip over for years, and ones at times I still do...

But my job isn't to like the Bible, it's to submit to it. And we have too many people that fall away from faith because they don't have a solid foundation... and you know what a solid foundation is in this crazy world? The steady and unchanging word of God!

I don't like going to the doctor, although I love my doctor... (he's in the room), but it's a part of being healthy... and you can't be a healthy Christian without living and submitting to the Bible.

Think about how we think about the Bible...

History book.

Instruction manual. (How to build something)

Road map.

It's none of those... we need to wake up...

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)

There was a study done that shows this:

When someone reads the Bible once a week, it has little effect.

When people read the Bible two to three times a week, it has some effect.

But when read four times or more each week, listen to this: those people are 228% more likely to share their faith.

407% more likely to memorize scripture.

59% less likely to view pornography.

30% less likely to struggle with loneliness, anxiety, or depression.

Here's the point: when the Word of God and not the world becomes the majority of your life, everything will change.

3. We are a POWER church.

(1 Corinthians 4:20)

We are a presence of God church.

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 Thessalonians 1:5 (ESV)

Did you notice... with the Holy Spirit and full of conviction... Let me remind you, church...I can't change anyone. You can't change anyone; it's the Spirit of God that does that!

Do you ever wonder why so many people fall away from the faith? Part of the reason I believe this happens is that if people can talk you into something, then they can also talk you out of it. However, no one can talk you out of an experience.

I remember the first time I experienced a holy space, a sacred place... a place known as Costco. My dad had talked to me about it, but then I experienced it... You can buy all your stuff there, and then get a hot dog for 1.50, it's heavenly...

But I drove by it for years before I experienced it. Consider this: the Apostle Paul knew the word of God and had the mission of God to spread Judaism, but it was an encounter on the Damascus Road that transformed him.

Do you realize that every person who has an encounter with the Spirit of God in the Bible is different?

Like, sometimes in the American church, we say things like, *Come see my pastor.* But this church was saying, *Come see my God.*

Now listen, I'm all for good pastors.... But sometimes we forget who it's all about... It's about Him, and He's the one with power...

Think about Jesus before He was crucified; He actually told the disciples it was better for them that He go... how could that be?

Here's why, because the Spirit inside you is better than the Jesus beside you... because the Spirit who is fully God now lives and reigns in you.

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

1 Corinthians 4:20 (NIV)

See, we don't want to talk about God; we want to experience Him.

And these don't have to be crazy things... but maybe you are in worship, and you feel the presence of God.

Maybe you're reading the Word, and God gives you a verse and a thought that you know is from Him.

Maybe He shows up in a prayer you've been praying... Those experiences... we want more of them!

So, where are you at, and where do you need to focus?

Gospel

Word

Power

Let me show you why you can't just focus on one of these... if you do, it's incomplete...

Gospel - Now today, a lot of churches that are gospel churches are churches like non-denominational churches or churches that go after "justice and mercy" issues as the primary focus, like the Methodist church...

The problem with these churches is that if you focus only on the gospel and reaching those who are far from God, you can end up looking like the rest of the world. You start to compromise the ethics and life that Jesus has called you to.

Think about it, Jesus sat with sinners; they were drawn to him, but he never once condoned their way of life... He called them to something higher...

So Brookwood is about the mission of God, we are called to be a Gospel church...

Word- Presbyterian and Baptist... can't sit and argue theology and do nothing.. and honestly, the danger of some of the Word churches is they are mean.

Power- A lot of churches that focus on the presence of God are Pentecostal churches... the shadow side of some of these churches is they become miracle churches, and if you aren't careful, you can start chasing the hand of God instead of the face of God!

So that's why we must be all of these...

Grab a stool if you want to have a healthy church... we need to have all of those. If you only have one, it's not a solid foundation. You need them all...

That's why we say, *Jesus at the Center*, because He was all of these things.

Application-

The Gospel... is God calling you to be more bold?

The Word...do you need to study and know more of His Word?

Power... you are called to a deeper prayer life... to ask for more of God!