

April 16, 2017

“You Accepted the Word of God”

Focal Passage: 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20
(NASB)

Cross References:

Matthew 5:10-12; John 15:18-23; Acts 17:1-9; Romans 10:17; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 4:1-4; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 4:12-13; 1 Peter 3:13-18; 5:8-9; 2 Peter 1:16-21

Lesson Idea:

We need to receive the Bible as God’s Word and allow it to perform its work in us.

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Apr 9 2 Samuel 16-18	Apr 10 2 Samuel 19-21
Apr 11 2 Samuel 22-24	Apr 12 1 Kings 1-2
Apr 13 1 Kings 3-5	Apr 14 1 Kings 6-7
Apr 15 1 Kings 8-9	Apr 16 1 Kings 10-11

Background: from David Guzik, *1 Thessalonians 2*:

Verse 13: Paul is thankful that they welcomed the gospel as God’s message, not man’s.

When you received the word of God: Paul earnestly believed and taught others that God had spoken to man and that we have recorded this word of God. Paul believed in a voice that speaks to mankind with the authority of eternity, and speaks above mere human opinion. Since we do have this word of God, we have a true voice of authority.

Some people like to say that there is a word of God, but that we can’t be sure of what He says. When we appeal to the Bible, they like to reply “That’s just your interpretation.” There are certainly some places where the word of God is hard to precisely interpret, but there are not many such places. If we can not know what God has spoken, then He may as well not have spoken at all.

You welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God: The Thessalonians received the word of God as it is in truth. Paul presented it not as the word of men, and the Thessalonians received it as the word of God.

Not everyone receives this message as the word of God. Yet when they do not receive it, it reflects upon them, not upon the message.

1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. 14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, 15 who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, 16 hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.

17 But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. 18 For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan hindered us. 19 For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy.

DISCUSSION:

- v 13. What was Paul thankful for? What does it mean to “receive the Word of God?”
- How does Paul describe the Word of God? Why are these things true? What kind of work does it “perform” in believers? (see Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 4:12-13; 2 Peter 1:16-21)

NOTE: from Guzik:

Which also effectively works in you who believe: Paul’s confidence in the word of God wasn’t a matter of wishful thinking or blind faith. He could see that it effectively works in those who believe. God’s word works, it doesn’t only bring information or produce feelings. There is power in the word of God to change lives.

- v 14. In what ways were the Thessalonians “imitators” of the Judean churches? Why did Paul commend them for that? How are all true churches both “of God” and “in Christ Jesus?”
- Why is suffering a mark of true believers? (see Matthew 5:10-12; John 15:18-23; 1 Peter 3:13-18)

- v 15-16. How did Paul describe the Jews of his day? Why did they not please God? (see Acts 17:1-9)
- v 16. What was always Paul's motivation for speaking to the Gentiles? What was the "result" of the Jews' opposition? Why will wrath come "to the utmost" upon those who oppose the Gospel?

NOTE: from Guzik:

Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins: Here Paul revealed what offended the religious persecutors of the Thessalonians so much. They were outraged that Gentiles could be saved without first becoming Jews. This exclusive attitude filled up the measure of their sins.

"The Jews' opposition to the work of the missionaries among the Gentiles was not due to the fact that they were seeking to win Gentiles. The Jews themselves were vigorously engaged in this period of their history in actively proselyting Gentiles. Their fierce opposition was due to the fact that Christian missionaries offered salvation to Gentiles without demanding that they first become Jews." (Hiebert)

But wrath has come upon them to the uttermost: Paul comforted the Thessalonians by assuring them that God would indeed take care of their persecutors. When Christians forget this, they often disgrace and curse themselves by returning persecution for persecution towards others.

- v 17. What does Paul mean by saying that he and his coworkers were taken away from the Thessalonians "in person," but not "in spirit?" How can you help people today "in spirit" when you cannot be with them "in person?"
- v 18. What had Paul wanted to do? What hindered him? How does Satan hinder the plans of believers today? (2 Corinthians 2:11; 4:1-4; 1 Peter 5:8-9)

NOTE: from Guzik:

Satan hindered us: Paul, in all his apostolic ministry and authority, could still be blocked by Satan. But Paul did not just receive this Satanic hindrance in a fatalistic way. He did something about the hindrance.

First, Paul understood that this was Satanic hindrance. He knew this was not a random circumstance, but a direct attack from Satan. Paul had the discernment to know.

Second, Paul had faith. For a short time means that Paul knew it would only be a short time until the roadblock was overcome.

Third, Paul was committed to fight against the roadblock any way he could. If he couldn't be there in person, his letter will go for him and teach and encourage them in his absence. Many scholars believe that 1 Thessalonians was Paul's earliest letter written as an apostle to a church. If this is the case, then Satan's roadblock got Paul started on writing letters to the churches. When Satan saw the great work God did through these letters, he regretted that he ever hindered Paul at all.

Finally, God brought the victory. Acts 20:1-5 describes Paul's eventual return to Thessalonica and other churches in the area.

"Supposing that we have ascertained that hindrances in our way really come from Satan, WHAT THEN? I have but one piece of advice, and that is, go on, hindrance or no hindrance, in the path of duty as God the Holy Ghost enables you." (Spurgeon)

- v 19. How would the Thessalonians be Paul's "hope or joy or crown of exultation?" What do those words and phrases mean? Do you feel that way towards your church family? Why or why not?
- v 20. How were they Paul's "glory and joy?"
- Why did Paul say that these things would be true about the Thessalonians "in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?" Who will you be able to present as glory and joy to the Lord Jesus at His coming?

APPLICATION:

- ✓ What kind of work is the Word of God performing in your life?
- ✓ Paul and his coworkers were forced to leave the Thessalonians, but they had a great desire to be with them. Do you take for granted the opportunity to gather freely with your Christian brothers and sisters in person? Do you "desire" to see them? Why or why not?
- ✓ Who is God calling you to invest your life in, so you can present them to the Lord Jesus at His coming? How will you proceed with that?

Lesson by Bro Stan