

God's Word and You

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[0 : 0 0] Thank you, Pastor Trent. It is a blessing to be able to be with you tonight and to be able to bring God's word. If you turn in your Bibles to the book of 1 Thessalonians, we are very grateful for all of God's blessings, and we're grateful for this church. When we moved back from the mission field, we moved back to keep serving and keep ministering, but we definitely were super amazed at how this church ministered to us in so many ways, and so not that we had low expectations, but we just weren't anticipating the love that you all would extend toward us, and so we're very grateful for that. So I don't know where you're at. You're probably trying to figure out where you're at right now because we're in the middle between Christmas and New Year's, and so it is kind of a weird time. We're heading back into another holiday, and that's exciting in many ways. If you're kind of task-oriented, it's a little bit annoying like me. Most of my friends, when they get around me, they say give them a headache. Pastor James in Northern Ireland says every time you come, I get a really big headache, so hopefully I don't do that to you, but one of the things we're thinking about right now, or at least I am, maybe you are as well, is you're kind of thinking, man, I really cannot believe how much I've eaten over the last few days. I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand because you probably couldn't reach up very high if you're in that boat, but this is not the time of year to be thinking about cutting back on eating, and it's kind of funny, isn't it, because you know, you lay out your menu, which has like enough calories. There's a whole week's calories to everybody in your family. You cook it all. You put it there, and you're like, well, the only people here is us. I guess we got to eat it, and as soon as it's done, you're like, man, I can't believe we ate so much. Even though you literally bought the food, made it all, you knew it was just going to be you there, and so maybe that's where we're at. Well, tonight's sermon is not about diet when it comes to food, okay, but it's going to be about your diet of God's

Word, okay, so we're relieved there because we have New Year's, and we don't want to feel too, you know, too puritanical. There's a big English word for you about our views of Christmas. I thought I'd just throw that in there, but we're thinking this is the last Thursday of the year, and I think as we approach a new year, perhaps you like this time of year. You like the planning. You like the preparing, but maybe you're thinking about the new year, and you're thinking about what are some of the goals that you have. Well, I hope in all of your thinking, and even if you have zero goals, and you're like, my goal is to have no goals, I hope you have one goal this year, and it'll be a goal to do with your relationship with God through his Word, and so that's the title of the message, God's Word and You. Terry and I just a couple weeks ago joined a gym. We've been there about four times in the last few months, so we're not too regular at it, despite, you know, how fit we might appear, but one of the things they said was you could come for an introductory session, and so we went to this session. I don't think he was quite prepared that we would come like in business casual. He expected maybe like shorts or something, but we were there business casual just to let him know we were not going to try anything, but the guy sat us down, and he was explaining about all this, but it was interesting because he said, really, he said, it's not just about coming to the gym. He said, really, if you came a couple times a week, you'd be fine. He said, but one of the keys is about what you eat, and he went into that. I was looking up on a website, and it talked about how one website said they suggest 80% of fitness is diet, and 20% is exercise. I don't know if that's a precise ratio, but basically the idea is you can't go to the gym every day and expect to see progress if all you're eating is pecan pie and

Twinkies, so you've got to have the right diet and the right exercise, and in the Christian life, you know, we really become what we eat spiritually or what we don't eat spiritually, and so we're going to talk about what the Bible teaches on this. In particular, we're going to look at three responses to God's Word, and then one result that comes from those correct responses, so let's look in our Bibles in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2. We're just going to read one verse, then we'll pray and look at this. The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 13, For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the Word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the Word of men, but as it is in truth the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. Let's pray together this evening. Heavenly Father,

I thank you for the opportunity to open your Word tonight. Thank you for this year that you've blessed us with. Thank you for the privilege that we have as a church to reflect on all of your many blessings.

God, thank you for our church. Thank you for a place where we can come and hear your Word taught and hear your Word preached on a regular basis. Thank you, God, that we have the opportunity to hold in our hands a copy of your Word. And Father, I pray that you will help us to elevate our view of your Word. Help us, Lord, to make it a highest priority in our lives, not just so that we can know more God, but so that we can worship more, so that we can know you more, and that we can become more and more like your Son, Jesus Christ, through it. God, I pray you'll bless our time together tonight in your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So 1 Thessalonians, of course, is a letter from Paul to the church at Thessalonica, and he is writing to them, and he is recalling what it was like when he went there. And interesting thing about this church is, if you look at the book of Acts, which gives the history, it seems that Paul was there only three weeks. If you just take exact, if you don't read anything else into it. And it's kind of amazing, because you think, how in the world did church get started in just three weeks? Maybe there was other time that we're not told about, but God did an incredible work in this church. In chapter 1, it talks about how that they were an example to all the other churches. And he talks about how that

[6 : 52] Paul would go places, and he would say, hey, did you hear about the church at Thessalonica? And he'd be like, yeah, we actually already heard about them, because other people were telling us about what happened there. And so it was just this incredible thing that happened there, and Paul is writing about that. And then in chapter 2, he reminds them about his ministry.

And he goes into, in verses 1 down to verse 12, all the different ways in which he and Silas and Timothy ministered there, and talks a lot about how they tried their very best.

Verses 1 and 2, he talks about how they were bold, even though there's persecution. He talked about how they had pure motives in verses 3 and 4, and they tried to be influenced only by what God said.

Verses 5 and 6, they say, we didn't use flattering words, or we weren't motivated by covetousness. We weren't worried about what other people thought about us in verse 6. We were gentle, verse 7. We were just, we were hard working. Verse 9, night and day, we labored. Verse number 12, he says, we labored so that you would walk worthy of God who hath called you into his kingdom and his glory. And so you read those verses and you think, wow, who could resist that type of ministry? Who could not respond well to that type of preaching? And sometimes we can get this idea that if we do things just right, it will always produce the right result. Then you remember, of course, Jesus did everything right and was crucified. So there is a responsibility on the messenger, but there's also responsibility on the listener. And so we come now to verse 13, and he begins by saying, for this cost, you know, they have given it everything they had to preach and to teach. And Paul says, for this cause, because of that, also thank we God without ceasing, because when you receive the word of God, which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. So because they poured so much into them, he said, then we were so thankful, and we just are constantly thanking God for how you responded, because they'd invested so much. And so we're going to focus on this response. So we see three responses in this passage. First one is found kind of the middle of the verse, and it says there, you received the word of God, which he heard of us. So if you want to put down, number one, we need to hear the word. We need to hear the word. This is a little different than read the word.

Do you remember Jesus saying very often, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear? I know you would never do this, but have you ever been in a conversation and you weren't paying attention?

[10:07] Have you ever been with someone in a conversation they weren't paying attention? All the wives are wanting to raise their hands. I know you would never do that. Or you've been in a conversation, you're like, this conversation is interesting, but that one over there seems even more interesting. So I'm going to multitask, which means you don't have a clue what this person's talking to you about. So it is very possible for words to be coming out of people's mouths and us have the ability to hear, but completely ignore it.

And so this is, this is why it's different than just reading it. He says, you heard the word that we preached. So the word which he heard of us before the word, but before the word can be heard, the word had to be proclaimed. I know it's kind of Satan the obvious, but they heard it from them. If you look back in your Bibles, I want to ask you to turn to Acts 17 real quick.

They'll probably put some of this up on the screen, but in Acts chapter 17 is the account of Paul going to Thessalonica. And in chapter 17, verse 1, it says, when they passed through Epiphallus and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where it was a synagogue of the Jews.

And Paul, after his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ.

So they had the blessing of having the word proclaimed. They heard who Jesus Christ was. In Romans chapter 10, it talks about those that call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, but then it works its way back, and it says that you can't call on someone you've not believed, you can't believe on someone you've not heard, and you can't hear without a preacher.

[11:59] So there has to be the proclamation of the word if we're going to hear the word. And that means we need to be where the word is being proclaimed. If I'm going to hear something, I have to be where it's being said, which means I've got to be in the book, or I've got to be places and around people who are talking about the word of God if I'm going to hear it.

I know this is very basic. You're not going to be that impressed with the training center after all this super basic stuff. But in reality, sometimes we are spending far too much time letting other things be proclaimed in our presence and not the word of God.

So I've got to be in church. I've got to be in a church where the Bible's preached. I've got to be in a small group where the Bible's taught. I've got to be around people who bring up the Bible in normal conversation.

And I've got to find ways to get the word of God proclaimed to me if I'm going to be able to hear it. But not only must the word be proclaimed, it must be heard.

So kind of getting back to our main point is we have to hear it. Before there was a printing press and before everyone had a copy of the Bible, some of you might remember those days, the reading of God's word and the hearing of God's word was especially vital.

[13 : 22] We're told in 1 Timothy 4, verse 13, Paul said, give attendance to reading. Imagine not being able to actually pick up a copy of the Bible. Imagine the way you heard the Bible was somebody read it.

You would say, hey, could you say that again? Could you say that again? Because you would want to hear God's word. A famine of God's word is worse than any other famine. Amos chapter 8, verse tells us, God said he would send a famine in the land and not a famine of bread or water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.

Think about all the things in our lives that have been impacted by something the Bible says. I mean, think about everything in our life that is impacted by something the Bible says.

If we didn't have those words, if we hadn't heard those words, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, where would we be? So we need to hear God's word and we need to respond to it.

I like Nehemiah chapter 8. It's a familiar couple verses, but there the Bible tells us in verses 1 to 3, the people gathered together in the street. And the Bible says that Ezra the scribe brought the book of the law of Moses before the congregation.

[14 : 43] And it says, all that could hear with understanding upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street, that was before the water gate, from the morning until midday before men and women and those that could understand.

And the ears, listen to this, of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. They stood all morning just to hear God's word.

Now, what is our attitude towards the word of God? Is that something we delight in hearing? Do we come to church saying, God, I want to hear from your word? I will say this, if you've ever been in a church where the Bible doesn't come out very much, it's pretty frustrating.

I'm not sure if you've been there, but you're kind of thinking, just give us the Bible. And it's wonderful when we hear from God's word. And if you ever could not have access to your Bible, just think how precious it would be if you thought, I can have a Bible.

So we need to hear the word of God. Some ideas for how to hear God's word kind of alluded to them, but get into your Bible every day. I used to guilt myself about my routine when it came to Bible reading.

[16 : 00] But the one thing I've learned about it is it's not so much what process I go through when I read it or how long I, it's just that I make a conscious effort to get some of God's word into my mind every day.

If I have an hour, praise God. If I have five minutes, if I have 10 minutes and it's on audio while I'm driving, I just need the word of God. Sometimes you have the time to do a whole spread of breakfast.

Sometimes you're just grabbing an apple or a Pop-Tart or whatever your diet choice is and going out the door. But we need to hear God's word.

But then secondly, we need to receive the word. So go back to our text. He says, you receive the word which you heard. We just had Christmas.

And most everybody, probably at Christmas, received all the gifts that were given. I don't know if, you know, you turn any down. That'd be kind of weird. You're like, ah, no, you're all right. You know, but we need to not just hear the word, but then we need to receive it.

[17:07] And receiving, just as hearing is really an active thing. People talk about active listening. Receiving is active. It is saying, I'm going to hear it, but then I'm going to let it in.

I'm going to accept it. I'm going, it implies a choice. Back in Acts chapter 17, we won't turn there for time's sake, but what happened was they preached about Jesus and then the Bible says, some believed and consorted with them.

But then some, in verse five, were moved with envy, gathered a crowd of lewd fellows of the Baser store. I love that phrase in the Bible. And created an uproar and tried to kick them out of the city.

So there was different responses, different receptions of the word of God. So we hear it, but then what do we do with it? Do we receive it?

Now, this is a great thing about this verse because notice how they received it. The Bible says here, they received it. And there's two, I believe, I always get these confused.

[18:12] I believe, are these, these are similes, aren't they? Because it's got as, like and as a simile. I think that's right. They received it. The Bible says, not as the word of men, but as the word of God, as it is in truth, the word of God.

We have to, we have to work on our attitude about God's word. Because I can get up in the morning, I can be like, man, I got a thousand things to do. And I just got to get through my Bible reading because I got to be a good example.

My kids are watching me, you know, and I want to be a good person today. So, all right, got that done, boom, move on to the next thing. And I can treat the Bible as just another book.

I can treat the Bible just as a part of my day. But what I really ought to be doing is I ought to be thinking, I have the opportunity to spend some time with the absolute most important person in the entire universe and to hear a message from him and everything else pales in comparison to my time with God.

And that changes everything. Because, you know, there's some phone calls, you're like, I have no idea who this is because it's unmarked. You're like, I don't know, let go to voicemail. There are some calls you're like, I got to take this one.

[19:33] There are some people that are really important and you just think, I want to hear from, when God says he has an appointment with us and when God wants to meet with us and God wants to speak to us, we ought to be saying, this is really important.

And so Paul says that God's word worked in you, but he says it's because you not only heard it, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.

If God could physically meet with people, if you could, you know, we can book an appointment with our pastors, but imagine you could go on the website and you could have coffee with Jesus.

You know, that would be pretty awesome. You can actually have coffee with Jesus. You can open the Bible and you can spend time with Jesus.

You can spend time with God. And so if we could just view it in that way, it would change our attitude towards us. So they heard it.

[20 : 33] They received it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God. God's word impacted them. So some ideas for how to receive the word.

Come humbly. Come humbly knowing you need the word. Don't think I got to go to church. Think I need to go to church. Don't think I got to read my Bible.

Think I need. If you think you don't need church or you think you don't need the Bible, that's really concerning. Yeah, I don't need to talk to God today. I'll check in with God in a few days.

I don't think any of us would be that dumb to say that. But we say that a lot, don't we? We act that way quite a bit when we think we don't need that time. So we need humility to say, yeah, I need to hear from God.

Invite God to speak to you. Pray for the services. Pray before you spend time in his word. See yourself as under the word. Think, I literally have no idea what I'm supposed to get out of 1 Chronicles, the first seven chapters and all the names, but I know I need it in some way.

[21 : 40] I've been in the minor prophets and sometimes I'm like, I'm not really sure what's going on here, but I know that I need it. I need to know that God is going to roar like a lion one day from the book of Amos chapter number one.

You know what that means? There's a really big God and he has got a plan and he is far bigger than other things that are roaring in my mind at that moment. We need all of it and we need to recognize we need it.

Submit to it as you would if you were in the very presence of God. Then third response to the word was that there was belief. He says here, and at the end of the verse, he says, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

So there's kind of a progression here. They proclaimed the word and the Thessalonians heard the word. Not only did they hear it, they received it.

And then the Bible says that it worked in them, but notice it worked in those that believed. This amazing thing about God is that God does not force us to do things.

[22 : 49] He could. And sometimes he intervenes in sovereign ways, but he will actually allow us to say no. He will actually allow us to reject the message.

And in the powerful word of God, in the powerful Holy Spirit can actually be limited. He wouldn't have to be limited, but he can be limited by our lack of belief and faith and obedience.

That's amazing. And the verse says here, it effectually worketh, but it worketh also in you that believe. Romans chapter 10, verse 17, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

The effectual working, it means that it is powerfully working. It's connected to the word of energizing or energy. There is an energy, there's a power that comes from God's word, but it's only activated when we have faith.

I'm thinking of John Anderson's message from several months ago. It's only activated when we believe what is there. So it effectually worketh in those that believe.

[24 : 04] I was thinking about, imagine someone from like 200 years ago comes back or travels forward in time, I guess. And this person is used to everything.

You got to walk everywhere, take a donkey or a horse or a chariot or something. You know, everything is much more difficult before you have cars, but they don't know that. They're like, I got a horse.

I mean, I'm doing like 15 miles a day. You know, I'm killing it here. And then you introduce them to your car. You know, you're like, now let me just show you something.

If you press this button, move this lever and push this with your foot, you can go across the prairie and be on the other side in half a day.

And they're going to look at you and they're going to probably start laughing. They're like, there's no way you're getting across the prairie by just pressing, moving and pushing. It's going to take a lot more effort than that.

[25 : 00] And sometimes in our life, we are stuck in thinking, I've got to try, I've got to make things happen. But the Bible tells us here that the effectual working, the effectual power of the word of God happens when we believe it.

So if we close it and we kind of have an attitude like, yeah, I know everything it says in there and I've tried all that. And honestly, I'm just not really sure. I'm just going to figure this out. And we're like the guy from 200 years ago who's just going to try to figure things out without the effectual working of God's word in our life.

But when we engage with it by faith and we say, you know what? I'm going to believe God. I'm going to trust God. I'm going to take a verse from the Bible and I'm just going to choose to act as if it is true from God and we just start living our life based upon it.

There is an energy. There is a power. There is that effectual working that happens when we believe. And so the final thing I want you to see in the passage, and this is something that more happens to us rather than something that we do, and that is we are changed by the word of God.

Because all these other ones here, receive, believe, are responses we have towards God's word, but then God's word does something to us. And that's the effectual working in us.

[26 : 27] And I want God's word to work in me. The same idea is portrayed in Philippians chapter 2 verse 13 which says, it's God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

And what happens is when we get into the word of God and we hear the word of God and we receive the word of God and we believe the word of God, then the word of God begins to work in us.

And it begins to change us. And it begins to fill us with faith. And it begins to renew our minds. And it begins to impact everything about our lives.

And people are like, what is going on? How are you getting through these difficulties? Or how do you have this boldness? Or all these different things.

You're like, I don't know. I just try to read my Bible every day and I just believe it. But that produces an impact. That produces some effectual working in our life.

[27 : 26] And it begins to change us. So as we face a new year, I want to ask you to consider and to commit to be where the word of God is being proclaimed.

Be where the word of God. Be in church. Be in small group. Be in your Bible. Be around other people. And study the Bible. And then commit to say, I'm going to hear. I'm not just going to read, but I'm going to hear.

I'm going to slow down and I'm going to hear, what is God saying? And then I'm going to receive it. I might not understand it all. I might not like it all. But I'm going to know that I need it all. And as I receive it, and as I respond to it in faith, it's going to begin to do some things to me and in me and through me, that is something that only God could do.

And I think there could be no greater resolution for a new year than to renew our commitments to God's word. Let's pray together this evening. Lord, we love you. And God, we're so thankful that you've given us your word.

Lord, God, we're so thankful that we are privileged to be able to read it, to hear it, and to respond to it. And I pray tonight you'll help all of us, Lord, to evaluate our relationship with you through your word and that we might have a renewed commitment to get where your word is being proclaimed, to be in your word, and to respond in faith to your word.

[28 : 51] Build us up, we pray. If there's someone here tonight who's not saved, God, I pray that you would save them this evening. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.