



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V25 N7 February 12, 2023

NOT HOME YET

“Good Medicine”

1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

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.

“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.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17



How are we to view the gospel?

The preaching of the gospel had a lasting impact on the Thessalonians. Luke tells his readers that Paul spent three Sabbath days reasoning with the Jews in their synagogue (Ac 17:2). His message to them undoubtedly debunked the notion among them that Jesus could not be the Messiah because he had suffered and had died at the hands of the Romans, after being rejected by their own Jewish leaders. Luke says Paul “reasoned with them” *from the Old Testament Scriptures* “explaining and proving that Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead” (vv. 2-3). Perhaps his message included a reference to the resurrection, and the fact he, like the other apostles, had seen the risen Jesus (2:32; cf. 9:3-6). Paul’s argument echoes the argument of Peter on the day of Pentecost (see Ac 2:22-36). Commenting on the words of David in Psalm 16:8-11, Peter tells 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” (vv. 30-32). Clearly, David understood that Messiah would die and be raised from the dead.

After ministering to the Jews, Paul apparently ministered to Gentiles for an extended period of time, making Jason’s house his base of operations (cf. Titus Justice in Corinth, 18:6-7; see also Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, 13-17). Paul’s gospel *rooted in the written word of God* came “with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction” (1Th 1:5)—so much so that many of the Thessalonians believed, and in the midst of the persecution that followed, became a model church. The gospel Paul preached was impactful because it was the word of God, more specifically, the *verbal* word of God.

The Thessalonians recognized as much. Paul writes, “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” (1Th 2:13). Paul reiterates in this verse that the gospel is

the *verbal* word of God, which explains *why it is so impactful*. Other New Testament texts concur. Paul himself writes elsewhere: “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). And the author of the book of Hebrews writes: “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” (4:12). When the Thessalonians “accepted” the word of God, like good medicine, it went to work in their lives, empowering them to turn from idols and to endure harsh persecution.

Paul’s remarks regarding the power of the gospel evident in the Thessalonians’ response to it causes later readers of his letter to reflect on the word of God’s impact on their lives. You no doubt remember the impact hearing the gospel had on you and the impact of the word of God has had on your life since you first believed. I certainly do. I remember how the word of God, like good medicine, went to work in my life. I remember how the Spirit of God used the gospel message, which I heard repeatedly growing up, to convict me of my sin and to persuade me that Jesus was the Messiah, God’s Son, to whom God had given the authority to forgive the sins of everyone who believed in him based on his substitutionary death on a Roman cross. I remember praying to him for forgiveness, and I remember the calm assurance of forgiveness that came over me based on the testimony of God’s word. Since then, the written word of God has impacted every aspect of my life. It has dictated my worldview, determined my sense of right and wrong, shaped my values, given me purpose in life and hope in difficult times, and has influenced every decision I’ve made since. That’s not to say that I have always obeyed God’s word, but whether I did or did not, Scripture left its mark on me.



1 EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

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.* 14 *For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews* 15 *who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone* 16 *in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.*

Read in another translation

13 *For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.* 14 *For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews,* 15 *who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men,* 16 *hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost. (NASB)*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "also" in v. 13.
- Circle "continually" in v. 13.
- Bracket "word of God" (2x) in v. 13.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 13.
- Underline "received" and "accepted" in v. 13.
- Bracket "at work in you" in v. 13.
- Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 14.
- Bracket "in Christ Jesus" in v. 14.
- Circle "the Jews" in v. 14.
- Circle "they" in v. 15.
- Box "so that" indicating *result* in v. 16.
- Bracket "wrath of God" in v. 16.
- Circle "them" in v. 16.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Explain the significance of “also” in verse 13 (cf. 1:2).
2. To what exactly does “the word of God” (v. 13) refer?
3. The words “received” and “accepted” appear to be synonyms, but “accepted” has a different connotation. Explain (see note on v. 13).
4. Explain the *contrast* (“but”) in verse 13.
5. Explain how Paul knew that the word of God was at work in the Thessalonian believers.
6. Paul refers to God’s churches being “in Christ Jesus” (v. 14). Put what “in Christ Jesus” means in your own words.
7. Explain the *comparison* between the church at Thessalonica and the churches in Judea.
8. Is Paul indicting all Jews in general or specific Jews in particular in verse 15? Explain.
9. Paul says the wrath of God “has come” upon “them” (i.e., “the Jews,” v. 14). How so?
10. **Discussion:** *Compare* and *contrast* your reaction to hearing the gospel for the first time to that of the Thessalonians and go on to talk about how the word of God has been at work in your life since.

Commentary On The Text

The conversion of the Thessalonians led to their persecution by Jews in the community as well as by their own people, Gentiles. That persecution continued after Paul, Silas, and Timothy escaped to Berea (Ac 17:10), which added to their woes. One commentator writes: “Their feeling of isolation, heightened by opposition or suspicion from non-Christians, was exacerbated by Paul’s abrupt departure” (Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, 51). Paul senses as much so he sent Timothy to Thessalonica from Athens to assess their situation and to “encourage and strengthen” (1Th 3:2) them. Fortunately, Timothy returned with an encouraging report. Paul explains: “When I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain. But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought *good news about your faith and love*. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you *because of your faith*. For now we really live, since you are *standing firm in the Lord*” (3:5-8). Paul writes to them to confirm their salvation experience—no doubt it was being questioned by their persecutors—and to encourage them. The same author above writes: “As new converts, they were experiencing anguish, sorrow, and a sense of isolation. Their faith, having been strengthened by Timothy, was still in need of being supplemented. Paul’s pastoral concern is evident in what he says about them. It is God’s power that in the first instance brought them to faith (1:5) and continues to be at work in them (2:13-14). Their successful imitation of Paul (and the Lord!) led them to become examples to others in Macedonia and even Achaia, ones who had commented on their faith (1:7-9). Furthermore, even their suffering at the hands of their own countrymen was to be seen as an emulation of the Christians in Judea (2:14). These geographical references serve to underscore that, while they might be temporarily deprived of Paul’s presence, they nonetheless are not alone in the world but are members of a worldwide fellowship in which they enjoy exemplary standing” (Malherbe, 75-76).

In the same way that 2:1-12 develops the thought of 1:5, “You know how we lived among you for your sake,” 2:13-16 develops the thought of 1:6, “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.” In verses 13-16, Paul gives a second reason why he, Silas, and Timothy thanked God continually for the Thessalonians—the first reason being their faith *response* to the gospel (1:4), the second being their *acceptance* of the gospel message as the word of God and not the word of men (2:13). Paul uses *contrast* in to express his point. When they heard the message of the gospel proclaimed by the missionaries, they “accepted” it, that is, they “eagerly embraced” it—like one would welcome a friend—not as a *human* word but as a *divine* word, that is, a word *from* God. According to Paul, once the word of God is “accepted,” it goes to work in the life of those who believe. In the case of the Thessalonians, it transformed them into imitators of God’s churches in Judea. The term translated “churches” can refer to “assemblies” of various sorts. So Paul makes it clear that these are *Christian* assemblies by pointing out that they are made up of believers who are “in Christ,” that is, believers in spiritual union with Christ and with one another in the body of Christ by virtue of the work of the Holy Spirit (1Co 12:13). Put differently, these local assemblies are geographical expressions of the universal body of Christ.

Paul then uses *comparison* to express another point. Just as the Thessalonians had suffered from their own people, namely, Gentiles, so also had the Judean Christians suffered from their own people, namely, the Jews. This came as no surprise to Paul for they are the ones “who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out” (v. 15). This should not be taken as an antisemitic reference to all Jews. One commentator explains: “This is the only place in his inspired writings where Paul charged the Jews with the death of Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 2:8). Elsewhere in the New Testament it is the sins of all people that were responsible. Therefore Paul was just identifying a segment of humanity that was responsible. He was not blaming the Jews in some special sense for Jesus’ death. The Apostle John frequently used the term ‘the Jews’ to describe *those Jews who actively opposed the Lord and the gospel* (cf. John 5:18; 7:1; 18:14, 31; cf. 11:45, 54)” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 1 Thessalonians,” 2023 ed., 30, italics added, plano-biblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/1thessalonians.pdf). Those Jews oppose the Lord and the gospel are displeasing to God and enemies of everyone, for they hinder any effort to bring salvation to people through faith in Jesus. They follow in the footsteps of their forebears, and thereby make God’s judgment inevitable.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 13 *also* See 1:2-3. Lit., “For this reason” (ESV) refers *forward* to a second reason that he is about to state; cf. “And there is another reason why we always give thanks to God” (GNT). “This section of the letter begins with the second thanksgiving in a series of three (1:2-5; 2:13; 3:9-13) that dominate the tone of the first three chapters” (D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, NAC, 85-86).

v. 13 *continually* “Without ceasing they [i.e., Paul, Silas, and Timothy] thank God for the manner in which the Thessalonians have accepted his message and for the influence which this word of God has exerted upon their lives. In other words, we have here [i.e., 2:13-16] a further elucidation and amplification of 1:6, just as 2:1-12 is an expatiation of the thought begun in 1:5” (William Hendriksen, *Exposition of 1 and 2 Thessalonians: Commentary on 1 Thessalonians*, NTC, 69).

v. 13 *word of God* I.e., the gospel message Paul, Silas, and Timothy preached. “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). “It must be taken as a subjective genitive, ‘the word from God,’ ‘the word originating with God,’ and not as objective, ‘the word which tells of God,’ ‘the word about God’” (Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, 87).

v. 13 *received, accepted* “The prayer of thanks not only referred to an objective reception (*paralabontes*, ‘[having] received’), but also a subjective acceptance (*edexasthe*, ‘you accepted’). The latter, a wholehearted welcome, indicated their high estimate of God’s word (Ellicott, p. 27; Lightfoot, p. 30, France, p. 107)” (Robert L. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, 256-57). “While [*paralabontes*] indicates that the message was delivered to them, [*edexasthe*] indicates their own initiative in eagerly embracing it” (F. F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 45, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 45).

v. 13 *at work in you* “Once received, the Word of God becomes an active power operating continually in the believer’s life. When it is at work in those ‘who believe,’ there is a change in behavior and constant fruitfulness” (Thomas, 257). “The word of human beings, however wise in substance or eloquent in expression, cannot produce spiritual life: this is the prerogative of the work of God, which works effectually [*energeitai*] in believers. Like the Corinthians a few

weeks later, the Thessalonians had proved that ‘the word of the cross . . . is the power of God’ (I Cor 1:18)” (Bruce, 45).

v. 14 *in Jesus Christ* “The concept of being in Christ, which appears over 160 times in Paul’s writings, was one of the most dominant themes in Paul’s thinking and theology, if not the most dominant” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 1 Thessalonians,” 2023 ed., 29, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/1thessalonians.pdf). It connotes being “in spiritual union” with Christ and with others in the body of Christ who are also in spiritual union with him (1Co 12:13; Gal 3:26-28; see James S. Stuart, *A Man in Christ*).

v. 14 *the Jews* There is an implied comparison between the Thessalonian Christians and Judean Christians who both suffered from their own people—in the first case, Gentiles and in the second, Jews. “The expression [‘your own countrymen’] may be in part geographical and include Thessalonian Jews, but it points to a large Gentile element in the opposition. We are probably not far wrong in seeing the opposition as rooted in the hostility of the Jews. But the Greeks were so stirred up by them that they took action on their own account. Incidentally the expression reveals that the church was predominately Gentile” (Morris, 89).

vv. 15, 16 *they, them* I.e., the Jews.

v. 15 *wrath of God has come* “Indeed, so sure is their punishment, that he uses the aorist tense . . . The use of this tense does not refer to the imminence of the punishment. It refers rather to its certainty” (Morris, 92). “It was only a matter of time before God would pour out His wrath in judgment on these enemies of the gospel. This may refer to the eternal judgment that will come on all unbelievers (John 3:36). Or it may refer to the present spiritual blindness with which God has judged the Jews as a whole because of their rejection of Christ (Rom. 11:25). Or it could refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, which was not far off. In view of the eschatological emphasis of the letter, Paul may have been alluding to the judgment coming on Jewish unbelievers during the Tribulation, the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer 30:7)” (Constable, “Notes on 1 Thessalonians,” 30-31).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

When you read the Bible or hear it preached, accept it for what it truly is, namely, the word of God and not the word of men.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Usually, when we consider being a spiritual model for our kids, we think of being the best of the best. My kids need to see me regularly read the Bible, memorize scripture, pray, worship, live in community, tithe, practice humility, joy, patience, love, kindness, etc., etc. Whew! How can I model perfection when I'm struggling in so many areas? Our kids absolutely need to see us seeking the Lord and growing in His likeness but there's another facet of modeling growth that we sometimes try to hide from our kids. How often do you model perseverance through difficulty with your kids? For example, you're having a rough time with a new boss and are thinking of leaving your job. Do you invite your child to pray for you and your boss (without the details, of course)? You know you struggle with patience and it's evident to everyone in the house. Do you ask your kids to pray for you and invite them to call you out? You have an opportunity to play in a Wednesday night kickball league but that means no one goes to church. Do you share your decision making? You and your spouse are having a disagreement. Do they see how you lovingly and peaceably work things out? How will your kids know to pray for their enemy, work on a character trait, choose Christ or peacefully resolve conflict if they aren't watching you model these challenges? Sanctification is a lifelong journey that ends only when you see Christ face-to-face. As you daily model godly character, invite your kids to walk with you in your struggle as well. We're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

1. Why does Paul thank God?
2. How did the Thessalonian church imitate the Judean church?
3. How did the Jews sin against God?

What Do You Think?

How do people today try to prevent the message of Jesus from spreading?

What Do You Do?

Choose one fruit of the Spirit to work on this week and remember actions speak louder than words. Model godly behavior by opening the door for others, waiting your turn, or being a good listener.

CORE COMPETENCY: Authority of the Bible

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

MEMORY VERSE: Matthew 5:16

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week's verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

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.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

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

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.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

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

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

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

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

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

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.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

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.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

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

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

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

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

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

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

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

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

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

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.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him 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.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

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

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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BIBLE CHURCH**

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