

Good morning. My name is Tyler I'm one of the pastors on staff here at CoaH. It's good to be with you all.

I want to point our attention to one more announcement...
Singles and Young married folks...

I've had quite a week if I can be honest with you all.

Earlier in the week our eight month old, Remy, started having a pretty bad cough but we didn't think too much of it... until Wednesday we took him in to the doctor and he tested for RSV and just wasn't having a good time really fever bad cough all the things... So he didn't go to daycare most of the week

And that Wednesday night I had a meeting with some friends from CoaH and after the meeting ended I stayed to hang out for a little bit so by the time I got home it was pretty late, maybe 12:30 or so...

By the time I let out the dog and get ready for bed it's close to 1am and the second my head hits the pillow our 3 year old daughter wakes up and is crying.

I get up and get out of bed to go comfort her and it takes some time to settle her down, she's crying about her friend from daycare that hit her and was sad and we had to work through that...

Then she's down and I kid you not the second I lay my head back down our eight month old wakes up and is crying...

So I get back up pick up up and bring him to Ashlan to feed him and I lay back down and then my daughter is back up crying again...

And this ping pong ping pong ping pong just goes back and forth really all night until at the end of the night Ashlan is sharing the bed with Addie

And I am this close to turning the baby monitor off Remy like figure it out bro everyone I know always wants to sleep why don't you...

I'm kidding- I wouldn't just turn the monitor off on him.

But... His RSV gets worse and it turns out she has an ear infection... and we probably get less than two hours of sleep that night.

On top of this I'm getting ready to leave town tomorrow

I have evening meetings almost every night this week this was one of the busiest weeks of the year for me so far... a terrible terrible week for one of the kids to be sick.

Ashlan is in a really busy season at work...

And maybe worst of all... I gave up coffee for lent. I was a two sometimes three cups of coffee a day kind of person.

This week we were just tired and all we could muster up was just kind of... parenting, life, jobs... this is hard..

And I'm sure many of you have had worse weeks than I've just described...

I know some of you here are dealing with lay offs at your work place...

I know some of you in here are dealing with the death of family members

I know some of you here are dealing with People you trusted betraying you and lying to you..

Things that far outweigh common illnesses...

But here's the reality- **There are weeks where the only thing we can cling to at the end of the day is the gospel.**

In these moments what do I turn to what do I choose to look to or to remember really matters **and it really has to be the gospel.....**

Why well My kids health will fail, my wife and I will not love each other the perfect way that is needed, my work will not go smoothly...

And at the end of the day if these are the only things I'm looking to my life will at some point or another cripple...

But if we cling to the gospel, if we constantly remind ourselves of the gospel, we set our lives on something much more stable, immovable even

And this is just what Paul does in our passage he takes time to remind them about the gospel...

Paul wants them to remember a few things.

Paul wanted them to remember how the gospel came to them, changed them, and compelled them.

And so as we look at this passage we're going to consider those same things

how the gospel came to us

How the gospel changed us

And how the gospel challenged us

And I use the word "us" here because Paul, Silas, and Timothy- in 1 Thessalonians don't forget they're writing to a church body, not *just* an individual...

in fact the majority of the time you see the word “you” in the new testament, about 2 out of every 3 times, it is the plural form. You all- or ya’ll- depending on which part of the country you’re from.

Paul is encouraging the church in Thessalonica to remember the gospel

So first, Remember how the gospel came to us (5-6b)

Gospel definition from Blands sermon “The good news that God so loved the world that he sent his only Son to live the sinless life we could not live, to die the death for sin that we deserved, and to rise from the grave to give us the eternal life with God we could never earn.”

A condensed version could be something along the lines of “God loved the world and sent His Son to live, die, and rise so we could have the eternal life we could never earn.”

With that in mind... How did the gospel come to the Thessalonians? Well verse five “Our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction...”

But this gospel... notice something else too- the gospel came the Thessalonians through people... and specifically through their suffering and sacrifice...

We read Acts 17 last week and heard about how the church was started in Thessalonica, how the Thessalonians literally heard about the gospel, and we see suffering.

Yes Paul, who preached and reasoned in the synagogue there showing the Jews the gospel, had a life of great suffering and affliction but so did others who were involved.

There was a mob described as “Setting the city in uproar” because of what Paul was preaching.

And they went after Jason, Paul’s host and dragged him and other Christians from their home, and essentially robbed him of some of his money... all because the gospel was preached.

There was great suffering and affliction so that the Thessalonians could hear the gospel.. .

The gospel came to the Thessalonians through suffering people...

And how does the gospel come to us... well more often than not by a person... right?

How many people, by raise of hand, if you're a Christian, it was in part because someone at some point shared the gospel with you?

Whether it's a family member, friend, of whatever...

Yes we all have stories of individuals in our lives that impacted us greatly **but the gospel comes to us now, at this church in this building every week because people have gone before us and sacrificed greatly.** Some of them still in this room...

We certainly have a gospel legacy of suffering to thank when it comes to our church..

Whether it's Bland and Teresa, their kids and a core team of people that were faithful to God's call... despite the overwhelming statistics that church plants in Boston, at the time, would not make it.

Or Brad and Mollie 13/14 years ago saying that they were okay with Bethany being the only kid.. in CoaH Kids...

their sacrifice is part of the reason you see a thriving kids ministry every single sunday. Where, if you have kids, where your kid hears the gospel every single sunday... because someone chose to sacrifice and endure for the sake of the gospel...

Or if you're in a CG that has ever multiplied in the past... Multiplying community groups, breaking relational rhythms that are comfortable so that more people can hear the gospel... etc etc...

Or many of you who have been here for 8, 9, 10, years or more... Those of you who have said I'm going to plant roots in Brookline in Boston, even though it's hard, for the sake of other people hearing the gospel.

When you make that conscious decision to make this city your home, don't underestimate what God will do with that for the good of others.

Our church now

So we look back, ***we remember how the gospel came to us***, but what does that prompt us to do...

Well Paul and Silas suffered so the gospel to get to the Thessalonians
The Thessalonians suffered so the gospel could get to the Macedonians and those in Achaia [Uh Chi Uh] and beyond

In other words suffering gets the gospel out...

Look at verse 6 and 7 “An 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*** [for the purpose of, for the reason of] ***so that*** you would become an example to others...”

In other words You may very well be suffering for the salvation of someone else.

Notice how we are to suffer too what is one of the descriptors in verse seven... joy.

verse 7 “You received the word in much affliction, **with the joy of the Holy Spirit...**”

The Christian life is a strange duality of affliction and joy that we might think make us a sad looking people but frankly it's probably one of the most appealing things about the Christian life

Because everyone will suffer... but not everyone will experience joy in it.. The Christian is promised this.

The world can't argue with joy-filled suffering. They can't explain how a person can suffer and still radiate peace and purpose. That's when the gospel shines brightest. Joni Eareckson Tada

And so Some of you are so discouraged in your suffering. Some of you feel so defeated by the difficulties and things you're facing..

But know this- it's doing something. You might just not see it- and it might not be in your life but rather the life of someone else.

So what's the encouragement here... keep going! And Don't try to elude suffering. If you sense that suffering is in a situation or a circumstance or more likely- in a relationship- Often times it's not something to run from but rather something to run to...

We so often curl up and avoid suffering because it's hard, which it is.

But if it's true that our suffering can lead to the salvation of others what is that saying about your view of others if you aren't willing to suffer.

Because suffering is how the gospel gets out. The life of Christ puts this on display...

Never has there been someone who has suffered as much as Jesus never has there been someone who has experienced so much affliction and yet these parts of the life of Christ helped get the gospel to the world..

So remembering how the gospel came to you helps you consider how God might be using you to get the gospel to others... which we'll talk about in a little bit too.

Paul also wanted them to remember how the gospel changed them...

Remember how the gospel changed us (6a, 7, 9b-10)

How did the gospel change the Thessalonians... well verse six they became imitators of Godly individuals and Christ “And you became imitators of us and of the Lord...MAYBE ADD THE REST LATER”

Now what does this mean they likely started to imitate their character Paul, these men, and Jesus had. And I don't need to sit here and go in depth about the characteristics of a Christian right we are all supposed to be people that are generous, unreasonably loving, sacrificial with our time, truthful, and I could go on...

But the gospel doesn't just make us good people. The gospel doesn't just change our character... **there are, quite frankly, plenty of non-Christians that have better character than Christians**

Leonard Ravenhill said “Jesus did not come into the world to make bad men good. He came into the world to make dead men live.”

In other words, the core of our problem is not merely our behavior- **because then the solution would be stop doing bad things.**

Our core problem is idolatry. It's worship of self and of anything and everything except for God. Which makes the solution worship of God

Verse 9 tells us what the Thessalonians core problem, and our core problem, is... Idolatry.

Verse 9 “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...”

...

What's the implication there ... well that what you worship either gives you life... or is slowly taking your life.

Think about it if you make your family your everything in life- where you get all of your joy your happiness- what happens when that family doesn't live up to your expectations... or God forbid something horrible happens....

You make your job the center of your life- what happens when the organization doesn't perform well, you can't manage your team successfully, or you get laid off....

The gospel... Jesus...He is the only one who will not fail you because the work of Jesus is already done...

You see the work of our idols have yet to happen, the work of Jesus is already done.

You don't have to wonder if He's going to hold up his end of the bargain because He already did it... He already paid the price... the bill has already been paid..

The end of the road of a life with Christ is communion with God here and now, and forever...

The end of the road of idols is eventual disappointment and death...

And here's the danger with idols- they don't scream at us in an obvious way they are much more subtle than that.

People in this room aren't going to their work place and bowing down to it while putting together a little burnt offering.

But people in this room are constantly bringing home the baggage of their work and letting it affect their family life.

People in this room are staying late and putting in extra hours far more often than they ought to.

What I'm not saying is you can't feel upset about work and bring that home

I'm not saying you shouldn't be putting in extra hours when it's needed at times.

But when your work starts to dictate how the rest of your life goes- not just your time, but your mental state, your ability to be present with family and friends, your physical state- **then it has become life consuming and is an idol and has ultimately taken the place of God in your life.**

Idolatry isn't the obvious worship of something other than God but the subtle take over of something that you care about.

And the gospel is the only thing that can truly correct this. Verse 9 doesn't just talk about them turning away from something but rather turning to something

Verse 9 "**You turned to God from idols...**"

As the great 21st century Philosopher Lil Wayne... once said "**Ain't 'bout what you walk away from, it's 'bout what you walk away with**"

I certainly cannot, as a pastor, recommend the vast majority of lil Wayne's songs to you...

But turning away from something bad is only half the job you have to turn to something good...

And if you just turn to another habit or hobby or goal, even if they are good ones, they will fail you.

If you don't replace your idols with God you're just going to replace your old idols with new idols...

What the gospel offers us is far better than what those idols do.

What the gospel says is what you are actually looking for in these idols- unconditional love, affirmation, intimacy, success (core desires of the human heart)- what you are actually looking for in these idols you will find in Christ.

Turn from idols to Christ...

And you want to know You want to know what your subtle idols are- pray for God to reveal them and then ask the people closest to you- they'll know or at least have a good idea.

And lastly the gospel challenges us...

Remember how the gospel compelled us (8-9a)

Look at verse 8 and the first half of 9 "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..."

This implies that yes the way that the Thessalonians conducted themselves in suffering and trials made news headlines in some way shape or form but the phrasing "the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you" implies some form of intentionally sharing their faith...

When you look across Scripture or really across all of the New Testament you see the gospel come to people, you see the gospel change people, and then you see the gospel compel people to go and share.

It's all over.

The woman at the well in John 4, what's the first thing she does after she meets Jesus... she is compelled to go and tell others about it..

The book of Acts is just the story of the apostles desperately trying to share this good news of the gospel in various parts of the world.

What I'm not saying you should do tomorrow morning when you jump into your first meeting is say to your co-workers "can I tell you about our lord and savior Jesus Christ"

The Gen Send team we had last year, which is a team of college students that just serves our church, at their orientation we told them rule number one when sharing your faith up here in Boston is “don’t be a freaking weirdo”

And to share one tip for sharing your faith...

Rarely is it actually affective to share the entirety of the gospel or the entirety of your story...

It’s often better to

1. listen and
2. ask questions about the other persons life...
3. and then respond with gospel truth...

In other words you converse with a co-worker and you learn their Mom has died recently and instead of saying can I tell you about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ you say “**do you mind if I share how my faith helped me get through something similar**”

There may be a time where a full gospel presentation is appropriate but more often than not it’s small steps, one piece of the puzzle at a time, and glimpses into the beauty that is in the gospel and the person of Christ...

But we don’t do this do we... most of us don’t feel, if we’re honest, we don’t feel compelled.

Why don’t we do this?

Because The truth is that same gospel that compelled those apostles to go and share until they were killed for it is the same gospel that we believe in today.

The same Holy Spirit that inspired and guided the apostles is the same Holy Spirit that inspires and guides us today..

So what is the disconnect... ?

I remember... over a year ago now Ashlan and I had some folks over and we were talking about mission and sharing our faith and CoaH...

It was a few folks from church that care about this kind of thing and practice it in their own lives.

We had a whiteboard and a bottle of wine and we just asked the question why aren’t we, as a church, doing this more?

We came up with all kinds of things.

- Fear of man
- Lack of urgency

- Time and margin
- Not well equipped to share or answer questions

We talked about it for a long time and you know what we boiled it down to...

We don't treasure the gospel enough. That's it...

I would say the tendency of the average person at our church is to treat the gospel as if it's just something to be intellectually believed but not emotionally treasured in the heart.

It's so easy to lose a sense of beauty and wonder when we think about the gospel...

- Whether it's because we've just fallen out of communing with God on a consistent basis...
- Or because we think our sin is small
- Or because we feel self sufficient...

This is why the week of prayer coming up is so important. We'll have prayer meetings every night, we'll have a 24 hour prayer room going, and we'll conclude with a night of worship and prayer...

Yes all of us should be praying for the gospel to reach others around us, but we should also be praying we continue to find it compelling and beautiful..

Or maybe you think who am I to share the gospel what will that even do or amount to... I want to close with a story, a true story...

That starts with a man named **Edward Kimball**...

-Sunday school teacher right here in Boston

-taught a young boys class and was really concerned about one of his students so he went to that students place of employment a shoe store right here in downtown Boston on court street... I can imagine Kimball pacing back and forth.. and he goes in and just so awkwardly presents the gospel.

That man was **Dwight L Moody** and that day he trusted in Christ and he would go on to preach the gospel, most estimates say to 100 million people..

all because of a sunday school teacher that shared

Under the preaching of Moody another man heard the gospel and trusted Christ and his name was **Wilbur Chapman**. And it's estimated that he preached the gospel to about 60 million people..

But... the impact of a Sunday school teacher goes on...

There was a professional baseball player named **Billy Sunday** who heard him preach and believed the gospel. He went on to preach around the world too and reached an estimated 100 million people with the gospel..

the impact of a Sunday school teacher goes on...

Some men were inspired by his preaching and his crusades so they decided to hold some in their own hometown in Charlotte, North Carolina. There another young man came, heard the gospel multiple nights in a row, and accepted Christ.

That man was **Billy Graham** and Billy Graham went on to preach to well over 215 million people in 185 different countries.. a 2005 poll in America found that one in six people had heard billy graham preach the gospel.

Don't miss what sharing the gospel and living out our faith can do....

But Here's what we do- we say yeah but Tyler these were gifted people. Their speaking abilities, their rhetoric, their lack of fear about what people thought about them... But if that's what you're thinking you're missing the point-

It's not about Edward Kimball, it's not about Dwight L Moody, it's not about Wilbur Chapman billy sunday or even Billy Graham- it's about their message. it's about the gospel

How you share the gospel is not ultimately what saves someone, It's the gospel that saves people.

That God sent His Son from heaven, raised him from the dead, and He delivers us from the wrath to come...

Verses 9-10