

Series: 1 Thessalonians
Title: We Thank God
Text: 1 Thess 2: 13- 16
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1 Thessalonians 2: 13: For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. 14: For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews: 15: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: 16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

Paul says, "*For this cause also we thank God without ceasing.*" Paul suffered much at the hands and tongues of the unbelieving Jews. But he did not let that be his focus. Instead, Paul, Silas and Timothy thanked God without ceasing for God working the word effectually in the hearts of them that believed.

Let us thank God for believing brethren without ceasing. Below God's own Son, the greatest gift God our Father gives his children is our brethren. God has given us brethren. He gave them to be there for one another that we might exhort and comfort one another with the gospel of Christ. Let us thank God for one another without ceasing.

IT IS GOD WE THANK

1 Thessalonians 2: 13: For this cause also thank we God without ceasing....

It is God we must thank because all blessings come of God. The Lord's preachers have no reason to thank ourselves. God's ministers labor in the word and in prayer. But we thank God. The word is of God. The heart is of God. The labor is of God. The message given is of God. The effect in the heart is of God. Even the heart to thank God is of God. Even the access to God's throne to give thanks is of God, through the blood of our risen High Priest and Intercessor. All is of God. So it is God to whom we give thanks.

They thanked God *without ceasing*. Let us always be thanking God. "In everything give thanks." We ask God for blessings. But let us never forget to thank God for the blessings. Each time brethren come to mind, thank God for them. Thank God without ceasing. If they are in this congregation or another, thank God for them.

We find problems in the early church between brethren due to envy. No brethren are in competition. There is no room for envy between God's preachers or any of God's churches. The brethren at Corinth had that problem.

1 Corinthians 1: 12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. 13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?... 3: 3: For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? 4: For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? 5: Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? 6: I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 7: So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. 8: Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one:...

God's preachers and all our brethren are all one with each other. We believe and preach the same Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ whether in this congregation or in one on the other side of the world. It is God our Father and his Son, Christ Jesus, who we give glory unto for brethren. Our brethren are God's own elect. They are those Christ redeemed by his precious blood. Our brethren are born of the same Spirit of God as we are. "*For this cause we thank God without ceasing.*"

Corinth was not the only church with problems. We find it in Galatia, Philippi, Rome. There have always been troubles in the church and always will be in this life. It is one of the ways God manifest those he has approved. By God's grace, those in whom Christ abides, shall continue stedfast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel and in nothing terrified by their adversaries (Php 1: 27-28). That is how God proved he had worked effectually in these Thessalonian brethren--*immediately they suffered*--yet remained faithful to our Lord.

The troubles weighed on Paul as they do us. But Paul did not focus and doubt due to the trouble. He looked to Christ and focused his heart on the Lord's word working effectually in his brethren. It is easy to focus all attention on the negative until we are entirely discouraged. Let us set our focus on the Lord and the good he is working in his church continually. We have far more to be thankful for than to be discouraged about. Let us thank God without ceasing. As we go to God's throne of grace thinking on the many things for which we thank God, it is one way the Lord strengthens our own hearts to continue steadfast in one accord with our brethren, striving in peace and faith and love, together, for the faith of the gospel.

THE HEARERS

1 Thessalonians 2: 13: For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Amazing grace! Some heard the gospel and believed on Christ! We should thank God constantly that it is so.

Paul thanked God because they "*received the Word of God*". There are two words translated "receive" in this passage. Here, this first word means to hear with the ear, with readiness of mind. They came to hear the word preached. The Thessalonians who God made to hear did not dispute and question. They received the word Paul preached and studied what they heard.

It is common when people hear the word preached to ask questions. The problem is that usually they ask about other things but do not receive what was preached that day. A father walks along with his child. The father points to a tree and begins telling the child about this tree. The child looks out past the tree, to other trees, and asks one question after another about the other trees. But by having his focus elsewhere he misses what the father is teaching him about that one tree right before their eyes.

It takes God's grace to humble us and make us willing to hear what is taught today. The Lord will answer all our questions as we go along. But we must be made willing to hear and receive what is preached today. Hear the word preached today and study God's word on what you heard today to see if these things are so.

Then having been willing to hear, they were made to receive it--"*when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it.*" This second word means to take hold and embrace with faith. They received in that that they heard. Then they received in that they believed the word of God.

What happened?..."*ye received not the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*" Men were preaching. But it ceased being the word of men. They heard Christ. Christ worked effectually in them by the word. Then they received the word, as it is in truth, as the word of God.

God uses the means of preaching. But it is not the word of men that saves. It is the word of God. Whose word are you hearing now? If the Lord blesses the word effectually then we hear the word of God. It is discouraging when folks oppose by quoting other preachers. God's true preachers are preaching the same word of God. Christ promised that his messengers preach the same gospel and if a man is not speaking the Lord's word it is because there is no light in him.

Isaiah 52:8: Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.

Isaiah 8:20...if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them.

But it is not the word of any man that saves, it is the word of God. As long as we are hearing only the preacher we will not receive the word as the word of God. As long as we think it is only the preacher's word we will shoot the messenger. As our thought is that we are only hearing one man's way of declaring a scripture verses another then we will not receive Christ the Way. If we hear in this way then we are hearing carnally but not in spirit. The blessing comes when the Spirit of God makes us hear our Redeemer speak in the heart. Then we receive the word as the word of God.

John 6:63: It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

Then we stop regarding the word as one opinion among thousands. That is when the gospel becomes true in our hearts. Then we stop judging the word by our opinion and prejudices *and the word starts judging us*. That is when we believe every word, as it is in truth, the word of God himself. When we are willing to submit to Christ and trust our eternal soul into his hand then the word has come in power. The word, the gospel, is the power of God unto salvation.

Romans 1:16: For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

1 Corinthians 1:18: For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

It is not the power of persuasion by a man but the Power of God that saves. A man persuaded by God cannot be unpersuaded by men.

Some look at the multitudes who do not believe and reason that the word of God does not come in power and work effectually. No, it only proves that God did not work in them. Two men hear the same word preached. One is unaffected. He says, "God is not in this! God doesn't bless his word effectually!" But the other's eyes are full of tears of rejoicing in Christ. The one man's unbelief only proves he had not experienced the power of God's word. But it does not mean God does not work effectually. The man weeping and believing is proof of that.

Romans 3: 3: For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? 4: God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

God's word works effectually to make us behold our sin. Our sin-nature is the evil mixed with everything we do. By God's word "of God Christ is made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption"--God is the power. Gods' word working effectually by the Spirit enables us to mortify the deeds of our flesh so that we repent toward God, confessing our utter sinfulness. And we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is God's word working effectually in us that keeps us believing on Christ no matter what happens. This is why Paul, Silas and Timothy thanked God without ceasing. "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above."

A CONTRAST

1 Thessalonians 2: 14: For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews: 15: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: 16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

We see a contrast in those in whom God worked and those in whom the word had no place. As soon as the brethren at Thessalonica believed *they suffered*. Men persecuted them. But it was God who sent it. The life of faith is a life of tests. That is what a trial is. It is God manifesting those he has approved. God proves to his child that we need Christ or we can do nothing. But God also proves to us that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Never think God has singled you out or singled out a congregation. These Gentile believers suffered the same as the Jewish believers. We have so much pride in our sinful flesh that we will take pride in our suffering, saying, "No one suffered like I have!" It is sinful to exalt ourselves in that way. No, Peter said "the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

Notice, that all unbelievers are the same toward believers, no matter their race. The unbelieving Gentiles treated Gentile believers the same as the unbelieving Jews treated Jewish believers "*for ye [Gentiles] also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they [the Jewish believers] have of the Jews:*"

Unregenerate folks love to think they made themselves differ from one another. In this day, everyone labels others putting them into a group. When someone does something that another group does not like, the other group piles on. The same happens with individuals. It gives a sense of moral superiority over the other. But there is no difference in sinners. Each worship the god of self and every unregenerate sinner hates Christ and his people the same as every other. "There is no difference for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The same poison of asps is under every unregenerate tongue. The same enmity against God in each unregenerate sinner.

This enmity manifests itself the same in all. They reject Christ and reject his people, "*Who both [Jew and Gentile] killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: 16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.*" Unregenerate folks may believe on a Jesus but it's another and not the Lord Jesus. The unregenerate Jews rejected their own prophets and persecuted Paul, Silas and Timothy. In Matthew 23: 29 the Lord said that the Pharisee's built sepulchers for dead prophets and put flowers on their graves, while they persecuted Christ and his apostles who were alive and preaching the gospel to them in person. They said, "If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." Christ said, "Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets."

Brethren beware of men who praise dead preachers while rejecting those God has sent today. The dead preacher the man is praising, suffered the same thing from men in his day from men who praised dead preachers before him. The unbelieving Jews tried to forbid Paul from preaching to these Gentiles. Have you ever had someone forbid you to speak to them or to their children? God's people face the same unregenerate men in every age.

But also notice, God's grace works the same in all his children whether Jew or Gentile. When the word came effectually, Gentiles believed the same Lord preached through the same gospel the same as the Hebrew believers! They both believed and followed Christ. The Thessalonians endured the suffering and continued believing Christ the same as their Jewish brethren endured suffering but continued in faith.

In Mexico, God's saints rest in Christ the same as you. They speak of Christ's righteousness being their only righteousness the same as you. They are opposed by their families and neighbors the same as you. But they continue believing and following Christ the same as you. They do so for the same reason as you, the word of God working effectually within us.

This is why we thank God without ceasing for God's work in our brethren, "*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*"

Amen!