

LIVING ON THE EDGE

"ON THE EDGE OF TRUTH"

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13

"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 attitudes of the heart" (Heb 4:12). The Bible has a mind of its own to accomplish its intended spiritual purposes. According to 2 Timothy 3:16, these include "teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." Scripture is God's primary spiritual formation tool. The Old Testament expresses the performative power of God's word this way:

"As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for
the eater,
so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."
(Isa 55:11)

Unfortunately, too many people do not have access to the Bible in their own language. Over 2100 language groups are still without a single verse of Scripture in their own language. The Seed Company exists to do something about poverty of a different kind, Bible poverty. Its mission is "To accelerate Scripture translation and impact for people without God's Word through Great Commission partnerships."

So the Bible, then, is both the record of aspects of special revelation and revelation itself.

– Charles C. Ryrie

One of those partnerships is aimed at provided God's word for 1,200,000 people in Mozambique. About this project, The Seed Company says: "The Meetto people farm small plots in the grassy savannas of northern Mozambique. Traditional beliefs and practices shape daily life. People are very conscious of spiritual powers and the need to secure protection from evil. Church leaders desire to see their people set free from fear and bondage." You can read more about this translation project—as well as others, some of which Pantego Bible Church is supporting, e.g., for the Konta, Oyda, and Melo tribes in Ethiopia and for the Irayai people in Central Asia—on the Seed Company's website (<https://seedcompany.com/languages>).

This Week's Core Competency

Authority of the Bible – I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

God has made himself known in *general* revelation and in *special* revelation. Examples of general revelation include the creation (Ps 19:1-6), which reveals God's infinite power and wisdom. Paul mentions these invisible divine qualities in Romans 1:20: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse." Another example of general revelation includes human beings, who bear the image of God, which means that humans are like God—in many ways. One writer explains: "The term 'image' has been variously explained as personality, nature (as body and spirit), or capacity for moral decision. It does not signify a physical representation of corporeality, for God is a spirit. The term must therefore figuratively

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describe human life as a reflection of God's spiritual nature; that is, human life has the communicated attributes that came with the inbreathing (Gen. 2:7). Consequently, humans have spiritual life, ethical and moral sensitivities, conscience, and the capacity to represent God" (Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 112). Another writes: "The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God in the following ways: intellectual ability, moral purity, spiritual nature, dominion over the earth, creativity, ability to make ethical choices, and immortality" (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 443). Neither list of likenesses is exhaustive, however, for humans are also personal and communal beings like the Triune God.

Examples of special revelation include events like the exodus, which reveals that God redeems and delivers from bondage, as well as Jesus Christ, the incarnate word, who said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). According to one theologian, "Undebatably, the incarnation of Jesus Christ was a major avenue of special revelation. He exegeted the Father (John 1:14), revealing the nature of God (14:9), the power of God (3:2), the wisdom of God (7:46), the glory of God (1:14), the life of God (1 John 1:1-3), and the love of God (Romans 5:8). Our Lord did all this by both His acts (John 2:11) and His words (Matt. 16:17)" (Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 73).

Another example of special revelation is the Bible, the written word; about which Paul said, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2Ti 3:16). Of these three, the Scripture is particularly important because it provides a record of the other two; without it we would know little about either the exodus or Jesus' words and works. The same theologian explains: "Actually the Bible serves as the most inclusive of all the avenues of special revelation, for it encompasses the record of many aspects of the other avenues. Though God undoubtedly gave other visions, dreams, and prophetic messages that were not recorded in the Bible, we know no details of them. Too, all that we know about the life of Christ appears in the Bible, though, of course, not all that He did or said was recorded in the Scriptures (John 21:25). But the Bible is not simply the record of these other revelations from God; it also contains additional truth not revealed, for example, through the prophets or even during the earthly life of Christ. So the Bible, then, is both the record of aspects of special revelation and revelation itself" (Ryrie, 73).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.

Cf., complementary passages

Acts 17:1-4

1 When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. 2 As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,³ explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah," he said. 4 Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

2 We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. 3 We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

4 For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, 9 for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Box "because" indicating *reason*.
- * Circle "received" and "accepted."
- * Bracket "word of God" 2x.

- * Underline "which you heard from us."
- * Box "not as" and "but as" indicating strong *contrast*.
- * Underline "which is at work among you who believe."

day **2** EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Verse 13 contains another reason why Paul thanked God for the Thessalonian believers. Summarize his first reason found in 1:2-3.
2. After reading Acts 17:1-9 and 1Thessalonians 1:2-10, describe the Thessalonians' initial reception to the gospel.
3. Paul refers to the "word of God" in verse 13. To what *exactly* is he referring?
4. Explain the *contrast* in verse 13.
5. Explain what the words "of God" indicate about the "word" in the expression "the word *of God*, which you heard from us."
6. The words "received" and "accepted" have slightly different meanings (see note). Explain.
7. A possible synonym for the first word, "received," might be "listened to" (cf., "heard from us"). Suggest a possible synonym for the second word, "accepted," that might clarify the difference in meaning.
8. Is the word of God at work in you in the same way it was at work in the Thessalonians? Explain.
9. **Discussion:** Talk about the relationship of the word of God, the *gospel*, to the word of God, the Scripture.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Paul conducted three missionary journeys. Luke's account of the second one is found in Acts 15:39-18:22. On that journey, after leaving Philippi, where his imprisonment led to the conversion of the Philippian jailer (16:25-34), he and his companions journeyed to Thessalonica. There "as was his custom" (17:2), the apostle went to the synagogue, where on three successive Sabbath days, he explained to the Jews from the Old Testament scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah. Like Peter did on the Day of Pentecost, Paul argued that the Messiah had to suffer and die, and then rise from the dead (vv. 2-3). "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is Messiah," he told them, based, no doubt, on his resurrection. According to Luke, "Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women" (v. 4). However, as in Philippi, there was opposition—this time targeting Jason who had welcomed the Paul and his companions into his home (vv. 5-9).

Peter put the details together this way in his sermon: "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (2:22-24). Then Peter quoted David's words in Psalm 16, "You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay" (v. 27), explaining that David had died and remained buried in his tomb; therefore, the psalmist could not have been speaking about himself. Instead, he must have been speaking prophetically about the Messiah. David was truly confident, based on the divine promise made to him (2Sa 7:16), that God would place one of his descendants on his throne. Peter told his hearers: "Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor

did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it . . . Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah" (vv. 31-32, 36).

The response of the Thessalonians to the message of the gospel was quite remarkable. Paul says: "Our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us" (1Th 1:5-9a). In a nutshell, "They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath" (vv. 9b-10).

Paul thanks *God* for the Thessalonians' remarkable response in 1 Thessalonians 2:13. After all, the Holy Spirit was behind it: "When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe." The apostle is referring to the gospel message he preached to them, and not the Bible itself, but the connection between the two is obvious. The message Paul preached is deeply rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures, which both Jews and God-fearing Gentiles believed to be God's word. That word, which initially resulted in their "work produced by faith," their "labor prompted by love," and their "endurance inspired by hope in the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:3), remained at work in them, in that they were willing to suffer persecution for their faith at the hands of their own people (v. 14).

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

Welcome the message of the gospel, which is deeply rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures, not as a human word but as it actually is, the word of God.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22.

Reflect on your own initial response to the gospel.

How did welcoming the gospel *then* immediately change your life?

How is it at work in you *now* to transform you into the likeness of Jesus Christ?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 13 **because** Cf., "And we also thank God constantly for this" (ESV). The Greek expression [*dia touto*] translated "for this" (ESV) may refer either backward, as in Col 1:9, or forward, as here, i.e., "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." "This thanksgiving does not merely continue or repeat that of 1:2-10; it amplifies it" (F. F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 45, 1 and 2 *Thessalonians*, 44).

v. 13 **received, accepted** Cf., "received, welcomed" (HCSB). "There is an interesting and significant contrast between the receiving of the message spoken of in the two halves of the verse. In the first half the word for receiving is one which denotes an objective, outward receiving . . . The second word for receiving denotes rather a subjective reception, a reception which involves welcome and approval (the word is the usual one for the reception of a guest" (Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, 88).

v. 13 **word of God** Cf., "God's message" (NET, GNT). "The 'Word of God' here clearly refers to the message spoken by the missionaries. When the Thessalonians heard it they realized that it was not simply the words of man's wisdom, but a message that had its source in God (cf. 1:5)" (Thomas L. Constable, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 695). The *source* of the gospel message is God. What's more, it is rooted in the Old Testament. "The inspired sources do not give us a complete and detailed survey of the contents of Paul's message at Thessalonica. A few important matters are mentioned, however. Thus we learned that he taught that the Messianic prophecies had attained their fulfilment in Jesus, he being the Christ; that he suffered, died, and was raised from the dead, and will come again, all this according to the Scriptures; that by his work he delivered from the wrath to come all those who trust in him; that idol-worship is evil' and that believers, having been called into his glorious kingdom, should live a life of sanctification so as to please the God who saved them, and should be orderly in their daily conduct in the midst of a wicked world ('If any man will not work neither let him eat'). See Acts 17:3; I Thess. 1:9, 10; 2:12; 4:1-3; II Thess. 3:10)" (William Hendriksen, *Thessalonians, Timothy and Titus*, NTC, 8).

v. 13 **you heard from us** See 2:1-12; cf., Ac 17:1-9.

v. 13 **at work** "Paul is fond of this verb is at work (*energeo*). He uses it again and again (Rom. 7:5; I Cor. 12:6, 11; II Cor. 1:6; 4:12; Gal. 2:8 twice; 3:5; 5:6; Eph. 1:11, 20; 2:2; 3:20; Phil. 2:13 twice; Col. 1:29; I Thess. 2:13; II Thess. 2:7). Of the twenty-one instances in which this verb occurs in the N.T., no less than eighteen are to be found in Paul" (Hendriksen, 70). God's gospel message and more broadly, God's word, is always doing something in the life of one who believes.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

I remember the day I got my first Bible. At 26 years old I was like a kid in a candy store. The excitement of shopping for and selecting a Bible brought an unspeakable and overwhelming joy that threw me to my knees with tears of praise. I couldn't wait to devour every single word on every single page. I never had a Bible and the fact that I was the new owner of my very own study Bible was huge. That particular Bible is like an old friend to me. Genesis has fallen out and there's duct tape keeping the binding together, but I love that Bible more than any other. There are over 20 years of study and sermon notes, not to mention dated prayers for friends, family members, and myself. When I really need to get into God's word, that's the Bible I go to. One of the greatest teachings we can pass to our kids is a reverence for the true, holy word of God. Today the Bible is accessible to us in hundreds of translations and languages quite literally at our fingertips. Help your kids understand the Bible isn't just an app, but God's love letter to His people. It helps us know and follow God. It's our trustworthy guide for wisdom and life decisions. It's a wealth of information and encouragement. Open your Bible as a family this week. I'm praying this is a sweet time of devotion and discovery for your whole family.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read 1Th 2:13

1. Why did Paul thank God?
2. What did people receive?
3. Who did they hear the message from?

What Do You Think

How is the message of God at work in believers?

What R U Going To Do

Make an effort to read your Bible every day this week. Pray and ask God to teach you through His word this week.

Core Comp

Authority of the Bible – I believe the Bible is God's book that tells me what to believe and do.

Memory Verse

Colossians 3:12 – *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you Belong, Become, and go Beyond as follower of Jesus Christ through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.