

Lighthouse Bible Church

March 22nd, 2015

1st Thessalonians 2: 13 – 16 *Scripture Reading 1st Corinthians 2: 1 - 5*
‘The Effective working of the Word’

Stand – Read – Pray

As we have been studying 1st Thessalonians Chapter 2, we have seen that Paul started out this chapter by having to defend his life and ministry to the church at Thessalonica because Paul and his partners had been accused of teaching error and living in uncleanness and deceitfulness.

So Paul does a masterful job of allowing God to vindicate him by telling the church that their ministry had been approved by God because God had tested their hearts and heard their gospel message that He entrusted to them and approved their ministry.

Even though they had been accused of being men pleasers and using flattering words to take advantage of people and covering up their own greedy hearts like a cloak and seeking their own glory, Paul says God knows our hearts and is our witness how we were among you, as you know.

Paul reaffirms his love for the people of that church as being similar to the love a mother has for her nursing child. He said he longed for them and gave their lives because they were so dear to him and the others.

Then Paul reaffirms his love for the people of that church as being similar to a father’s loves that teaches and disciplines and encourages his own children. He ends by telling them how godly they behaved themselves while they were with the people at Thessalonica and all that they had been accused of was just not true, as they well knew.

And then he concluded by encouraging them to walk worthy of the Lord because they were called into His kingdom and glory and should conduct themselves that way. That is where we want to pick it up this morning in Verse 13.

In this passage of Scripture, Paul commends the congregation of Thessalonica for their acceptance and response to the preaching of the Word of God and for their willingness to suffer persecution for the sake of God's kingdom. Paul says in Verse 13.

Verse 13: for this reason we also thank God without ceasing because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men but as it is in truth the word of God., which also effectively works in you who believe.

Paul says what he said similarly in Chapter 1 Verse 2 when he said “we give thanks to God always for you all making mention of you in our prayers remembering, without ceasing...” and then he lists all those things we looked at before. Paul was constantly thanking God for what God had done in the lives of the Thessalonian believers.

This time Paul is thanking God, without ceasing, **because** the Thessalonians **received the word of God which they heard from them and they welcomed it not as the word of men but as it is in truth the word of God.**

Remember, **Acts 17: 2 – 4** says that Paul **went into the synagogue for 3 Sabbaths and reasoned with them from the Scriptures that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead and that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ.**

And you remember that in 1st Thessalonians Chapter 1 and Verse 5 that Paul said “our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit..”.

Notice that Paul says **you received the word of God which you heard from us.. not as the word of men but as it is in truth, the word of God.** These Thessalonian believers knew that what Paul was preaching was the Word of God and not man’s wisdom or human opinion or what was politically correct, but the Word of God, and that is why they received it. Remember what he said in **1st Corinthians 2: 1 – 5.**

He told the church at Galatia in **Galatians 1: 11 – 12** **but I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man for I neither received it from man nor was I taught it but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

Notice also that Paul says when you **heard** the word of God **you received it and you welcomed it.** That is really the process of how the Word of God penetrates the heart of an unbeliever. They hear it , they receive it and they welcome it because they understand it is God’s Word. Look at the parable of the sower in **Matthew 13: 18 – 23.** *Para-lambano=r deekomai = welcomed*

So the Thessalonians heard, received and welcomed, because they understood, the gospel of God and their lives were changed. Paul said to the church at Corinth in **1st Corinthians 15: 1 – 2** **I preached to you the gospel and you received it and you stand in it and were saved by it...** and that is what Paul is saying that happened to the Thessalonian believers.

That is why Paul says at the end of Verse 13 **which also effectively works in you who believe.** And it had, hadn’t it, as we saw in Chapter 1 verses 3 – 10.

Because there is nothing like the powerful word of God that can transform a person. That is why we preach and teach the word of God because we know the power that it has to **work effectively** in those who believe it. What did Paul say in **Romans 1: 16** for **I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes...**

In **1st Corinthians 1: 18** it says **for the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the POWER of God.** You want to know why? Because as **Hebrews 4: 12** says **the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.** That is because this Bible, **all Scripture, is given by inspiration of God,** it is God breathed, it is the power of God, **and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness...** and as **Isaiah 55: 11** says, **it never returns void.**

This is the same Word of God that was working effectively in the believers in the Thessalonian church, first of all for their salvation, then for their growth, because salvation is only the beginning of the power of the word of God, after that it profitable for every area of life.

The word of God according to:

John 17: 17 sanctifies

1st Peter 2: 2 matures them

Psalm 19: 11 warns them

Psalm 119: 11 protects them

Psalm 119: 105 guides them

2nd Timothy 3: 16 – 17 teaches, reprovess, correction and equips

Psalm 119: 97 – 100 makes wise

Colossians 3: 16 enriches

Psalm 119: 147 provides hope

And Paul says that same word was **also effectively working in you** and it was evidenced by how their lives were changed and how they were now living. No words of human wisdom can do that. No historical, philosophical, political, scientific, or other book can do that. How about us?

Verse 14: for you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen just as they did from the Judeans..

Paul then begins to share another result of a church that hears, receives and welcomes the word of God and then lives out that word in their lives; it is the fact that they are going to suffer persecution because of how it effectively worked in them.

As a matter of fact, Paul will say later in **2nd Thessalonians 2: 4 – 5** we **boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure ... that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you also suffer...**

The church at Thessalonica **became imitators of the churches of God in Judea** because they began to follow in the same footsteps as those other **churches in Christ Jesus** by being persecuted.

The churches in Judea included all of the Christ centered churches from Gaza to Caesarea and from the Mediterranean sea to the Dead sea, including the church at Jerusalem started on the day of Pentecost. And notice that they are the **churches of God which are in Christ Jesus**. That is a true church; it is God's church, not mans, and its congregation are made up of people who are in Jesus Christ because they are believers in Christ.

Paul tells them that they became imitators of the other churches because **you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans**, the unbelieving Jews living in Judea.

Paul said the churches in Judea suffered persecution because they received the gospel, a message that was to the unbelieving Jews a stumbling block and to the Gentile unbelievers foolishness as **1st Corinthians 1: 23** says. And because of that, these unbelievers began to persecute the churches. You can read about it all throughout the book of Acts.

And now Paul says ‘you are suffering the same things from your own countrymen’, from the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles. Remember in **Acts 17: 5** where the **unbelieving Jews and some evil men from the marketplace formed a mob and set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason?**

Since the beginning of the church in Thessalonica, they began to experience more and more suffering and persecution and affliction, as Chapter 1 and verse 6 said, but they had a **joy of the Holy Spirit** knowing that they were suffering for righteousness sake and that God was still sovereignly in control.

Paul says **you suffered the same things from your own countrymen just as they did from the Judeans** then **Verse 15: who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets and have persecuted us and they do not please God and are contrary to all men.**

Paul says in Verse 15 the unbelieving Jews **killed both the Lord Jesus and THEIR OWN prophets and have persecuted us.** The Bible makes that very clear that the unbelieving Jews had a significant part in the killing of Jesus. You see it in *Matthew 16: 21, 26: 3 – 4, 59, 66, 27: 1, Mark 8: 31, 10: 33 – 34, 14: 1, 55, Luke 9: 22, 22:2, 24: 20, John 15: 16, 18, 17: 1, 19* and many other places.

Not only had they killed the Lord Jesus but Paul says **they killed their own prophets as well**. They totally rejected God's Word and the Messiah He sent and all of those who preached about Jesus Christ as that Messiah, which included many of the prophets of God.

Remember what Jesus said as He left the temple for the last time in **Matthew 23: 37** *Read Verse 29 – 36*. In **Luke 11: 47** Jesus said to the unbelieving Jewish religious leaders **woe to you for you build the tombs of the prophets and your fathers killed them**. Just look at **Hebrews 11: 32 – 37** and see how many of them were slaughtered and the parable of the landowner in **Matthew 21: 33 – 46**

And Paul says **and they have persecuted us** as well. And they had, over and over again in the book of Acts you see Paul suffering at the hands of unbelieving Jews. What he once did to the church was now happening to Him. He said in **2nd Corinthians 11: 24 – 27** that **from the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 3 times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned ... in perils of my own countrymen and in perils of the Gentiles...**

Before we leave this and put all of the blame on the unbelieving Jews for killing Jesus, let me suggest to you who else was responsible for His death as well.

- #1: Judas, who was satanically inspired: **Luke 22: 3 – 4, John 13: 27**
- #2: The unbelieving Jewish religious leaders: **Luke 24: 20, Acts 4: 8 – 10**
- #3: The Roman political leaders: **Matthew 27: 27, 35, Luke 18: 32 – 33**
- #4: The unbelieving Jewish / Gentile crowd: **Matthew 27: 22, Mark 15: 14**
- #5: All unbelievers: **Romans 6: 23, 1 Tim 2: 6, 4: 10, Hebrews 2: 9**
- #6: God Himself: **Isaiah 53: 10, Acts 2: 23**

The Paul says **they do not please God and are contrary, or hostile, to all men**.

How were they being that way? Verse 16 tells us.

Verse 16: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved..

These unbelieving Jews, who themselves rejected the message that could save them, tried to stop God's spokesmen from sharing that message with the non-Jewish Gentiles so that they could be saved. I can't think of anything more terrible than trying to withhold the life-saving, soul saving message from those who would otherwise die in their sin.

Think about this that through the gospel message; God, **1st Timothy 2: 4** says **desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.** **2nd Peter 3: 9** says **God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance** and it is through the gospel of Jesus Christ preached that that happens.

But these unbelieving Jews, whom Jesus came to, to save from their sins, **Matthew 1: 21** says, were in essence attempting to forbid God from speaking by forbidding His servants from speaking. The unbelieving Jews rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ because they rejected Jesus Himself and so they forbid anyone from preaching in the name of Jesus.

Remember in **Acts 5: 28, 40** that the disciples **were commanded not to speak or preach in the name of Jesus anymore.** The unbelieving Jews and the unbelieving world still wants to stop the mouths of those who would share the life saving gospel of Jesus Christ and if they have to silence them permanently, they would, just like they tried to in Jesus' day.

We have the freedom today, in this place, in this city, in this country, for the most part, to share the message that can save you. That message is:

That God is Holy and perfect and demands that you be holy and perfect
That we have all sinned and fallen short of God's standard of holiness
That, because God is holy, He must punish all sin. The wages of sin is death
That God was willing to punish His own Son in your place:

God so loved the world – *death, burial and resurrection*

God demonstrated His love in that while we were yet sinners...

He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might become ...

That you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your ...

That you repent and put your faith and trust in His finished work on the cross

That you believe that through the shedding of His blood you can be cleansed

That you yield to His lordship in your life

Well, because the unbelieving Jews killed their own Messiah, Jesus Christ, and persecuted the true born again Christians and are not pleasing to God and hostile and contrary to all people and wanted to stop the saving gospel message by killing the messengers, Paul says **they fill up the measure of their sins but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.**

In other words, they have sinned to the fullest with what they had done. Remember Jesus said that to the unbelieving Jewish religious leaders in **Matthew 23: 32 fill up then the measure of your father's guilt** in talking about killing the prophets of God and their message about the coming Messiah.

Daniel 8: 23 it says when the transgressors have reached their fullness. In Romans 2: 5 – 6 ... because of your impenitent hearts you are treasuring up for yourselves wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Listen, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God as Hebrews 10: 31 says and that is just where Paul says these unbelieving Jews are.

And that is where all people are who reject Jesus Christ and show hostility towards His messengers will be. The **wrath of God has come upon them to the uttermost**. The fullness of God's wrath hasn't come upon them yet but Paul writes as if it already has, because it is assured that it will.

He is talking about the ultimate wrath of God against all sin that He will punish **to the uttermost** or to the extreme or to the full limit. And that punishment is described in **2nd Thessalonians 1: 9** as being **punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord**. It is described in **Revelation 14: 10 – 11** as **the wrath of God poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone ... and the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever and they have no rest day or night**.

Revelation 20: 10 describes **the lake of fire and brimstone** as a place where someone is **tormented day and night forever and ever** and then **Verse 15** says **anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire**.

What about you? Have you received the gospel of Jesus Christ because you heard it, received it and welcomed it because you understood it and now you are living it in your life. Are you experiencing some type of opposition or persecution to your life as a born again believer? Because **2nd Timothy 3: 12** says **all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution**.

Or are you hostile to the things of God, to the good news of Jesus Christ dying for you. Are you offended or do you chaff or resist when someone has the gall to tell you that you are a sinner and need to be saved. Does the truth of the Bible and what the church does and teaches make you angry or resentful? Would you rather shut the mouth of one who is teaching God's word because it offends, angers, annoys, or bothers you? Then you need to repent and believe and be saved before it is too late. Closing prayer

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Introduction and Review:

Verse 13:

Acts 17: 2 – 4, 1 Corinthians 2: 1 – 5, Galatians 1: 11 - 12
Matthew 13: 18 – 23, 1 Corinthians 15: 1 – 2, Roman 1: 16
1st Corinthians 1: 18, Hebrews 4: 12, Isaiah 55: 11
John 17: 17, 1st Peter 2: 2, Psalm 19: 11, 119: 11, 105
2nd Timothy 3: 16 – 17, Psalm 119: 97 – 100, 147
Colossians 3: 16

Verse 14:

2nd Thessalonians 2: 4 – 5, 1st Corinthians 1: 23, Acts 17: 5

Verse 15:

Matthew 16: 21, 26: 3 – 4, 59, 66, 27: 1, Mark 8: 31
Mark 10: 33 – 34, 14: 1, 55, Luke 9: 22, 22: 2, 24: 20
John 15: 16, 18, 17: 1, 19. Matthew 23: 29 – 36
Luke 11: 47, Hebrews 11: 32 – 37, Matthew 21: 33 – 46
2nd Corinthians 11: 24 – 27, *Luke 22: 3 – 4, John 13: 27*
Luke 24: 20, Acts 4: 8 – 10, Matthew 27: 27, 35
Luke 18: 32 – 33, Matthew 27: 22, Mark 15: 14
Romans 6: 23, 1st Timothy 2: 6, 4: 10, Hebrews 2: 9
Isaiah 53: 10, Acts 2: 23

Verse 16:

1 Timothy 2: 4, 2 Peter 3: 9, Matthew 1: 21, Acts 5: 28, 40
Matthew 23: 32, Daniel 8: 23, Romans 2: 5 – 6
Hebrews 10:31, 2 Thessalonians 1:9, Revelation 14: 10-11
Revelation 20: 10, 15, 2nd Timothy 3: 12

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2nd Timothy 3: 16 – 17, Psalm 119: 97 – 100, 147
Colossians 3: 16

Verse 14:

2nd Thessalonians 2: 4 – 5, 1st Corinthians 1: 23, Acts 17: 5

Verse 15:

Matthew 16: 21, 26: 3 – 4, 59, 66, 27: 1, Mark 8: 31
Mark 10: 33 – 34, 14: 1, 55, Luke 9: 22, 22: 2, 24: 20
John 15: 16, 18, 17: 1, 19. Matthew 23: 29 – 36
Luke 11: 47, Hebrews 11: 32 – 37, Matthew 21: 33 – 46
2nd Corinthians 11: 24 – 27, *Luke 22: 3 – 4, John 13: 27*
Luke 24: 20, Acts 4: 8 – 10, Matthew 27: 27, 35
Luke 18: 32 – 33, Matthew 27: 22, Mark 15: 14
Romans 6: 23, 1st Timothy 2: 6, 4: 10, Hebrews 2: 9
Isaiah 53: 10, Acts 2: 23

Verse 16:

1 Timothy 2: 4, 2 Peter 3: 9, Matthew 1: 21, Acts 5: 28, 40
Matthew 23: 32, Daniel 8: 23, Romans 2: 5 – 6
Hebrews 10:31, 2 Thessalonians 1:9, Revelation 14: 10-11
Revelation 20: 10, 15, 2nd Timothy 3: 12