

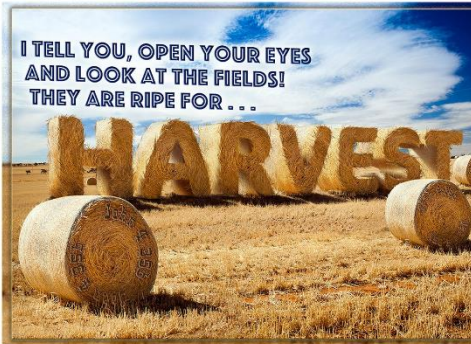
The Word of God

1 Thessalonians 2:13

Online Sermon:

http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567

How easy it is to look upon this modern world and only see gossipers, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, boastful, disobedient people that have no fidelity, no love, and no mercy; and feel our evangelistic-holy-living labor is in vain



(Romans 1:28-30)! And yet despite the depravity of their self-righteous, pleasure seeking, broad path of destruction living, surely Christ's ambassadors, are called to take on the attitude of Apostle Paul and the Lord who saw the ripeness of the fields in

midst of their darkness (Matthew 7:13-14, 9:37)? For instance, in the face of thousands of gods, emperor worship, and sexual relations often being treated like a sport without boundaries; Apostle Paul preached the word of God as one making an appeal to the image-bearing, yet persecutors of the Lord that God still loved them and dearly wanted them to be reconciled unto their

Creator, Lord, Savior, and King. And yet while many remained lost, to those who heard the Good Shepherd call their name through the Word of God, Paul thanked Him continually (2:13). Paul did not take the credit but instead praised God for His word is true (Psalms 19:7), timeless (Isaiah 40:8), transforms and can be trusted (Proverbs 3:5).¹ It is not by the empty rhetoric of the opinionated, philosophical, or even the most learned that one sees the Light but by hearing, listening, and submitting to the word of God that explains His sovereignty, love, grace, and forgiveness. With tears of joy streaming down his face, Paul gratefully praises the Lord for the multitude of lost sheep who have now come to understand that the cross is not foolishness, as stated in 1 Corinthians 1:18, but rather a powerful message of reconciliation to be embraced wholeheartedly!

Reflection. It can be deeply disheartening to witness countless individuals continuing in their sins and wandering on the broad path of destruction despite our fervent evangelistic endeavors. In such moments, we must resist the temptation to adopt Elijah's despairing mindset, as recounted in 1 Kings 18:22, mistakenly believing that we are the sole worshipers of the Creator. Rather than dwelling on hopelessness, let us marvel at the miraculous transformation of those lost sheep whom we've had the honor to sow seeds of righteousness into. Let our hearts be filled with joy, knowing that through our faithful words and upright lives, enabled by the Holy Spirit, we have made an eternal difference in their lives!

¹ Mark Howell et al., [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 46.

Hearing the Word

While there are many walks in life that bring us great joy such as walking down the aisle of marriage, walking over to pick up our children, walking to the dinner table, or walking along the peaceful sandy shores; nothing compares to walking up to the lost and boldly saying, “God loves you.” But how can the



sheep hear the voice of the Shepherd if no one is speaking His words?² When we tell others about the Good News Christ speaks through the Word³ and by the power of the Holy Spirit seeds of righteousness are planted into their hearts!⁴ Numerous factors contribute to believers'

reluctance to vocalize the teachings of Christ, including fear of misinterpretation, rejection, uncertainty, timidity, diminished ardor, and insufficient commitment to faith and obedience. However, the primary deterrent to Christians sharing the source of their hope is the misconception that this responsibility falls solely on pastors, evangelists, or deacons, rather than on every believer. While Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were the ones who initially planted seeds of

² James H. Grant Jr., [1 & 2 Thessalonians: The Hope of Salvation](#), ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 71.

³ James H. Grant Jr., [1 & 2 Thessalonians: The Hope of Salvation](#), ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 71.

righteousness in Thessalonica, it was the believers who continued to spread the Good News after he left! At times, all it takes is one individual deeply enamored with the Lord to spontaneously declare, "Jesus loves you," to everyone they encounter, resulting in a harvest of believers sixty times greater than what was initially sown (Matthew 13:1-9). Let me give you a quick illustration.

“Think for a moment. Can you think of any point in history when God’s Word was snuffed out completely? You cannot, and that is the point. No one—no force, no evil, no government, not even Satan himself—can stop the gospel. The gospel finds a way, and it always will as seen in this example from World War II.

A few years ... before the war, a humble villager in eastern Poland received a Bible from a colporteur [someone who sells or gives away Bibles] who visited a small hamlet. He read it, was converted, and passed the book on to others. Through that one Bible two hundred more [people] became believers.

When the colporteur, Michael Billester, revisited the town in the summer of 1940, the group gathered to worship and listen to his preaching. Billester suggested that instead of giving the customary testimonies they all recite verses of Scripture.

Thereupon a man arose and asked, “Perhaps we have misunderstood. Did you mean verses or chapters?”

⁴ James H. Grant Jr., [1 & 2 Thessalonians: The Hope of Salvation](#), ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 69.

“Do you mean to say there are people here who can recite chapters of the Bible?” asked Mr. Billester in astonishment.

That was precisely the case. Those villagers had memorized, not only chapters, but also whole books of the Bible. Thirteen knew Matthew and Luke and half of Genesis. One had committed all the Psalms to memory. Together, the two hundred knew virtually the entire Bible. Passed around from family to family and brought to the gathering on Sundays, the old Book had become so worn with use that its pages were hardly legible.



What is the best way to spread the Word of God? It is to internalize it, to hide it deep in your heart, and then to share it with those who need a word from God. Are you committed to do your part in keeping God’s Word alive in your community?”⁵

Not Human Words

We live in a world where truth is allusive and utterly dependent on individual lens by which facts are interpreted. Swimming in a sea of unending and often conflicting opinions has not only created “noise” but also a sense of distrust,

⁵ Leadership Ministries Worldwide, [Practical Illustrations: 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon](#) (Chattanooga, TN: Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 2003), 127–128.

especially of those who are trying to “sell” their supposed truth to us. For instance, promises made today tend to be empty and void of meaning. Like the deceivers in Paul’s era peddling Roman gods with promises of health, wealth, plentiful offspring, and bountiful crops, only to fall short, we also encounter numerous false counselors today, whether in finance, philosophy, or politics. They attempt to entice us with visions of a dazzling utopia, which, at best, are mere embellishments and,



at worst, outright falsehoods! It is not that our three pounds, roughly 80 some billion nerve cell brains are not impressive and capable of figuring out many things about our environment, after all if the great intellects of the prior century could

step into a time machine and see some of our advances in computers, medicine, engineering, and science they would be speechless! But when it comes to knowing and speaking absolute truth whom amongst us can speak with authority⁶ any more than Job who failed to “brace himself like a man” (38:3) and speak of the complexities of the universe both seen and unseen! God’s word alone is absolute truth and as such is incredibly countercultural. “It exposes the hypocrisy and emptiness of every man-made attempt to find fulfillment,

⁶ James Denney, [“The Epistles to the Thessalonians,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible: Ephesians to Revelation*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 6, Expositor’s Bible (Hartford, CT: S.S. Scranton Co., 1903), 328.

meaning, and purpose apart from God.”⁷ Though we are created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27) and a little lower than the angels (Psalms 8:4-6) does not mean that Satan was right, and we are like God, either in His infinite wisdom and omniscience!

Reflection. Advice is easy to come by, but absolute truth comes only from our Creator. When it comes to living “our best life” possible, how often do we seek others to illuminate our path to success rather than God who is sovereign and knows all things seen and unseen (Colossians 1:16)? When we go through the valleys of tribulation, how often do we put precedence on the knowledge of this world to show us an escape plan rather than ask the Good Shepherd to help us endure or escape altogether?

Receiving the Word of God

Paul thanked God that the Thessalonians accepted his words not as human ones but as “Spirit-inspired God-breathed words!”⁸ When one calls upon the name of the Lord one does not do so in a vacuum but in the “context created by the proclamation of the Gospel on part of those commissioned to

⁷ Mark Howell et al., *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 48.

⁸ Mark Howell et al., *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 49.

⁹ James H. Grant Jr., *1 & 2 Thessalonians: The Hope of Salvation*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 70.

¹⁰ Mark Howell et al., *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 49.

proclaim it.”⁹ No one had spoken to the Thessalonians the way Apostle Paul did, not the priests nor even those who spoke in the tongues of demons!¹⁰ The word of God is not words of a philosopher that is to be held up to a “human system of ideas or to our scrutiny.”¹¹ “God’s word has the power to accomplish what no human message could ever do – it can renew one’s life (Psalms 19:7).¹²



The author of Hebrews rightly states, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints, and marrow; it judges

the thoughts and attitude of the heart” (4:12)! Paul praised God that it was not him who spoke but the Spirit of the Father who spoke through him into the very lives of the Thessalonians (Matthew 10:19). As little children through their faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ the Thessalonians gave up their wills and consciences¹³ and made Christ the lord of their lives. Like the Psalmist, who cherished the words of God as precious lamps

¹¹ James Denney, “The Epistles to the Thessalonians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible: Ephesians to Revelation*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 6, Expositor’s Bible (Hartford, CT: S.S. Scranton Co., 1903), 328.

¹² Mark Howell et al., *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 48.

¹³ James Denney, “The Epistles to the Thessalonians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible: Ephesians to Revelation*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 6, Expositor’s Bible (Hartford, CT: S.S. Scranton Co., 1903), 329.

illuminating their path (Psalm 119:105), we too can find solace in this beautiful love letter from our Creator. Though the Bible may not encompass the entirety of God's wisdom, it serves as a beacon of divine truth amidst the fleeting philosophies and empty promises of humanity. In its pages, we discover the timeless essence of God's grace and guidance, offering a steadfast foundation in an ever-changing world. Paul, in his journey of faith, diligently worked out his salvation with reverence and awe (Philippians 2:12), recognizing the gravity of his spiritual journey. He thanked God for infusing his mind, heart, and soul with divine truth, enabling him to communicate with the eloquence of angels and the sincerity of love (1 Corinthians 13:1). In a society saturated with the worship of countless Roman gods, Paul's love for the lost propelled him to share the Gospel with compassion and fervor, seeking to liberate hearts enslaved by false ideologies.

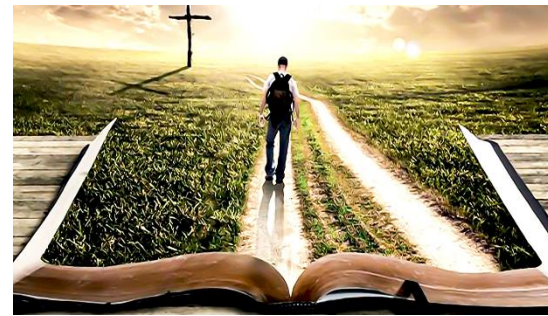
Reflection. What significance does the word of God hold in your life? Do you perceive it as a guiding light, illuminating your path towards righteous living? Are you so captivated by God's word that, like the Psalmist, you meditate on it day and night, recognizing its role as the ultimate source of truth and as a safeguard against sin? Do passages on forgiveness move you to tears, rejoicing in the transformative power of faith and grace that has ushered you from death to life? For the answers to life's most difficult questions do you seek His word or human wisdom and philosophies that are merely empty and foolish in His sight (Isaiah 55:8-9); 1 Corinthians 3:19)?

¹⁴ Gary Steven Shogren, [1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 110.

¹⁵ Gary Steven Shogren, [1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 110.

Living the Word of God

It is one thing to intellectually marvel at the words of Christ but quite another to put them into practice! The Gospel transcends mere philosophical musings, which often fade into insignificance amidst the ebb and flow of human thought.¹⁴ Instead, it embodies the divine utterances of God Himself, with the power to fulfill His intended purposes in creation, as Isaiah 55:11 assures us.¹⁵ “God’s Word energizes people and produces



faith and repentance and obedience.”¹⁶

James says, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who

listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do” (1:23-25)! Apostle Paul rejoiced for the Thessalonians invited the word of God to challenge their thinking, change their hearts, and

¹⁶ James H. Grant Jr., [1 & 2 Thessalonians: The Hope of Salvation](#), ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 69.

transformed their living¹⁷ and as a result they were bearing the fruits of the Spirit¹⁸ such as love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22). Embracing the authority of the “deep, manifold, inexhaustible, and yet ever same”¹⁹ truth of God, akin to the faithful example of the church in Philippi, enabled them to transcend adversity and emerge as “more than conquerors” (Romans 8:37), remaining “blameless and pure” even amidst persecution from the corrupt and twisted generation they sought to reach (Philippians 2:15).

Reflection. In a world replete with charlatans peddling their distorted versions of truth—mere illusions of grandeur deemed foolishness by God—relying on a foundation built upon the shifting sands of culture offers no security for our lives. Our understanding of truth to be a sweet offering unto God it must find its essence solely in the Spirit-inspired and empowered teachings of Christ. It is through relinquishing what is ultimately transient—our intellect, wisdom, ambitions, and aspirations—that we attain what is eternal and incorruptible: salvation and holiness!

Conclusion

How easy it is to look out upon this modern world and only see gossipers, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, boastful, disobedient people that have no fidelity, no love, and no mercy; and feel our evangelistic-holy-living labor is in vain!

¹⁷ Mark Howell et al., [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 48.

¹⁸ James H. Grant Jr., [1 & 2 Thessalonians: The Hope of Salvation](#), ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 69.

It is hard to see through our own plank-filled eyes of sin and realize the eternal potential of the lost image-bearers of our Creator. Upon reflection, we humbly recognize that without the beautiful feet that carried the Gospel message to us, former enemies of the cross, we would still be perishing and bound for hell. As ambassadors of Christ, purchased at the cost of His very life, we are obligated to give the reasons while we are filled with hope. The profound philosophies and intellect of the wise can sometimes evoke fear in those who were considered insignificant when they were chosen. We can approach those in positions of power and influence, regardless of their complex ideologies, without fear. This confidence stems from the assurance bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit, who seals us with divine truth. This truth, spoken through us, carries the weight of absolute authority, as it emanates from the One who reigns over all realms, both visible and invisible. With boldness, humility, and love may we go and not only profess the Good News with our mouths but with the way we live our lives! Let us demonstrate that God’s word is not merely a cherished book to be held close or words to be memorized sporadically. It is, in fact, a love letter from our Creator, serving as a guiding light for our path and a divine roadmap for living a life of holiness. Therefore, let us speak words of life to those who are lost, carrying within us the radiant hope that as we sow seeds of righteousness, the Owner will speak with authority, love, and grace, piercing their hearts so deeply that they cry out, "Abba Father, I need You!"

¹⁹ James Denney, [“The Epistles to the Thessalonians,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible: Ephesians to Revelation*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 6, Expositor’s Bible (Hartford, CT: S.S. Scranton Co., 1903), 329.