

1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

Richard Cimino
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**The Word of God: Spoken,
Welcomed, & Working**

1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

We spent the three weeks prior to Easter examining the HEARTBEAT OF THE MINISTRY. Verse 13 BEGINS with another glimpse into the heart of Paul:

1 Thessalonians 2:13 *And we also thank God constantly for this...*



CRUCIAL OBSERVATION:

Paul — the servant of God — was constantly thanking the God he served! **Constantly** = incessantly, unceasingly, without interruption, without intermission. It was a word used of an uninterrupted cough. Josephus used this word when writing of the continual hammering of a battering ram against the walls of Jerusalem (Josephus, Jewish Wars 5:298-302).

This Word in the Greek —

1. Is ONLY found FOUR times in the NT
2. Is ONLY used by Paul
3. Is ALWAYS connected with prayer

Romans 1:9-10 (ESV) *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you 10always in my prayers,...*

1Thessalonians 1:2 (ESV) *We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers.*

1Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV) *And we also thank God constantly for this...*

1Thessalonians 5:17 (ESV) *pray without ceasing*

Paul was constantly THINKING about them— PRAYING for them — Thanking God for them.

CRUCIAL OBSERVATION:

Paul was not merely saying — I'm so thankful — rather he was constantly thanking GOD. Because he KNEW that it was God who had given to him the privilege of preaching and teaching of the Word.

Ephesians 1:1 (ESV) *Paul an apostle by the will of God.*

[1 Corinthians 15:10 \(ESV\)](#) ...By the grace of God I am what I am...

[Galatians 1:15-16 \(ESV\)](#) But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles...

Above all – Paul was constantly thanking GOD. Because he understood that if there was any fruit in his ministry it was because - It was GOD'S good news (gospel of God) that touched their hearts. It was God the Holy Spirit working through the Word to save men and women!

APPLICATION /QUOTE: [Spurgeon](#) –

Our American friends have one Thanksgiving Day in the year, but it was Thanksgiving Day all the year round with Paul and Silas and Timothy when they thought of the Thessalonians. They felt as if they never could leave off thanking God for the Thessalonians, for they knew by sad experience that all churches were not of the same happy kind. There were those Corinthians, for ever quarrelling and thus grieving the apostle. "Never mind," he says, "we will thank God for the Thessalonians." Oh, but there are those Galatians! They have gone off the line, bewitched by Judaizing teachers. They have wandered into "modern thought," and left the old orthodox faith. "Yes," says the apostle, "those Galatians are a burden to me; but, then, blessed be God for the Thessalonians." So I think we ought to bless God for those that are kept, and for those that are true, and for those that are faithful; and when our harp is made to hang upon the willows because of part of the work which is barren and unfruitful, yet let us not cease to praise and bless the Lord our God for that part of the work which prospers. Let us magnify him for those that are brought to know his name..... O child of God, fall back upon what the Lord has done, and this shall make you encounter every difficulty with a brave heart! What the Lord has done is but a token of what he is going to do. Let us hold the fort, and look out for better times. Never let us dream of fainting or retreating. Do not say, "I will give it up because of the Galatians." No, but go at it again because of the Thessalonians. Do not say, "I am worried and wearied with the Corinthians." No, but with your heart full of joy, persevere in your Master's service, because many Thessalonians have received the word, not as the word of man, but as the word of God. Hallelujah, there is still something to sing about! Bring out the trumpets: we are not yet silenced, nor shall we be while the Lord liveth. The walls of Jericho will be more likely to fall before our trumpets than our tremblings. In his thanksgiving we find the Holy Spirit taking the spot light off of the servant of God and shining it directly onto the Word of God.

The Word of God SPOKEN -

The Word of God WELCOMED - The Word of God WORKING

FIRST we must notice the MEANS by which the Word was brought to them so they MIGHT RECEIVE it and it MIGHT WORK in their lives.

[1 Thessalonians 2:13 \(ESV\)](#)...the word of God, which you heard from us...

LITERALLY — “a word of hearing from alongside us, of God”. The phrase — word of hearing — indicates it was a SPOKEN message. One commentator translates it as — When your ears received God’s message. This concept of a word of hearing is seen elsewhere in Scripture

[Hebrews 4:2 \(ESV\)](#) For good news came to us just as to them (the Hebrews who came out of Egypt and wandered in the Wilderness for forty years), but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.

[Romans 10:16 \(NASB\)](#) However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT

akoe = literally hearing — a thing which is heard like a report?”

[Galatians 3:2 \(NLT\)](#) Let me ask you this one question: ...Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ.

The Holy Spirit came upon them only after they believed the message they heard about Christ. Today there is a sweeping and dangerous trend to emphasize living over proclaiming. This trend is based upon man’s perception that the OLD method of VERBALIZING the Gospel is unacceptable to a post-modern society. BECAUSE — Human consensus is that Absolute truth is unacceptable to post modern man.

I overheard a local pastor say that very thing to a guy he was mentoring. And besides being unacceptable to the so-called “post-modern” culture — many so called Christians aren’t even sure if the Scriptures contain absolute truth. This trend is based upon man’s perception that the the OLD method of VERBALIZING the Gospel is offensive to a post-modern society. The claims and demands of the Gospel — the narrowness of the Gospel — are now viewed by many so-called Christians as counterproductive to their desire to win people to Jesus. They believe that the message is divisive and offensive. AS A RESULT of these positions — the NEW evangelism — the NEW missionary enterprise — is essentially MUTE.

The PROCLAMATION of a message that is viewed as divisive and offensive is now replaced with INCARNATIONAL evangelism.

INCARNATIONAL living says this — Jesus is made incarnate today in the lives of Christians. So wherever Christians go — they bring Jesus into their culture by demonstrating His love and promoting unity. The great emphasis is on creating a collective experience and being active in community service that unites Christians with the diverse faiths and values of their community.

For some this approach springs from:

- Ignorance of what the Bible says
- Indifference to what the Bible says
- Outright rejection of what the Bible says.

NOTE IT WELL:

The god of this world – the enemy of the souls of men and women – is glad to:

- USE ignorance of the Word
- PROMOTE indifference to the Word
- UNDERMINE confidence in the Word until finally the Word is rejected.

BECAUSE ALL of these:

- take away from the Glory of God
- take away from the Glory of His Gospel
- Leave men and women without the ONE thing that alone can save them

Let's NOT be IGNORANT – nor INDIFFERENT – nor REJECTING what the Scriptures say – FIRST and foremost about Jesus. Jesus IS God INCARNATE – He IS the Word that became flesh and lived among us. But Jesus DIDN'T merely LIVE silently in this world. At the age of 30 he went everywhere PREACHING and TEACHING. And what JESUS – God INCARNATE – had to say was OFFENSIVE – even REPULSIVE to the multitudes.

[John 6:60-69 \(ESV\)](#) 60 When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" 61But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? 62Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) 65And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." 66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. 67So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" 68Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

Let's NOT be IGNORANT – nor INDIFFERENT – nor REJECTING what the Scriptures say – about Paul. PAUL was surely committed to a BIBLICAL understanding of Christ living within the believing man and woman. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit we have seen Paul in this letter alone rip open his chest so that we can see how the heart of Jesus was beating within in him. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul would say to the Philippians – It is no longer I who lives – but Christ lives in me.

But this same Paul would say –

[Romans 10:14-15; 17 \(ESV\)](#) But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"..... 17So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

The Bible is CLEAR that most who hear – will be offended or indifferent or outright reject what they HEAR

[Romans 10:16 \(ESV\)](#) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"

[1 Thessalonians 2:13 \(ESV\)](#) 13And 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 what it really

is, the word of God,...

KEY OBSERVATION:

Paul thanked God for how the Thessalonians RECEIVED the Word that they proclaimed.

KEY INSIGHT:

He does this by using two different verbs:

paralambano (received)

dechomai (accepted).

The first (paralambano) means simply “to accept from another,” while the second (dechomai) means “to welcome.”

GREAT PICTURE —

The Thessalonians heard the missionaries’ proclaim the gospel and they actively took it to themselves. (paralambano).

BUT — It was not merely an ACTIVE — WILLING taking of it. They WELCOMED it — They EMBRACED it. (dechomai) Think of WELCOMING a guest at your door with a loving hug!

THAT is what WELCOMING the Word looks like.

QUOTE: Spurgeon —

They first received it by eagerly hearing it. They wanted to know what it was all about: they were attentive to it, and wanted to understand it. When they had heard it they rejoiced, and said, “Oh, yes, yes, yes, this is the very thing we want!” They embraced it. That word will do—they embraced it. They put their arms around it, and would not let it go. They were hospitable to the gospel, and said, “Come in, thou blessed of the Lord: come and live in our hearts!” They assented and they consented to the word of the Lord.

ONE MORE CRUCIAL INSIGHT into these verbs:

We can understand Paralambano to mean “the hearing of the ear”. While we can understand dechomai to mean “the hearing of the heart.”

CRUCIAL POINT:

The believers at Thessalonica did not only hear the Word; they took it into their inner man and made it a part of their lives.

KEY APPLICATION:

We need to GLADLY and ACTIVELY expose ourselves to the HEARING of it. But then we must WELCOME IT into our hearts; Receive it into our hearts and let it find itself at home there — We do that by:

- Making every other attitude and belief become subordinate to the Word. If there is a conflict between the Word and a habit or attitude — the Word stays and the habit is evicted!
- Meditating on it.

Not in the sense of eastern religion meditation. But in the Old Testament sense of THINKING upon it.

[Psalm 1](#) – “his delight is in the Law of the Lord and in it he does MEDITATE day and night.”

It is like the chewing of the cud.

1. Bringing it up over and over again.
2. Thinking on it
3. Praying over it
4. Praying it into our lives.

QUOTE: [Warren Wiersbe](#) -

Meditation is to the spiritual life what digestion is to the physical life. If you did not digest your food, you would die. It takes time to meditate, but it is the only way to appropriate the Word and grow.

NOTE WELL:

They WELCOMED it because it was not the mere word of man – they heard it with their hearts because it was THE WORD OF GOD.

KEY QUESTION: How do you receive the Word of God?

Do you receive it as the Word of God? Or do you blow it off – or even get angry as if it were merely the ideas of some man? Listen – If I’m making this stuff up don’t welcome it! But if I’m giving you the Word of God you should hear with your ear and welcome it in to your heart!

BY THE WAY – That is why some leave blessed and transformed and others leave unchanged.

KEY OBSERVATION:

Paul thanked God for

- 1.) For how the Thessalonians RECEIVED the Word that they proclaimed.
- 2.) For how the Word of God WORKED in their lives– What it accomplishes in the hearts of men and women.

[1 Thessalonians 2:13 \(ESV\)](#) *13 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 what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.*

At work = energeo

from en = in + érgon = work.

KEY INSIGHT:

In the NT it is used only of superhuman power. Literally – The Word of God PERFORMS it’s works
Listen to how Isaiah put it:

[Isaiah 55:8-11](#) *For my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10 “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me*

empty, but it shall accomplish...

It is the WORD that is working – It is not MIGHT accomplish – but SHALL accomplish

...“that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

THAT is why we gather so often to study the Word of God!

THAT is why we encourage you to read it through in a year

THAT is why we will never forsake it.

[Hebrews 4:12-13 \(NLT\)](#) For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. 13Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.

Jesus said that it is like SEED – Plant it and it grows.

THE DEAL IS THIS – It HAS to be SOWN to work. It must be heard or read!

STORY – C H Spurgeon once tested an auditorium in which he was to speak that evening. Stepping into the pulpit, he loudly proclaimed, “Behold the lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.” Satisfied with the acoustics, he left and went his way. Unknown to him, there were two men working in the rafters of that large auditorium, neither one Christians. One of the men was pricked in his conscience by the verse Spurgeon quoted and became a believer later that day! Such is the penetrating power of God’s eternal word! Little wonder that Paul is so insistent on our “preaching of the Word.”

THE PROBLEM with modern Christianity is that it has forsaken the SEED of the Word – which ALONE effectively works in those who believe. Some places might give it lip-service. But they are not DEVOTED to the sowing of the seed into the hearts of men and women!

INTERESTING: Religious people do NOT understand:

- the SIMPLICITY of the Word of God, nor
- the POWER of the Word of God.

THAT is why they resort to every thing and anything in their attempts to succeed at church.

[1 Thessalonians 2:13 \(KJV\)](#) ...“which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

When we believe God’s Word - Belief that is demonstrated in obedience - God the Holy Spirit releases His power – divine energy – that works in our lives to fulfill His purposes. But the fruit of the Spirit – conforming us to the image of Christ. THE PROOF that they had RECEIVED it and WELCOMED it – The PROOF of the POWER of the Word

[1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 \(ESV\)](#) 14For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, 15who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind 16by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved – so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God’s wrath has come upon them at last!

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