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1 THESSALONIANS 2:13-16

Today, as we continue our study of the **Book of 1 Thessalonians**, we're going to look at the Word of God...and we're also going to see two groups of people...

one group **who loves God's Word**
and one group **who hates God's Word**.

First of all, I want us to look at the precious Word of God...so please take the precious Word of God and turn to **1 Thessalonians 2**.

1 Thessalonians 2:13...

We could spend the entire lesson time on this one verse. We won't do that but I do want you to see several things about God's precious Word...

1) Its Origin

Where does the Word of God come from? Paul said,
"when you received from us the word of God's message,
you accepted it **not as the word of men...**"

First, Paul tells us what it **isn't**...Paul says it's not the word of men. Turn with me to **Galatians 6:8-12**...

Paul is telling the Galatians that the word he brought to them didn't come from men. He says he didn't receive it from men, nor was he taught it by men.

Paul didn't go to seminary to get the Word from human professors.
Paul didn't sit down with great philosophers to get the Word.
Paul didn't go to class with the rabbis to get the Word.

Men have written some wonderful novels and history books and textbooks and "how to" books...but **this** Book did not come from men.

So, we see from **1 Thessalonians 2:13** that the Word did not come from men, but we also see from this verse that the Word **did come by God**. Twice Paul refers to it as the Word of God...
"the word of God's message..." "the word of God..."

Galatians 1:12 tells us he received it by revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul spent three years in Arabia being taught by the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 3:16 tells us **"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..."**

This expression "inspiration of God" literally translates as **"God breathed."** He just breathed out His Word. How? How did God breathe out His Word?

Well, Peter tells us in **2 Peter 1:20** that Scripture is not of any private interpretation, but holy men **moved by the Holy Spirit spoke for God**.

God chose holy men...men He had set apart for this purpose and then the Holy Spirit moved on the hearts of these holy men and inspired them to write word for word the Word of God.

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Now, I don't believe all these men fully understood all the details of what they were writing about, do you?

I mean, I don't believe Isaiah, for instance, fully understood when he spoke the Messiah's being wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities that Jesus would be born of a virgin and live a sinless life and preach and teach for three and a half years and heal the sick and make the lame walk and the blind see and the dumb speak and raise the dead and then die on a cruel Cross.

I don't believe Daniel understood all about the things God revealed to him about the things to come in the end times.

What *I'm saying is this...even though we call Isaiah the author of the **Book of Isaiah** and even though we call Daniel the author of the **Book of Daniel**, and even though we call Paul the author of **1 Thessalonians...***

We need to understand that God is the Author of all these books!
Paul and Daniel and Isaiah and Amos and Joel and Zechariah are just men God chose to use in writing the words He breathed out!!!

And the significance of knowing God is the Author of Scripture is profound!

- First of all when you know God is the Author of Scripture, ***you know for certain it is true...***

You don't have to wonder when you read the Bible if somebody just sat around and made all this up. You know you can trust it. It says what it means and it means what it says. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said in His high priestly prayer... ***"Thy word is truth."***

- Another thing we know when we know God is the Author of Scripture is that ***it satisfies...***

Job said, "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."

In ***Psalm 119*** the Word of God is referred to as honey... "Thy word is sweeter than honey."

The writer of the ***Book of Hebrews*** refers to God's Word as "milk and meat."

Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

God's Word is honey! God's Word is meat! God's Word is milk! God's Word is better than bread! God's Word satisfies!

- Not only is God's Word truth and satisfying...***It is also a blessing.***

God's Word blesses us with guidance: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

It not only lights each step we take, it lights the very path we walk on.

God's Word also blesses us with protection: "Thy word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against Thee."

God's Word also blesses us with joy: The psalmist said, "I rejoice at Thy word."

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And there are many more verses we could look at to show that God's Word blesses our lives!

- Also, when we know God is the Author of His Word, we know that it is eternal...**it is everlasting, it is eternal.**

1 Peter 1:24 says "the grass withers and the flower fades, but Word of our God remains forever."

Jesus said that not a jot nor a tittle...not the smallest stroke or letter...shall pass away from the Law...

But, not only do we want to think about the origin of God's Word, but I want us to think of

2) Our Obligation to God's Word

Verse 13...

What should we do with God's Word?

Well, **verse 13** tells us we should receive it. And this word means "**to receive as a matter of fact...as a matter of information.**"

But, there is a second word we need to look at in **verse 13**. If you are reading from KJV, this word is also "received", if you're reading NAS as I am, this word is "accepted" and it's "accepted" in the NIV, as well, and this word means "**to welcome with joy and delight; to receive in the heart.**"

See, we can hear with our ears all day long, but when we hear and accept with joy and delight with our hearts it's different, isn't it?

Let me ask you...

Why do you read your Bible? I mean, do you read just to get information? Do you read just to say you've read your "daily Bible reading?"

Or, do you read it and accept it with joy and delight into your heart? If we accept it we will love it! Paul is writing to a group of people who have done just this...they have accepted it into their hearts...not just their heads!

Well, one more thing...

We've briefly looked at the **origin of God's Word** and **our obligation to God's Word**...let's look very quickly at

3) The Operation of God's Word

"...which performs its **work** in you..."

Let me ask you...is God's Word working in you?

Is God's Word **building your faith**? Is it **teaching and training** you? Is it **guiding** you? Is it **counseling** you and **reviving** and **restoring** you? Is it **convicting** and **warning** you? Is it **rewarding** you? Is it **nourishing** you? Is it **judging** and **sanctifying** you? Is it **freeing** you? Is it **enriching** and **protecting** and **strengthening** and **making** you wise? Is it **rejoicing your heart** and is it **prospering** you? If we had the time, we could find Scriptures that would tell us that the Word of God does these things for us.

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Let me ask you to do something...

When you read a passage of Scripture, ask God,

“Lord, please give me something from this passage that will make a difference in my life today.”

I believe God longs to bless us and satisfy us with His Word.

I believe God longs to do a work in us through His Word.

I believe He longs for us not to just know it in our heads, but to love it deep down in our hearts!!!

We've seen that the Thessalonians did this...they both received the Word into their heads and accepted it with joy into their hearts. And I pray that everyone in this room has done that.

But not everyone has...and I want us to see those folks next.

In the time we have left, let's look at

Verses 14-16...

Look at **verse 16**. What was Paul talking about when he said he was hindered from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved? What was Paul hindered in speaking? Well, what does a person speak to another person in order to lead them to salvation? They speak the Gospel, don't they?

Paul was hindered in speaking of the Gospel!

What does the word gospel mean? It means "good news," doesn't it?

We live in a world full of bad news, don't we? This past Tuesday morning our country was rocked by a cowardly, evil act of terrorism. Many lives were lost and many hearts were broken.

Even before all that had happened last week, however our world was already full of bad news. My husband and I used to enjoy watching programs like DATELINE and PRIMETIME and 20/20. However, it seems as though all they ever have on is bad stories...bad news, depressing programs.

Wouldn't you think good news would be welcomed by everybody? Wouldn't you think that any good news of any kind would be gladly received and welcomed? But, strangely enough, that's not the case...

The Gospel is not good news **in general**. The Gospel is good news **in particular!** And it centers in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The particular good news of the Gospel is that

Jesus died for our sins...that He was buried...and that He was raised from the dead.

That's the Gospel! That's the good news of God! And let me tell you this...apart from Jesus Christ there is no good news.

I was interested this past week to hear Shimon Perez from Israel as he commented on the terrorist attack on our country.

He said that this kind of terrorism is against human decency, and it is against all that is good and he said something very interesting... He said, "It is against the Gospel." I don't know whether that was a slip of the tongue. Maybe he meant to say that it is against the Bible.

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For those of you who were here this past Wednesday night, you heard Bro. Bob say that the enemies of our country are not against us because we are **strong and powerful and wealthy**. He said they are against us because of our stand for the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the fact that our country stands for Judeo-Christian truth.

It's ironic to me that the good news of the Gospel has always been opposed. It has always had enemies. And throughout the Christian faith and even today, there is great opposition and hostility to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I want us to think first about

1) The Source of This Opposition

The Bible gives us two kinds of enemies of the gospel...two sources of opposition to the Gospel.

Verse 14...

The human enemy of the gospel that Paul was speaking of here were Greeks...the folks of Thessalonica, and the Jews.

Some of the opposition comes from radical terrorists from the Middle East. But they're not **all** from Iran and Iraq and Afghanistan. Some of the opposition comes from professors who sit in college classrooms. Some of them sit in seminary classrooms as theologians.

The Word of God...the Gospel...has enemies and you and I need to understand this...

Sometimes the enemies of the gospel are men. Sometimes they are women. Sometimes they have multiple degrees behind their names. Sometimes they wear clerical collars. Sometimes they stand behind pulpits.

But there is another kind of enemy and that enemy is found down in

Verse 18...

The greatest enemy is Satan himself. Satan does everything he can to hinder the Gospel. The reason Satan is opposed to the Gospel is because he hates the Gospel...in fact, he hates God. The devil's deep desire was to be like God and when God thwarted that, Satan has opposed everything and everyone who would do anything to further the Gospel. He doesn't want folks to come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's think about how

2) The Opposition Manifests Itself

Most of us have seen the manifestation of the **human** opposition...ridicule, mocking. Even within some of our own families some of us have had to put up with this, haven't we?

I doubt that any of **us** have undergone any physical persecution for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ...but it just may come. It certainly is going on in other parts of the world. Bro. Bob said Wednesday that he fully expected it to come in our country...maybe not in our lifetime, he said, but in the lives of our children and grandchildren.

By the way, look at our television programs today and you'll see another way that men oppose the gospel. Christians are portrayed as stupid, backward idiots and Christian morality is relegated to old ANDY GRIFFITH shows or LEAVE IT TO BEAVER or I LOVE LUCY.

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Immorality is the order of the day in the shows today, and I heard on Christian radio the other day that the new fall lineup will include explicit “adult language” or even more “adult” than they already have.

And folks, it's just going to get worse and worse if America doesn't wake up! Hearts are going to become more and more hardened and consciences are going to become more and more seared!

But, the opposition of Satan is much more subtle.

He comes at us many times with questions. For instance, when we try to witness to someone, he says, “Who do you think you are to tell someone else how he should live?” **Has this ever happened to you?**

Let me tell you another way that Satan opposes the gospel. He gets preachers to water the gospel down. He gets preachers to preach a social gospel. He gets preachers to tickle the ears of their congregations. He gets once conservative, Bible-believing churches to become liberal and/or “seeker-friendly.” He gets preachers to “go out in left field” and start emphasizing “experiences” over true doctrine.

Well, we've thought of the source of the opposition to the gospel and how the opposition manifests itself, let's think of

3) The Reason Behind the Opposition

We've already stated why Satan opposes the Gospel. He hates God and the things of God.

But why do men reject and oppose the Gospel? They **reject and oppose the gospel because it brings conviction to them.** They don't like being brought face to face with their sin. The gospel says, “All have sinned and come short of God's glory” and men don't want to hear that.

Not only do men reject the gospel because it reveals their sinfulness, they reject the gospel because **it confounds their intelligence.**

**Jesus died! Jesus was buried! So far...so good.
JESUS WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD!! Uh-oh!!**

Man cannot understand what he cannot explain, so he rejects it...and he considers it foolish.

Paul tells us God uses the foolish things to confound the wise. Paul tells us that natural man cannot understand the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned...and the gospel **confounds their intelligence.**

One more reason man rejects the gospel is that gospel **shames his “religion.”**

The gospel shows us that man was separated from God and the only way man can be reconciled to God is by God reaching down to man in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Religion is man's effort to reach up to God. Religion is **man's** idea of how he can stand before God. And try to share the gospel with a “religious” lost person and you'll quickly see how very hard it is to break down that barrier.

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We've looked at the **source** of the opposition, the **manifestation** of the opposition and the **reason** for the opposition...

Let's look at one last thing and we'll be through...

4) The Outcome of the Opposition

What's going to happen to those who oppose the gospel?

Verse 16...tells us that wrath will come upon them.

There's a very interesting phrase in **verse 16** that we might miss..."they always fill up the measure of their sins" or "they always pile up their sins to the maximum limit..."

What does this mean?

Apparently God has a divine measuring device. And there's a limit at which He stops dealing with an enemy of the gospel. God permits sin to run its course. That's true of nations and also individuals. The figure of speech the prophets used was that **the cup of iniquity must be filled up**. God is permitting the cup of iniquity of those who oppose His precious Gospel to be filled up.

Back in **Romans 2**, Paul says, "*men treasure up wrath in the day of wrath...*"

To reject God's offer of forgiveness and cling to one's sin is to accumulate more of God's wrath and a severer judgment.

The **Book of Revelation** tells us the dead will be judged **according to their works**, which tells us there are degrees of punishment in hell.

One day, they will reach the point of no return. One day God's wrath will come upon those who have come against the precious Word of God. Paul told us in the last verse of **chapter 1 of 1 Thessalonians** that you and I won't come under His wrath. We will be delivered from the wrath to come! Praise God! Hallelujah!!

Well, having said all of that...what does God want **our** response to be?

We're to pray for the enemies of the Gospel.
We're to witness to them and not be discouraged by them.
We're to follow Paul's example and be imitators of him.

Paul said, "They **killed the Lord Jesus**.
They **killed the prophets**.
They **persecuted us**.
They **drove us out**.
They **are not pleasing to God**.
They **are hostile to men**."

So what did Paul do? Did he say, "Well, the opposition is just too much for me...I quit"? No, he kept preaching the gospel!! He kept telling the story!! If they wouldn't let him tell it one place, he went to another place and told it there.

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WHY? Because the gospel had transformed Paul's life! Because God had called Paul to a task. God had commissioned Paul to go all over Greece and Macedonia and preach the Gospel and plant churches and win folks to Jesus and teach them true doctrine. And it didn't matter to Paul that he was persecuted, **Jesus had saved him and called him and he had to tell others!**

And that's exactly what **we** must do.

There are lost folks who need to be saved and there are homes that need to be restored and there are lives that need to be put back together.

And we must keep on learning the Word and loving the Word we learn and sharing the Word we love and not be discouraged by the enemies of the Gospel, no matter who they are or how they manifest themselves!

I hope you're learning some things that you can apply to your lives as we go through this book. Please study. There is much to learn from this letter of Paul's to the Thessalonians.