



# God's Effectual Work of Salvation

1 Thessalonians 1:2-5

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We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers constantly, bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.



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## **Main Point**

The way the gospel came to the Thessalonians demonstrates that salvation is an effectual work of God and not due to any human effort; and this should humble us, fill us with gratitude, and embolden us.

# **Our Key Question:**

## **How did the gospel come to the Thessalonians?**

**1 Thessalonians 1:5**

...for our gospel did not come to you in word  
only,  
but also in power and in the Holy Spirit  
and with full conviction...

# An Important Preliminary Answer:

1 Thessalonians 1:5

...for **our gospel did not come  
to you in word only,**

but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction...

The gospel *did* come to them in words;  
in fact, it must come in words,  
but it did not come *only* in words.



The background is a faded map of Europe. Overlaid on the map are several text elements: 'God's Effectual Work of Salvation' in large bold black font, 'God's word came to them in power.' in large black font, 'VUGTK, v. v. i.' in a diagonal orientation, and 'Národní technické' in a diagonal orientation at the bottom right. There are also some faint, illegible text fragments on the left side.

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It did *not* come with the mere force  
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## 1 Thessalonians 1:5

...for our gospel did **not** come to you **in word only**

It did not come in dependence on  
persuasive logic or skillful eloquence  
or rhetorical embellishment.



## **1 Corinthians 2:4-5**

My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

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on the wisdom of men, **but on the power of God.**

Sophists were common in the first century, and it was likely that some in Thessalonica were accusing Paul of being one, and a poor one at that.

## **1 Thessalonians 2:5-6**

For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed — God is witness — nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others.

Paul did not come to them relying upon the common practices of the day, and this disappointed some who thought he should be more eloquent.





**God's word came in power.**

It did not come with the mere force  
of human logic or rhetoric.

**It came with the effectual  
power of the truth.**

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word *only*, but also

**in power** and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction;

just as you know what kind of men we proved  
to be among you for your sake.

This power may have included miracles, but it was not limited to this nor even primarily this; and even if it did involve miracles, these were always attestations of the truth of the gospel and of the authority of the Apostles.



## **Hebrews 2:3-4**

How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

After it was at the first spoken through the Lord,  
it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying  
with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles  
and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

## **2 Corinthians 12:12**

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you  
with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.

1 Thessalonians 1:5

...our gospel [came to you] ***in power.***

Our gospel came to you with  
the full force of life-changing truth.

## **Romans 1:16-17**

For I am not ashamed of the gospel,  
for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone  
who believes...for in it the righteousness of God  
is revealed from faith to faith.

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The Lord has chosen to save a people for Himself, and the gospel is not only the declaration of this salvation, it is the very instrument (the power) God uses to effect it.

# **Note Paul's warning to the Corinthians**

## **1 Corinthians 4:19-20**

But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills,  
and I shall find out, not the words of those  
who are arrogant but their power.

For the kingdom of God does not consist  
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We are tempted to believe that the effectiveness of preaching or evangelism is due to the persuasiveness of our words or the winsomeness of our presentation when in fact it is due to the power of God through the gospel boldly preached.

# God's Effectual Work of Salvation

God's word came to them in power.

God's word came to them  
in the Holy Spirit.

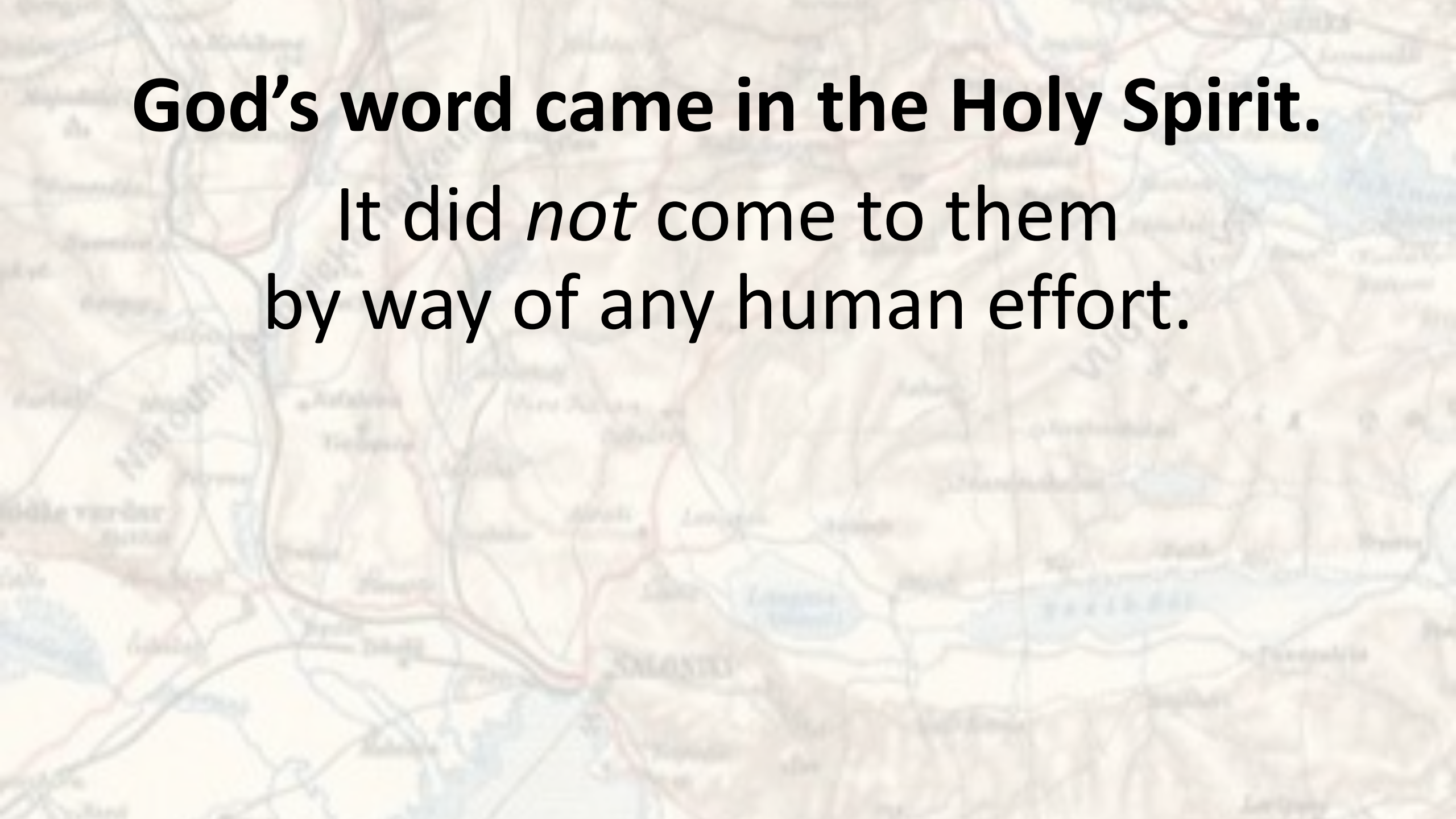
## 1 Thessalonians 1:5

...for our gospel did not come to you in  
word only, but also

in power and **in the Holy Spirit** and with full conviction;

just as you know what kind of men we proved  
to be among you for your sake.





**God's word came in the Holy Spirit.**

It did *not* come to them  
by way of any human effort.

1 Thessalonians 1:5

in power and **in the Holy Spirit**

At a minimum, this is set in contrast to “in the flesh” or in human strength.

We are tempted to believe either that our salvation is due to merit we have earned with God or at least due to our own ability to understand the gospel and to respond in faith.

But salvation is not of ourselves!



## **Ephesians 2:8**

For by grace you have been saved through faith;  
and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.



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For by grace you have been saved through faith;  
and that **not of yourselves**, it is the gift of God.  
Apart from the grace of God, we are helpless  
and unable even to understand the gospel.

## **1 Corinthians 2:14**

But a natural man does not accept the things  
of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him;  
and he cannot understand them,  
because they are spiritually appraised.



**God's word came in the Holy Spirit.**

It did not come to them by way of any human effort.

**It came by the effectual working  
of the Holy Spirit.**



1 Thessalonians 1:5

[our gospel came] to you... **in the Holy Spirit**

Our gospel did not come to you by way  
of human power but by the power of the  
Holy Spirit effecting the will of God.



## **2 Thessalonians 2:13**

But we should always give thanks to God for you,  
brethren beloved by the Lord, because God  
has chosen you from the beginning for salvation  
through sanctification by the Spirit  
and faith in the truth.

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# **Note the power of our witness...**

## **Acts 1:8**

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

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both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,  
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The power of our witness is the power  
of the Holy Spirit because it is the Spirit  
who generates life and illuminates truth.

## **Titus 3:5**

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds  
which we have done in righteousness,  
but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration  
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which we have done in righteousness,

but according to His mercy, **by the** washing of **regeneration**  
**and renewing by the Holy Spirit.**



Our humility and gratitude  
are grounded in God's grace to us,  
that is, in His effectual work of  
salvation applied to us by His Spirit.

# God's Effectual Work of Salvation

God's word came to them in power.

God's word came to them in the Holy Spirit.

God's word came to them  
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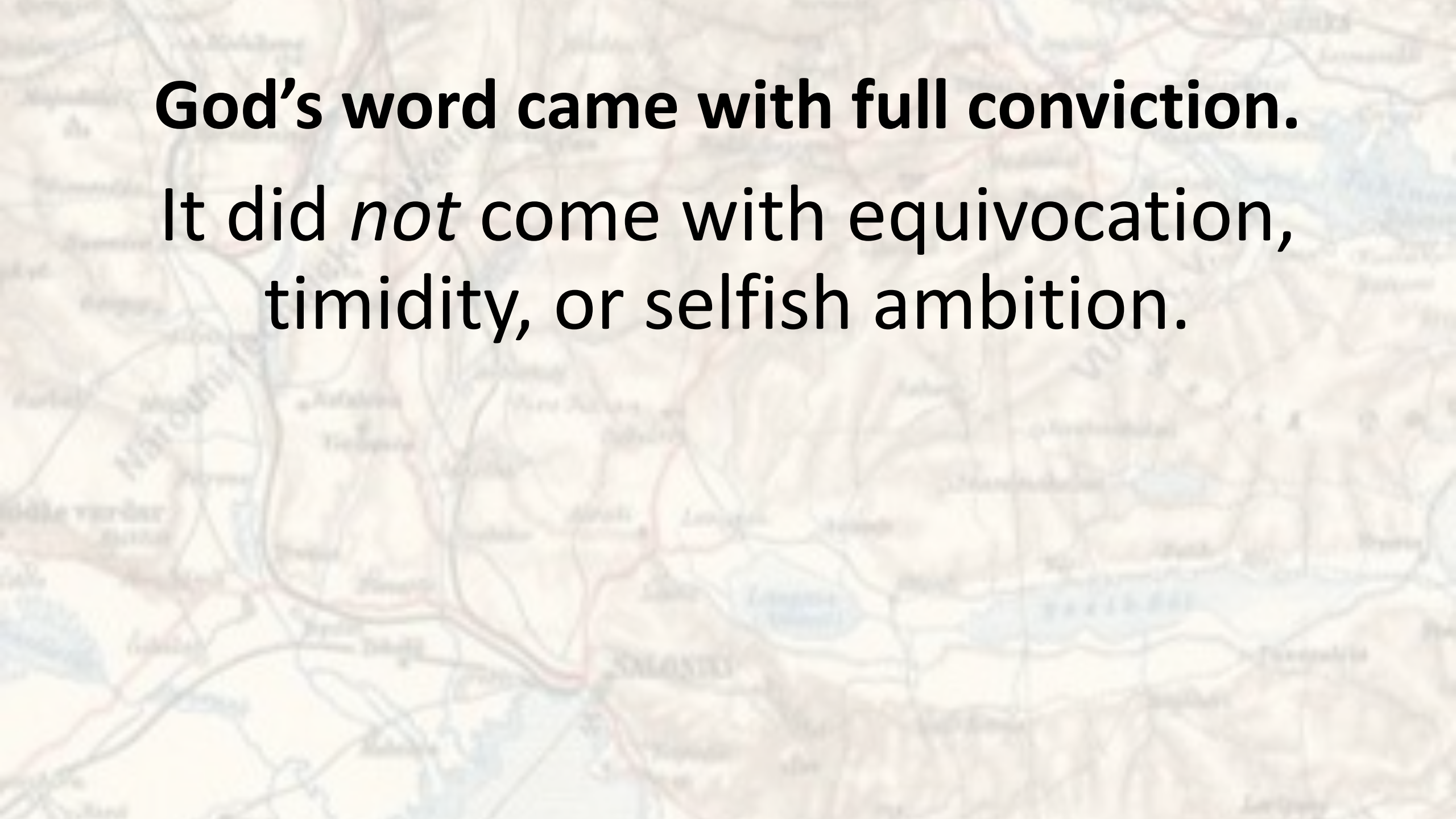
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**God's word came with full conviction.**  
It did *not* come with equivocation,  
timidity, or selfish ambition.



1 Thessalonians 1:5

...our gospel [came] to you  
**with full conviction**

This is set in contrast to those  
people-pleasing philosophers  
who practiced flattery for pay.

### **1 Thessalonians 2:3-4**

For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.

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For we **never** came **with flattering speech,**  
as you know, **nor with a pretext for greed...**

Man-pleasing is driven either  
by fear or by selfish ambition;  
both of which lead to equivocation  
due to lack of real conviction.

### **Galatians 1:10**

For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God?  
Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying  
to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

### **Galatians 5:11**

But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision,  
why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block  
of the cross has been abolished.

## **2 Timothy 1:7**

For God has not given us a spirit of timidity,  
but of power and love and discipline.



Timidity will be a great temptation  
as we are increasingly forced to face  
down the costs of gospel clarity.



**God's word came with full conviction.**

It did not come with equivocation, timidity, or selfish ambition.

**It came to them with the force of  
unashamed and confident conviction.**

1 Thessalonians 1:5-6

...our gospel [came] to you  
**with full conviction;**

just as you know what kind of men we proved  
to be among you for your sake.

You also became imitators of us and of the Lord,  
having received the word in much tribulation  
with the joy of the Holy Spirit,”



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# What kind of men did they prove to be?

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# What kind of men did they prove to be?

## 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.

# What kind of men did they prove to be?

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## What drove this boldness?

## **Romans 1:16-17**

For I am not ashamed of the gospel,  
for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone  
who believes...for in it the righteousness of God  
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Gospel shame is not generally seen  
in straight up embarrassment  
but in a softening of the message  
where it directly challenges the  
cultural commitments of the day.



Our calling is to proclaim  
the gospel without fear and  
without equivocation but rather  
with the clarity of full conviction.

# Conclusion

Are you reluctant in your evangelism because you are afraid you won't say it right?

Are you being humbled by the realization that your salvation was truly a gift of grace?

Is your communication of truth unclear because you are afraid to say it straight.