

A Gospel Resolution

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Preacher: Mark Norman

[0 : 01] All right, let's have our Bibles open there at our text at 1 Thessalonians 1 from verse 1 to verse 10. I was thinking about when I preached here last, I think it was last year. I can't believe the way the time has gone by.

It's the end of February already. I sort of wonder whether or not we've thought through our New Year's resolutions yet or not, or whether or not we've already tried to implement them and failed. Is it too late to think about New Year's resolutions?

Or perhaps to add another very important resolution possibly to the ones we already have? Well, I want us to think about a Gospel resolution, not only for 2018, but I think for the rest of our lives and for the rest of our time here as we serve the Lord here at St. Marks.

So 1 Thessalonians 1 from verse 1 to verse 10. As we contemplate our church here in Plumstead, as we contemplate our future, what will God do?

That's an important question. We don't always think about that. What should our Gospel resolutions be for this year and the years to come?

[1 : 26] Because, of course, the most important resolution of all is the Gospel resolution. And as we think about a couple of challenges for our congregation, I want us to look at these few verses of here in Paul's greeting and thanksgiving, as he writes to the Thessalonians.

It's a congregation that he, Timothy and Silas, founded in the largest province in Greece, Macedonia, just over 2,000 years ago.

And we're going to have a look at these verses as we consider a Gospel challenge or a Gospel resolution for 2018.

I'm going to be doing essentially two things. First of all, I want us to have a look at the kind of church this church in Thessalonica really was.

And then secondly, we're going to study the kind of Gospel that established this church. Those are the two things we're going to be doing this morning. Let's start with the church.

[2 : 31] You look at your Bible there, you will notice that he begins his thanksgiving with a greeting from himself, Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so what starts out as a thanksgiving, as you cast your eye down the text, turns into a description of this remarkable congregation all the way up to verse 10.

Thessalonica was the largest city in Macedonia. We learn something of its founding. If you go home and look at Acts, the book of Acts chapter 16.

The book of Acts, by the way, is a kind of an historical account of Paul's ministry. And in Acts chapter 16, you can read up on how the church in Thessalonica was founded.

Paul arrived there with his evangelistic team. He started ministering the Gospel, but it seems like he brought as much trouble as he brought blessings.

[3 : 37] That is often the case with Gospel work. Sometimes Paul's and think, well, how can this be from God? Look at all the trouble this ministry is causing. Well, that's what happened here in Thessalonica.

He reasoned with the Jewish people when he arrived over three Sabbaths in the synagogue. He reasoned with them about Christ and the Gospel. And from there, a congregation was founded.

Despite that, there was so much opposition to his ministry that he was actually forced to leave rather suddenly. And he had to leave the trouble behind.

With the result that this new congregation had to deal with a great deal of trouble and a great deal of persecution. But yet through this trouble, go and read Acts chapter 16.

It makes for quite a lot of amazing reading. Through this trouble, something happened. Something remarkable happened. A congregation was formed.

[4 : 39] A church was formed. Probably not really bigger than this congregation. Very similar to this congregation. A congregation was formed, but it was a powerful church.

A powerful church. And as we look at our congregation here at St. Mark's, and as we look at this congregation, what I want us to do is consider three signs, quickly, of a true church.

What are three signs on the basis of our Bible passage of a true church? The first sign is that it's a gathered community.

Now the word church on its own in the original language really just means gathering. It could be a gathering of people in the town square. It could refer to any kind of community.

And there are all kinds of communities, no doubt, here in Plumstead and in Cape Town. We can think of the Rotary Club or the Lions Club. In fact, down the road, my folks used to attend the Crank Handle Club. That was a club that some of you know restores old cars.

[5 : 45] A great club. And my folks are very much part of the Crank Handle Club. You could call the Crank Handle Club a church if you wanted to. It's a gathered community. But you see, this body of people, the church of Jesus Christ, is utterly unique.

It's unlike any other community in the world. And so is that the case with us. We ask ourselves, what is the mark of a church?

As Paul implied a little bit earlier, it's a gathered community. People want to be together. But secondly, it is a community in, says Paul.

Think about that word. In God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is almost distorting language to express this profound reality.

A community in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. So the true church, Paul points out, has a supernatural origin.

[6 : 53] It's a supernatural reality. It might not appear to be the case. We all come to church on Sunday and we all know about one another. We know pretty much about one another's problems and issues and our failings.

We all appear to be very normal everyday people, don't we? But don't let that fool you for a moment. The Bible tells us, Paul tells us, that the church is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The church is a supernatural reality established by the gospel itself. Observe the intimacy here that Paul uses.

The intimacy language to describe the fact that these people are in God the Father. They're in God. That is very, very unusual language.

I speak about being close to someone. I might say, I'm close to that person. Or you might say, I'm attached to that individual. But this language is so powerfully intimate that we don't even use it for people.

[7 : 56] Would you say that I am in my husband or I am in my wife? No, not really. Here Paul refers to a level of intimacy that is unprecedented.

He refers to the establishment of the church as a divine action, a divine act from outside the world. The church's life. The church's life. The church's power and existence is rooted in the very life and the power of God the Creator and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are in the Father and we are in the Son, he says in his greeting. So, firstly, the church is a gathered community. But secondly, it is a community that enjoys this unprecedented, profound intimacy being in the Father and in the Son.

Now, thirdly, when you look at your text, you'll see in the first couple of verses, particularly if you look at verse 3, the church, thirdly, is a laboring community. Paul writes, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul writes to a busy congregation. No one is warming a pew here. This is not a congregation of people who just crop up on a Sunday and perhaps do a Bible study every now and again.

[9 : 27] No, this is a very, very active congregation. These believers, without a doubt, have a sense of purpose. They are laboring. Your labor, Paul writes, uses two words there.

Work of faith. Labor of love. In the original language, this idea of labor is a very strong word. It's a word that we would refer to someone who works very hard.

Perhaps that worker, that man out in the street with glistening muscles, perspiring as he manhandles a jackhammer, breaking up the concrete or breaking up the tar road.

He's laboring out there in the street. Now, that's the kind of language that the apostle uses here to describe these Thessalonians. And observe that they're not only laboring, they're not only an active congregation, they're steadfast.

They are steadfast in their labors. They're not just active. They are steadfastly, consistently active. I say that because in our environment, in our society today, people give up so easily.

[10 : 36] You know, we come to church, we get excited, we get involved for a few months, and then I have a disagreement with that particular lady, or I have a disagreement. I don't like the pastor because the pastor said this, or I don't like that.

And then I just decide to resign from the Sunday school or whatever it is that I'm doing. Not many people are consistent in their labors for the Lord in the 21st century church.

We are far too easily distracted, aren't we, by consumerism and the world out there and the pressures at work and so on. Paul says the sign of a true church is a gathered community in the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father who are laboring and who are consistent in that and don't easily give up.

So that's the church. Wow, what a church. The church in Thessalonica was. Well, what formed this church? What made these people the kind of people they were?

Well, now we need to move our focus on this morning and look at the gospel. We briefly look at the church, now look at the gospel. What is the gospel? Because we need to remind ourselves of the kind of gospel, the gospel, that empowered this community to ring out into the world.

[11 : 50] So now we're going to take a little bit of time and have a look at this wonderful gospel. I know we talk a lot about the gospel here at St. Mark's and that's good, but we must never forget what it is. It's always good to be reminded.

First of all, it's a gospel of grace leading to peace. Have a look at verse 1. Grace to you and peace. Grace is what? It is the vertical component of the gospel that comes down from heaven in the Lord Jesus.

Grace leading to the horizontal component, which is what? Peace. Grace leading to peace. That's what the gospel is. It's God's undeserved favor and power, saving power, coming down to the church.

And as a result, horizontally, we have peace, meaning peace between God and man. But how does this life-transforming peace come into the church?

Well, of course, secondly, the gospel is not only a gospel of grace leading to peace, but it is a gospel of the word. The gospel comes to the church in the form of a word.

[12 : 59] It's so important that we are reminded of that because many, many churches today are losing focus on that reality. They're looking for all kinds of other alleged sources of God's power. That's a big mistake.

Let's have a look at chapter 1, verse 5. Because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

Chapter 2, verse 13, we read, And we also thank God constantly for this, That when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it, not as the word of men, but as that is what it really is.

The word of God. The church became this unique community. The church in Thessalonica became this unique community through the verbal presentation of a word.

A specific word. It's a gospel word from God. It might be preached by human beings. It might have been written down in the Bible by human beings, but it is a word ultimately not having its origins in man.

[14 : 15] It's not a human word. It's the word of God. The word of Scripture doesn't always appear glamorous. Why do we have to come to church on Sunday and listen to a sermon every Sunday?

Why can't we just have music all the time? Or dancing. Maybe we need to have dancing. We'd get a lot more people into the church if we had more dancing. Why is it that at St. Mark's Church the sermon is central?

And why must the sermon come out of the Bible? Because the Bible is the word of God. The New Testament message. The message of Paul to the Thessalonians is a supernatural word of God.

So we consider what the gospel is. First of all, it's a gospel of grace leading to peace. Secondly, it is a word. It is a gospel word. It is based on the word of God.

And thirdly, it is a gospel word with a specific content. The word which came in Paul's preaching, the verbal word, what made it powerful wasn't the fact that he was a great preacher, which I'm sure he was.

[15 : 26] What makes the gospel word powerful is not so much the form in which it's presented, but its content. A lot of churches mistakenly believe it's all about the form and the flash up front.

I remember chatting to a colleague of mine who said that there's a church down the road where he preaches. There's a large church down the road and they've spent a couple of hundred thousand rand on spotlights and computerized equipment to move these spotlights around and change the color as the pastor preaches.

And the man sits in the back there and operates these spotlights to make sure that it looks very dramatic when the pastor preaches. People get very, very affected by the sermon.

They believe they're going to get a lot more conversions because of these colored spotlights that move around in these little servo motors up in the roof. Now, the Bible tells us, the apostle tells us here that what makes the word the word of God and powerful is its content.

It's a word about Jesus, isn't it? It's a word about the cross of Jesus Christ. It's the word of resurrection. It's the word of forgiveness of sins. It's not about the form in which it is presented.

[16 : 39] I doubt whether you're going to be more impressed necessarily with my words this morning if I put on a fancy suit or if I dressed up. No, it's the content of the word that is powerful, that changes the lives of people and that builds up the church.

Right, fourth characteristic of this gospel. Not only, thirdly, a gospel word with a specific content, but number four, it is a gospel of power. Have a look at verse five.

Isn't that wonderful? It is a gospel that comes in power. We need to remind ourselves of that because it doesn't always appear to be the case. Gospel work is hard.

Sometimes it would appear that God is not working very profoundly and very quickly in the local church. Let us never forget that our gospel, writes Paul, came in power.

The word, if I remember correctly, from which we get dynamite. Now consider, what does power really mean? If I talk about power in the local church, power in your marriage, gospel power in your family, what do I mean?

[17 : 48] What does power mean? It is the ability to produce change. Think about a church without power. Without gospel power.

Without real power in the local church, there will be no conversions. There will be no growth in the gospel. There will be no life change. There will be no forgiveness of sins.

There will be no church growth. There will be no successful and powerful evangelistic projects into the local area. Without power, there is no hope. Now in Paul's text here, we've already encountered the Father and the Son.

Now we meet the Spirit from verse 5. The power of the Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the key to unlocking the very power of the gospel and the power of God.

When the Spirit comes, God's power comes. But you'll observe there how Paul links the ministry of the Spirit to the ministry of the Word.

[18 : 53] You notice that they are not separated in his thinking? I had a chat to somebody some years ago who said to me, well, I like Reach South Africa. You emphasize the Word in your church. And I love that.

And I attended one of your churches for a while, but I'm in another church now and I prefer this church. Oh, why? What do you prefer about this church? Well, we emphasize the Spirit in our church, not the Word.

Now can you see that that is just wrong thinking? There will be no power of the Holy Spirit in any church unless the Word of God is preached. The Spirit only works in the church when the preaching of the Word is a reality, when the Bible is unlocked, when the Scriptures are presented to the congregation.

Now do you want to see how powerful the gospel is? Do you want to see how powerful the Word really is? Well, have a look at what Paul says in verse 9 in your passage there. I hope you've got your Bible open in front of you.

You must always check on what the minister or the pastor is saying. I'm sure Nick tells you that. So have a look at verse 9. How you turned, writes Paul to the Thessalonians. How you turned to God from idols to serve the living and the true God.

[20 : 03] Wow! Now in an ancient Greek city like Thessalonica, every single possible religion, cult, God was available.

It was a city very much like Cape Town. One scholar did a survey of a typical ancient Greek city in Paul's time and came away and said there would have been around about 30 religions, sects or cults that you could choose from in the ancient world.

It was an idle market. Every single option was covered. And what does Paul say? Paul says incredibly what they did was they turned away completely from them all.

Consider that for a moment. To completely reject the idols of your culture. To reject them all. To have this radical turnaround.

These Thessalonians didn't slow down or reduce the worship of pagan gods. No, here we have a picture of the gospel arriving in this community and producing a total turning away from worshipping something pointless, something dead to the living God.

[21 : 25] We prayed about that earlier, didn't we? That God would do the same in our lives as a congregation. To help us to see the vacuousness, the emptiness of the gods of our day and age.

Whatever they might be. Well, that's what the gospel does. It doesn't produce some change. It produces radical change. To turn to the living God.

Do you see that? Isn't that wonderful? To turn to the living God. Because in Jesus Christ and the resurrection we know that God is alive. See, this passage doesn't make much sense unless we appreciate the God to which they turned is a living God.

He's alive. He's active in history. He's active in this church. He's active in our community and in our country. He cannot be a God of power.

The gospel cannot be a gospel of power unless our God is alive. And the power of God and the work of the Spirit is confirmation of this.

[22 : 29] And so, when we consider the gospel, what did we say? It's a gospel of grace leading to peace. Secondly, it's a gospel that is centered around the word. Thirdly, this word is a word that has a specific content.

It's not any word. Fourthly, it is a gospel. It is a word of power. It is a word that produces change. And now, fifthly, it's a gospel that brings conviction.

Have a look at verse 5. Not only in word, writes the apostle, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. Isn't that wonderful?

The word in power, in the Holy Spirit, and full conviction. Paul, Timothy, and Silas arrived at Thessalonica. They weren't crooks.

They weren't charlatans. They weren't in it for the money as preachers. They were convicted. They were completely convicted about the truth of the gospel that they brought.

[23 : 29] They were the real deal. They were gospel men who knew of the truth of the gospel and experienced its power in their own lives. That's what the Spirit produces.

Preachers that are convicted about the gospel they preach. They were the real deal. That's what we need today, don't we? That is what we are committed to doing as the George Whitefield College.

We don't just want to turn people into academics. The George Whitefield College, we want to turn men and women into folk who preach and teach with conviction and with power.

Because the gospel is a gospel of power. These were the real deal. Paul and his colleagues were men of conviction. But not only that, if you look at the text, I think we can also perceive here that conviction, the word conviction not only applies to Paul and his team, but also the Thessalonians themselves.

I think that what is implied here is that they were convicted too. The gospel produces people who are convicted by its truth.

[24 : 38] As it changes them. It changes their lives. They were convicted by what they heard. And this, as we're going to see in a minute, produced a very specific set of results.

When this gospel comes into a community, in the power of the word and the spirit, we're going to see changes. What did the gospel bring about?

What are those changes? So let's move on now as we come towards a conclusion. What does the gospel bring about? Let's have a look at from verse 6 to verse 10. So we had a quick snapshot of the church.

And then second, we reflected briefly on the type of gospel that came to Thessalonica. Now what I want us to do is just consider what happened. The gospel results itself. Look at verse 8.

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.

[25 : 41] So the gospel is never ever stationary. That's the point of the text. It must go out. In any authentic church, when the word comes in, it always goes out.

The word came to Thessalonica. The word came in. But in a church where the spirit of power is at work, the word cannot be contained. It can't be locked up.

It must go out. Have a look at the logic here of Paul's writing. From God the Father. Through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through to Paul.

Paul gets converted. Silas, Timothy and others get converted. Through to Paul. Then to the congregation. And then from the congregation all the way out. All over Greece.

The gospel rings out. A couple of weeks ago I was watching this program on DSTV. Where they had a couple of expert veterinary surgeons and a few other folk at the Kruger National Park.

[26 : 40] And they had caught this rhinoceros. And they darted this rhino, I think from a helicopter. And the rhino fell asleep.

And they then took a crane. They needed a crane to load this animal up into the back of this big truck. It was a big truck with these steel walls around the back.

This enclosed, that enclosed end. Back of this truck. Back. And they did some tests on this rhino. And then they somehow managed to get the sleeping rhino back into the back of the truck.

And they were worried about the time. Because they knew that the tranquilizer was going to wear off. And they quickly drove back out into the bush. And as the truck came to stop, if I remember correctly, this rhinoceros.

This huge animal woke up. And it was not happy being contained in the back of that truck. And it started to basically smash that truck to pieces.

[27 : 46] And they opened up the flap at the back. And this rhino just, I mean, it's almost two tons, went hurtling out the back of this truck.

And all the medical staff and the wardens, you know what they did? They were so terrified. They all jumped back in the back of the truck. And they closed the back. And this rhino just went off at 100 kilometers an hour, straight into the bush, knocking over small trees, rocks.

Wow! That was a close call for those guys. When I reflected on the text again this morning here in the Bible, I thought, yes, the gospel is like a rhinoceros.

The gospel must go out. The gospel doesn't want to be contained. And that's what happened in Thessalonica. It was like a rhinoceros. It just wanted to get out of the church and go out into the community and go out into the world.

That's the logic of Paul's thinking. Paul says that the gospel rang out from our brothers and sisters in Thessalonica. It sounded forth. It rang out like a trumpet.

[28 : 50] It rang out. When I was a child, I must have been about seven or eight years old, we had some kind of youth meeting. And I think it was a church. I know it was a church in Rondebosch.

I can't remember. It was so long ago. And we had this youth meeting on a Friday night, I think it was. And I was a very naughty little boy. And I remember me and another guy, we found this little staircase in the church.

And we didn't know where it led to. And we went up to a little door. We opened the door. And where did we find ourselves? In the bell tower. And we were so excited about this. We completely forgot about the youth meeting, what the other guys were doing.

And I was looking at this bell. And my very naughty colleague unwound slowly and laboriously the rope behind me.

And before I knew what was going on, he grabbed hold of this rope and he pulled on it. And all of a sudden there was this ringing sound.

[29 : 50] I thought my head was going to explode. It was so loud. It echoed throughout the whole church. It went all the way down to my socks.

And the whole youth meeting had to come to an end. And everybody was trying to find Mark and his friend. And we got into a lot of trouble. And the youth leader phoned my father.

And a lot of trouble. But I never forgot the power of that noise. And you know what? It wasn't even a big bell. A small bell.

Now Paul says, he uses a Greek word and he says, The gospel rang out from Thessalonica. Like a trumpet. It wasn't subtle. That's the point of the text.

It had enormous effect. It's nothing less here than a spiritual revival. We are reading about a phenomenon that is very, very powerful. That despite their troubles, despite their persecution, this church was not afraid of sharing its new faith.

[30 : 53] I love those words. It rang out into the community. So Paul the Apostle didn't have to go around defending the church saying, Well, you know, if you just give them a chance. You know, if you just give them a chance. If you're just a bit patient.

Give it some time. And there might be some Christian fruit coming out of Thessalonica. Please don't be impatient. Just wait another six months. Not at all. No. This gospel community rang out with the gospel.

Everybody knew what was going on in that church. And what rang out? The self-same word that planted the church in the first place.

The self-same word rang out like a rhinoceros. Like a mighty bell. And of course lives were changed. Their faith, their lifestyle went forth as well.

Look at verse 8. Your faith in God has gone forth. And how far did the gospel reach? Have a look at verse 8. Macedonia and Achaia.

[31 : 55] Wow. That must be a printing error. No, there it is. The two largest provinces in ancient Greece. An area larger than modern day Greece.

From one congregation just like this one. In fact, I suspect they were probably a bit smaller than St. Mark's. Wow. Despite all of their problems, the power of the gospel went out.

They abandoned all of their idols for the living God. And soon the whole part of the world there around them knew that their God was unique because their God was alive.

We have a picture here, don't we? We have a living power flowing from these little house churches, these little Bible studies, moving through Greece like a mighty river.

You know your Palestine-Israel geography? You know if you look at a map of Palestine, you've got that big river that runs down, you know what it's called? The Jordan River? We all know that.

[33 : 00] Of course we do. And the Jordan River starts at the top. It gathers up the waters from the hills. And it goes down and down and down.

And then what does hit? Like, around about almost, not quite, but just before halfway there's this huge lake. It's called a sea. What's it called where Jesus went fishing? The Sea of Galilee. And it's a very rich sea.

It's a very fertile lake. There's a lot of fishing there. That lake kept the economy going for all of the fishermen and the disciples. That was a very, very fertile lake.

And then the Jordan River goes down, down, down, down. And then where does it go to? It enters into another little sea or lake. And what's it called? The Dead Sea. Do you know why it's dead? They say it's dead.

They say that fish can't even survive there. I haven't been there. But they say that fish can't even survive there. You know why? Because fresh water comes in. How much fresh water goes out? Nothing. There's no living, life-giving activity there.

[34 : 02] The water comes in and no water goes out. And so over the centuries, I would assume, it has died. You see, folks, a church is like that.

When the gospel comes in, if the rhinoceros comes in, you try to lock the rhino up, he's not going to be happy. The church is not going to be happy. The church will die if she isn't seeking to get that gospel out.

That's what we need to be doing. So in conclusion, as we think about Paul's challenge for us for the rest of this year, I think that Paul wants us as a church to partner with this church in Thessalonica.

Why do you think it's in the Bible? Why do you think Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians? And why do you think in the providence of the Holy Spirit it's in the Bible? Well, surely God wants us to partner with this church.

Think about partnering with a church like this. Experiencing an incredible anointing of the Spirit of God. What would it be like? Think about this.

[35 : 11] Think about what it would be like to partner with a church like this. An incredible church. How would it challenge St. Mark's? How would it challenge us as married couples and as families?

What would we have to change as individuals? What priorities would have to change? Well, if we look at our text, as we said, we would also have to be a community rooted in God's grace and love.

A community committed to Jesus Christ. Sure, a community empowered by the Holy Spirit. A community that bore witness to the gospel. Yes, a community characterized by faith, hope and love.

But New Year's resolutions are also about doing. It's not only about what we believe, it's about what we do. So I went this morning and I looked at our passage and I said to myself, what are all the doing words in the passage?

So I looked at Thessalonians 1 from verse 1 to verse 10 and I said, what are the doing words in that church? Because those should be the doing words in our church. So I ended with all the doing words.

[36 : 13] They welcomed the message. We welcome the message on a Sunday. You welcome the message. They became people of conviction.

Think about that. People of conviction. No matter what the persecution. No matter what the cynicism of my friends. People of conviction. We're going to pray for that, don't we?

They turned. That's a great doing word, isn't it? They turned to God. They turned away from rubbish and lies.

Perhaps that's God's message for you today. That's why God brought you into this congregation today. God wants you to turn from the things that you know in your life. You know what you're up to. You've got to turn away from lies.

You've got to repent of wickedness. They turned to God. What's the next one? They served. They became servants.

[37 : 13] No longer on themselves. They were servants. They served, writes the apostle, the living God. They served him. It's an attitude of service. They became imitators of the gospel.

They implemented it. They got the doors of the back of that truck open. They were gospel people. They were imitators of the gospel. They became a model gospel example.

And I love this one. They labored steadfastly. They didn't give up. Maybe you're on the verge of giving up. Maybe you're frustrated or tired, angry.

Don't give up on gospel work. They labored steadfastly for the gospel. And then finally, my favorite. They rang out. The gospel rang out from them like a trumpet.

They rang out the gospel. Amen. Let's pray. Let's take just a moment to reflect on our lives.

[38 : 22] In the light of the gospel challenge to you this morning, will you not stop and think about your own life and your involvement in our church? Where do you stand with this gospel?

Perhaps there are some things you need to change as you go home today. Priorities. Sins.

Our Father, thank you for the Bible. We praise you for this magnificent letter to the Thessalonians. Thank you for your servant Paul and the wonderful inspired verses we have studied together today.

Thank you above all, Father, for the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel. Lord, may we never become tired of it. May we never take it for granted.

And Lord, won't you do a great act of gospel work in this congregation. Lord, we would love to see the power of the gospel, like a rhino, move out from this church into the whole of Cape Town, the whole of South Africa.

[39 : 29] Lord, may we too know you, turn to the living God, and experience a great work of your spirit in our midst.

In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.