

I Thes 1:5 The GOSPEL and the POWER

INTRODUCTION

How was Paul so **sure** that they were “*chosen*” by God?[4] 3 things! (1) The **voluntary dramatic change** in their lives – they “*turned to God from idols*” [9]! (2) At a **cost** – “*received the Word in much affliction*”[6]! (3) They had “*joy of the Holy Spirit*” in their souls [6] (4) Mainly **practical Xianity!** “*your work of faith and labour of love*”[3] Jesus said “*By their fruits you shall know them*”[Mat 7:20].

Jim Petersen of Navigators tells of a fellow who just loved the gospel when he heard it first. He came to Jim and begged for more and more information. He read, and read, and asked and asked questions – real deep questions! He was understanding every word! He got to grips with the most penetrating and theological issues. ‘Who did Christ die for? Just the Xians or others?’ He saw the arguments & distinctions! But after several months he lost interest and **stopped** coming and apostatized! What happened? He just loved **mental stimulation!**

I used to wonder how there could be an unconverted minister! But I do understand now – the Bible is a **fascinating** book. People who attend church **and** have a **natural disposition** for **mental** ‘stimulation’ **will** be attracted to the Bible, but rather than being attracted to X/gospel it may just be a **natural** affection for mental **stimulation** together with a natural interest in one’s own destiny! To be interested in the Bible is for them to be **intellectually satisfied!** *It was so **different** with the Thess believers! For them there was **something else** – a **power!**

THERE is a POWER in the GOSPEL

Conversion is a **radical** thing. The change is so great it can **only** happen by some special **power** “*our gospel came to you not only in Word, but also in power*”[5] Paul told Tim “*For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control*”[2Tim1:7] Paul said “*I am not ashamed of the gospel*

of Christ for **it is the power of God** to salvation to everyone who believes”[Rom 1:16] + “For the Word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to **us** who are being saved **it is the power of God**” (not it should be, or can be) [1Cor 1:18]. Jesus re Sadds ““Is this not the reason you are **wrong**, because you **know neither** the Scriptures nor the **power of God**?”!

It is a **Divine** power “His **divine** power has **granted** to us all things that pertain to life and godliness”[2P1:3] It is a power **from God** “But we have this **treasure** in jars of clay to show that the surpassing **power** belongs to **God** and not to us” [2Cor 4:7] Peter tells us that believers “by **God’s power** are being guarded through faith”[1P1:5]

You cannot be a **true** Xian without having a degree of this power. There **is** a degree of power in **every true** convert. Paul told of those who had “the **appearance** of godliness, but denying its **power**”[2T3:5] **Now power **for what?** Some say we **ought** to have power to **heal, miracles, etc!** Maybe, but I am not convinced. John Baptist was the greatest believer but he did no miracle! Certainly the apostles were given such power “He...gave them **power** and authority over all demons and to cure diseases”[L9:1]! **Bottom line** is: power to “**turn** from idols”[9] 1st to make the **initial break** with **idolatry!** To reverse our stance! God/Jesus must be your only idol – worship Him only! **APP** If you have **no power** over **the sins** in your life, then you are probably not a Xian at all! “For sin will have **no dominion** over you” [R 6:14] + “those who belong to Christ **have crucified** the flesh with its passions and desires”[Ga5:24].

Now, as discussed in our Bible Study recently, God’s power in us affects **every area** of our life. In **some** measure and degree **all** sins in our life are crucified by God’s power – not just some sins. God’s grace pervades our **whole being**. We do not just have power over some sins and none over the rest! We will **never** on this side of heaven have **total/complete** control over

all of our sins, but all that is evil and opposed to God in us will have been assaulted to some degree! Our whole **being** has been **radically changed** towards sin, God and Christ!

A Xn is a **new** creature in Christ. Conversion is not like a ‘repair job’, a new gearbox on your car - you get a new car! It might not be the sports car, or the limousine you hoped for, but it is brand new car. Your whole person is changed – **every** sin is an enemy and you are now against **all** the sins in your life!

WHAT REGULATES THIS POWER?

The **presence/strength/vigour** of this power depends on **3** things: **(1)** The **Initial Measure** of **Saving Grace** given at regeneration/conversion! We are given a certain **dose** of ‘**saving** grace’! *“think sober judgment, each according to the **measure** of faith that God has assigned”*[R12:3] + *“but grace was given according to the **measure** of Christ’s gift”*[Eph 4:7] No doubt some get **more** grace than others! Just as in **natural realm** some get more **common** grace than others! That’s obvious to all - thus, the **un**regenerate man who works beside you can sometimes ‘outshine’ the Xian in **moral** matters!

God of course gives *“more grace”* to some – to those who are **humble**, to those who **use** the grace already given them [J4:6]

(2) Depends on **where** God has **placed you** in **Providence**. If a Xian is living in a Xian home, with godly parents, in a good church with Biblical teaching and godly examples, then he is bound to be a ‘better’ Xn than the Xn living in an **ungodly** home, **without** a strong church ministry. The **environment** of his weekly life **does** make a difference! (That’s why Moses asked Hobab to *“come **with us** we will do you good”*!) Moses knew the best chance Hobab had of becoming a believer was to be among Israelites! We must live among God’s people! Thus Paul says *“Do not be deceived: **Bad company ruins good morals**”*[21C15:33] Xns **can** be influenced for evil!

That is why it is **important** to make use of all the **means** of grace. You just cannot grow as a Xn if you are not feeding your soul on a **wholesome spiritual diet!**

(3) Depends on how much we **personally practice godliness!** Faith is actually a **means** to an end – the end being **godly living!** To **walk** with God! We will be **judged** according to our **works**, not faith! We must never rest satisfied with knowledge – we **must** “*be doers of the Word and not hearers only*”! Just as an athlete, rugby player, **improves** by **training/practicing** and is **more** fit/able/alert/skillful “*in the day of battle*” so a Xian must **prepare** for Xian living.! It is **not** enough to **know** what is right – we must **practise** right living!

The Bible puts a lot of emphasis on **training/discipline** for the Xian walk! In Scripture **discipline in military/sporting** careers are emphasised as examples! “*Archippus (and Epaphroditus is) a fellow soldier*” [Phm 1:2, Phil 2:25] Vigilance! + “*Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him*”[2T2:3] ***Discipline** is not pleasant “*all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained* (Gr=gumnazo!) *by it*”[Heb12:11] + “*solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained* (Gr=gumnazo) *by constant practice to distinguish good from evil*”[H5:14] **APP** Unless you/I are **daily** training to be skillful in spiritual warfare, in combating sin, we will not be powerful enough! We need regular training in kindness/love/honesty! Just as in the **natural** realm! Peter speaks of those who are ‘trained’ in **evil** who “*have eyes full of adultery ... hearts trained* (Gr=gumnazo) *in greed*”[2Pet 2:14]

The **power** of the **gospel** – do you have this power? Its **free!** The grace of God is free to all who want it.