

Transformed lives; A faith that works; 1Thes 1:3-5, 9.

Scripture does not call ministers "change agents." Yet it is the keynote task of ministry. The essence of ministry is to preach, proclaim and lead to people of God to changed lives, faith, attitudes and faithfulness on every level imaginable--personal, communal, national, and internal.

All God's Ministers Are Change Agents!

Over the next few weeks, we will have a series of sermons on the theme of "Transformed lives."

It is possible for people to learn how to change their behaviour, under their own steam.

- They can make themselves more socially acceptable. But only God can transform the human heart, and enable real **change** for the better.
- The people Paul wrote to in Thessalonica had found in the good news about Jesus, a way to be **changed**.
- The purpose of their lives had been altered. These believers now possessed; *faith, hope, and love*.

What is the "work of faith" that Paul refers to in v3? ?³*We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

He answers that question in v9 *they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.*

- That is faith at work. Faith is not merely belief. Faith works. It has the power to **change**.
- Faith enables us to turn from what is wrong to what is right, from dark and hurtful things to bright and helpful things, from the worship of idols to the worship of God. We have many idols. Sport; entertainment and entertainers! Our work; even the TV!
- Faith is **costly**! It cost Abraham his son. Daniel, to be cast in the lion's den. Stephen to be stoned to death. It cost Jesus his life. Does it cost you anything?

Note: not from idols to God, but the other way round.

- You do not leave your idols and then try to find God. You discover something of the wonder and greatness of God and seeing it want it.
- *Faith sees the invisible; believes the incredible; and receives the impossible. Faith is far more a way of walking than it is of talking.*

The Call: Eph 1:4. *He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.*

How do you know? The answer is that you feel yourself drawn to God. Jesus **"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. Jn 6:44**

- The people at Thessalonica felt a desire to have this Jesus who could change their lives.

Paul spelt out the steps of God's call.

1. The Word. 5.

The Scriptures were preached. The truth was proclaimed. It is through the declaration of these great promises and the story of Jesus, that men and women are awakened and moved towards God.

2. The Power

"For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power" 5.

The Word becomes real, compelling, and gripping. The gospel has the ability to compel because it is Truth, not myth and legend.

3. The Holy Spirit

Paul says the gospel came "in the Holy Spirit". Behind the power is the reality of God himself. His Spirit can touch and fill the human spirit. He begins to minister to our minds and our hearts from within, opening them to understand the things of God.

4. The Deep Conviction

Finally, the gospel came "with deep conviction". The gospel not only affected the emotions and the minds of these people in Thessalonica, it affected their actions; their **will**! They heard, they acted; they did something, they yielded their hearts to God.

Conclusion.

Maybe you have been attending Church for years, and have heard the gospel many times, but you have never opened your heart to God. Maybe you have faith that is only belief. You have not acted on it. That is the final, necessary step.

- Your will must be moved. Jesus said: **"Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me. Rev3:20**

- Do you have a faith that works? Unless you have actually received Christ, you have not exercised faith.

- You can believe the story to be true, but until it moves you to accept the Lord, to invite him into your heart, you have not exercised faith.