



WOW: Word Of the Week

Priorities

September 9, 2020

When Paul writes to the Thessalonians, describing his ministry among them and their initial encounter with Christian faith, he mentions four aspects or characteristics to describe their reception of the gospel – persuasive words, the power of God, the joy of the Holy Spirit, fully convinced, changed lives. As a result, the Thessalonians became examples – modeling what it means when God becomes our priority, persevering in the midst of persecution and affliction.

Two applications come to mind. Here are priorities for effective ministry and evangelism. Here are priorities to guide the Christian life.

The priority of speaking the gospel. The gospel is communicated in words. By words, not only by works. The gospel that transforms life is a message, not merely an example. The gospel must be spoken, the gospel must be preached. Words are important, because words communicate the gospel. Exemplary lives make our words more persuasive. The gospel advances by persuasive proclamation accompanied by an exemplary presence. The Thessalonians followed the example of the evangelists.

The priority of God's power. The gospel arrives with power when God's message is communicated. The gospel is not simply the preaching of Good News. The gospel initiates the operation of God's power on human hearts. If the word is delivered without God's power, it remains a dead letter.

The priority of God's joyful Holy Spirit. The joy of the Holy Spirit – what an interesting phrase! Effective evangelism and effective Christian living depend on the presence of God's Spirit.

The priority of convicted certainty. Hebrews 11 says that certainty and conviction combined equal faith. Live as though you are fully convinced. The word used means full certainty, deep conviction. Do you know any preachers who at times do not communicate personal involvement and conviction? Do you know Christians who do not seem all that convinced? A priority of the Christian life is being fully convinced.

The priority of changed lives. The Thessalonians had changed their life. That change occurred in the past and changed their present, even as they anticipated the future. They become imitators of the evangelists and examples of others. No wonder their influence extended so far!

These priorities make it possible to endure in the midst of difficulties. Perseverance means that we remain faithful. Adversity does not deter us. Christian persevere in the midst of problems. God's plan for sending the gospel into the world includes five priorities and one result.

Christians speak persuasive words, with God's power, in the joy of the Holy Spirit, being fully convinced, modeling changed lives. Adopting only some of these priorities will hinder the gospel. The Christian must adopt all of these priorities, persevering in every difficulty and challenge.

This is God's plan for transforming your life, your family, your neighborhood, your city, state, and country, this world.