

Recap of 1/26/20 (1 Thessalonians 1:5-8):

1. In 1 Thessalonians 1:5-8, Paul enumerates the evidence that the believers in Thessalonica were loved of God and chosen by God (1:4). In vss. 5-10 he lists six reasons for his confidence.
2. The first reason is how they received the message of the gospel. It wasn't Paul's oratorical skills which reached them (1 Corinthians 2:1-5), nor gifts of the Holy Spirit, nor miracles, but rather it was the power of the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12), applied by the Holy Spirit to their lives (the Holy Spirit's convicting work (John 16:8) delivered with conviction by Paul which produced new life in them.
3. Too often when we think of the Holy Spirit and power, we assume some kind of spectacular gift or healing or miracle. The greatest power is how the word of God applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit can change a life. To take a rebel and make them a devoted follower of God, to take one who is dead in trespasses and sin and make them alive (John 5:24), that's real power.
4. In the words of J. Vernon McGee, "I believe that the Spirit of God can cause the Word of God to penetrate into your heart, and life, and my heart and life so that we are transformed people...I believe the Spirit of God can take the Word of God and make it real to you...The Spirit of God can and will take the Word of God and perform the greatest miracle possible—changing an unbelieving, lost sinner into a child of God!"
5. The next reason Paul gives is that the Thessalonians became imitators of him and of Christ to the point that they willingly suffered for the sake of Jesus, with joy, the deep conviction that their lives were in God's hands.
-“Many believers today think that suffering is the exception in the Christian life. So when suffering occurs, they say, ‘Why me?’ They feel as though God has deserted them, or perhaps they accuse him of not being as dependable as they thought he should be. In reality, the world is broken, so even believers suffer.” (NLT One Year Study Bible)
6. The third evidence he cites is that they went from being imitators to being model believers.
7. The fourth evidence was that they became such vocal witnesses of the gospel that their lives and witness reverberated all throughout the provinces.