

While I'm Waiting
(Week 4)
1 Thessalonians 2:13- 16
"The Power of The Word"

Introduction

Abram believe The LORD, and He credited it to him as righteousness. Genesis 15:6

Just this past week, I was contacted by a dear friend in the faith, who called me up for some advice. It seems that she, in her current position in life, finds herself surrounded by atheists from every possible direction. She is under a constant barrage of attacks upon her Christian beliefs. She does not want to shirk from her responsibilities as a believer to witness to those who are persecuting her. But she is struggling with maintaining her composure in the face of such verbal attacks. Her question to me was simple: "How can I continue to witness to these people without losing my temper?" I had to stop and ask God how to answer.

After a quick moment of prayer for discernment, I suggested to her that she try a new approach. When they come to you and in their normal argumentative fashion attack you with their secular humanistic nonsense, listen politely until they have finished. After they are through beating you down with their ridiculous beliefs, ask them this simple question in a polite tone of voice; "May I tell you now what I believe?" If their answer is "No", then politely walk away. But if they say "Yes", then begin your reply with, "The Bible says...". After you say this, quote from the scriptures and then explain what those scriptures mean.

Why did I tell her to approach them in this manner? Because our words alone have no power in them, but God's word does, my friends. The word of God is packed with wonder working power. The word in the Greek that Paul uses to describe the working of God's Word is "energeo" (pronounced en-erg-eh'-o), and it is where we derive our word "energy" from. When God talks, there is immense power in His Words. That is why believing in what He tells us empowers us to be saved in the first place.

For The Word of God is living and effective (energeo in the Greek) and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

The reason that the church at Thessalonica had begun so powerfully is not because of the wondrous eloquence of Paul and his missionary companions. It was not because of the some carefully crafted man-made speech. But rather, it was because Paul and his companions shared with them the Word of God, and they believed. Hear the words of Paul as he writes to the church in Thessalonica:

This is why we constantly thank God, because when you received The Word of God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, the Word of God, which also works effectively in you who believe.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

For you see, God's Word had come in power to Thessalonica. And the people who believed what God had said to them would never be the same. Just like Father Abraham, they believed God, and it was credited to them as righteousness! But the Thessalonians didn't just Hear The Word with their ears and then just go about living as they always had. No they heard with their ears and then trusted it in their hearts. The reason that the church of Thessalonica was on fire for God in their little corner of the world was because of the effect of God's Word upon their lives. They **Believed** in what God had said, **Became New** in the way that they lived, and **Braced Themselves** for the persecution that was sure to follow. If we are to become true followers of Christ then we too must do likewise.

Believe (vs. 13a)

This is why we constantly thank God, because when you received The Word of God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, the Word of God.... **1 Thessalonians 2:13a**

Paul uses two different words here to describe the effect The Word of God has on its hearers. The KJV translates them both as “received”, but that does not accurately portray the message that Paul is sending. The first word he uses is “*paralambano*”, which means to “*receive the message*”. The second word that he uses, *dechomai*, actually means to “*take hold*” of something. Now, here is the complete meaning of what Paul is saying in **verse 13**: After the people in Thessalonica had heard the message with their ears, they believed that it was a message from God, and not men. Therefore, they took hold of it in their hearts. In short, they had not only heard the message, but they had appropriated it as well.

Many people have heard The Word of God, but only those who recognize that it is from God and receive it in their hearts are truly saved. Just as Abraham believed God when He promised to make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, and took this as a promise from God, and trusted it in his heart. For this reason God credited it to him as righteousness (**Genesis 15:6**). When we recognize God’s Word for what it is, and believe it in our hearts, we are declared righteous just by believing. This is how we are saved... by grace THROUGH FAITH (**Ephesians 2:8**).

The church at Thessalonica was radically saved, because they had heard the Word and accepted it in their hearts as God’s truth. Therefore, Paul knew that The Holy Spirit had indeed wrought a great work in that city. Never underestimate the wonder working power of The Word of God! It has the ability to transform lives, if only, we believe the message.

Become New (vs. 13b)

...which also works effectively in you who believe.

1 Thessalonians 2:13b

Here is that word I was speaking about earlier, “*energeo*”. It is translated in the CSB “*works effectively*”. It simply means that God’s Word is powerful and effective. If I were able to get anything across to you today and be assured that something in this sermon would “stick”, as it were, I would want it to be that you would fully grasp the Power that is in God’s Word. The sole reason that the Thessalonian Church had been declared righteous, the reason that their testimony was so effective, the reason that they had been able to turn away from their sinful worship of idols and turn to The Living God was because they had received His Word and had believed what He said was truth. And THAT is the very reason that they became a new creation.

God’s Word has immense power. Nothing that you or I can say or do has that kind of power, but God’s Word does. Have you ever thought about the first time we are able to hear what God said about anything? You will find it in **Genesis Chapter One**. It is the first time that we “hear” God say anything. He says two little Hebrew words, “*hayah ovr*”. In their simplest translation, it means “*be light*”. And after saying those two little words, the entire universe began! But wait, there’s more!

When Jesus and His disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee (**Mark 4**), a furious storm arose, and the disciples were terrified that the boat would be sunk, and they would all be lost at sea. Jesus, however, was asleep in the boat! They woke Him up in a panic and accused Him of “not caring” that they were all about to drown. Now don’t beat them up too badly. We would all more that likely react the same way as well. Jesus calmly looks out at the sea and says two little words in the Greek text, “*siopao*” (see-o-pah’-o) meaning “*hush*”, and *phimoo* (fee-mo’-o), a word used to describe *putting a muzzle on something’s mouth*. Simply put, Jesus basically told the storm to “*shut up*”, and it did. The sea became as calm as glass. Again, two little words from God and the result was miraculous.

In his commentary on **1 Thessalonians**, Warren Wiersbe uses the illustration of the man with the withered hand in **Matthew Chapter 12** to explain the power of God’s Word. This poor man was at the synagogue, when Jesus came in and found him. No doubt this man’s deformity had caused him to suffer

greatly, and more than likely, had rendered him unable to make a good living in the workplace. It is no telling how many doctors that he may have gone to in order to find healing. And it is no doubt that he had offered up countless prayers asking God to heal him. But here he was at the synagogue, and Jesus looks at him and says three little words in the Greek, which simply translated mean, “*stretch your hand*”.

I’m sure the man had heard many physicians before ask him during his examinations, “can you stretch out your hand?” And of course, the answer was always the same, “I cannot.” But three words from The LORD and he was able to do what he never could before! He stretched out his hand and was made whole. This, my friends, is the power of God’s Word. What He says, He will do. What He promises will come to pass. The only thing that we have to do is trust His Word, and we will be able to become what we had never been able to become before.

I could never be righteous on my own, but Jesus says that if I believe in Him then I shall be declared righteous. I could never turn away from sin in my own strength, but God’s Word tells me that I can through Him, and so I will. When I look around at the chaos of this wicked world, I see hopelessness and despair in every direction, but God’s Word tells me that “**All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.**” (Romans 8:28). Therefore, I know that I am secure in Christ Jesus. I have HOPE in the midst of the storm, because my Savior can bring me peace just by speaking it in to existence! THAT is the power of God’s Word. It changed everything for the Thessalonians, and it can change everything for you as well, if you will simply hear it with your ears and take it into your heart as God’s truth.

Look down at your *Bible* for a moment. Think of all the things that God accomplished with just a few short words. He created the universe and calmed the raging sea. In the original Greek and Hebrew text of your *Bible*, there are roughly 545,000 words. That’s **five hundred forty-five thousand** words that God has given to you. You hold in your hand more of God’s Word than Abraham, Issac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Daniel, or any of the prophets EVER had! Think of the power you hold in your hands. This, I truly believe, is why *The Bible* tells us that the sign gifts and prophecies would one day no longer be necessary and only love would remain.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will come to an end.
1 Corinthians 13:8-10

And why would there come a time when all these other things would become unnecessary? Because we now, in our time and generation, have all of God’s Word spoken to mankind in the palm of our hands! We have been given His Word, and if we will truly hear it and accept it as His truth, then we shall have all we need. We have the power to overcome anything. What a privilege we have been given, that Father Abraham would have loved to have had! All the power that we need to be all that Christ has called us to be, we are able to carry with us everywhere that we go. No matter what storm arises in your life, speak God’s Word over it, and you will overcome. Are you struggling with an addiction from which you can’t break free? Speak the power of God’s Word in faith and watch the shackles fall away. If Jesus says that you can, then you CAN my friends. For His Word has promised us:

I am able to do all things through Him Who strengthens me. **Philippians 4:13**

When we trust in God’s Word, all things become new. God’s Word has His mighty POWER behind it. It changed everything for the Thessalonians, and it can change everything for you as well. Make God’s Word a real part of your life, abide in Christ and all that He has promised, and you will have victory. Don’t take my word for it... trust in HIS!

Brace Yourself (vs. 14-16)

For you brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's churches in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, since you have also suffered the same things from people of your own country. just as they did from the Jews who killed The LORD Jesus and the prophets and persecuted us. They displease God and are hostile to everyone, by keeping us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. As a result, they are constantly filling up their sins to the limit, and wrath has overtaken them at last. **1 Thessalonians 2:14-16**

I love The Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5-7**). I think that most Christians fail to realize that the "beatitudes" at the beginning of that sermon are really a progression of what it means to be a Christian. It begins with humility, the recognition that we need a Savior,

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. **Matthew 5:3**

In order to be saved, you must first realize that you are wretched and need saving! Then as you are broken over your sin, God will forgive and comfort you.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. **Matthew 5:4**

As the progression continues, we are promised eternal life (**the meek shall inherit the earth vs. 5**), and we are sanctified in the image of Christ (**those who hunger for righteousness will be filled vs. 6**). As we have been forgiven, we long to show God's mercy to others and see them reconciled to God. In short, we long to win souls to Christ (**blessed are the merciful and peacemakers vs. 7,9**). These are the marks of a true believer (**pure in heart vs. 8**). And finally we come to the last of the beatitudes:

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. **Matthew 5:10**

For you see, if you go around saying that you love Jesus, sooner or later, you will be given the opportunity to prove it. God's people are aliens in this wretched world. And if you are to become all that you can be in Christ, then MANY will despise you for it. But take heart, God's people the world over are despised, just as He was despised. But God has promised that we shall overcome. Paul knew that the Gentile Thessalonians had a real dose of Jesus, because they were suffering for it just like the Jewish believers back home in Judea. If you take a stand for Christ in this wretched world, trust me, you will have some enemies. And the Thessalonians had more than their share.

God allows our enemies to come against us for a time. He does this so that they may have every opportunity to repent and be saved (**2 Peter 3:9**). But remember this, those who remain the enemies of Christ in the end will suffer the wrath of God. This world may hate our message of the gospel, but one day they will truly wish that they had heard it with their ears and accepted it in their hearts. But on that day, it will be too late. This same Jesus that they despised will be the Jesus that they will bow down before and beg for mercy that shall not come. Our enemies, therefore, are not to be despised, they are to be pitied and prayed for. For some, who once hated Him, have later come to believe. Only God knows who will turn from their sins and trust in Christ. Our commission is to go and make disciples. So we must love our enemies, for we have no idea which of them will one day be our brothers! That is the wonderful power of God's Word. It can turn adversaries into allies. It can make the vilest sinner clean. It has the power to make all things new. Do you believe?

Let all of God's people say that His Word is... TRUTH!!!