

I Thessalonians 2:13-16 The Confirmation of Salvation

We are starting a new section this morning - I Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 13 through 20. You remember that we are in these first three chapters, The Inspiration of the Believers in Thessalonica.

Chapter 1 was The Testimony of the Thessalonians. How they received the word in the midst of hardship and difficulty. And that is how Paul knew that they were saved, because in the midst of affliction they did not fall away.

In chapter 2, The Testimony of Paul, that we are in today. Chapter 2 verse 13 says, **On account of this.** He is making reference to everything that he has told us so far in chapter 2.

In verses 1 and 2 he talked about The Commission of Paul. He says, **For you yourselves know brothers our entrance to you, that it has not become empty; that is, for nothing. But also having suffered before and having been insulted according as you know in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak the gospel of God to you in much agony.** The word *conflict* is the word **ἀγών** (*agōn*), where we get our word *agony* from. So he says, "You know what happened when we went to Philippi before we came here, we suffered great affliction, great agony, but we came here and kept preaching. We did not quit because of the difficulty." That shows Paul's commission.

Then Paul's Commitment, verse 3, **For our encouragement was not out of error, neither of uncleanness, that is, impure motives, nor in deceit, but according as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, in this way we speak not as pleasing to men, but to God, the One proving our hearts.** The word *approved* and the word *proving* is the same Greek word. We have been approved by God, that is, we have been put to the test. It is the word used for testing of metals for their purity. So Paul says, "We have been tested by God and we were bold at the same time to speak the gospel of God in much agony." **But we did it not pleasing to men but to God, the One proving our hearts.** So Paul says, "I was proved." Put to the test by God in Philippi, who proves all of our hearts. He puts all of us through the test, puts all of us in situations where if Christ is not real, we would just quit, just give up, leave it behind, pick up something else.

The Conduct of Paul in verses 5 and 6. **For neither at any time did we become in a word of flattery, according as you know, nor in pretense of covetousness, that is, desiring other men's things, (God is witness), nor seeking glory from men, neither from you, nor from others, being able to be in weight, as apostles of Christ.** That is the literal translation; that means pushing our weight around as apostles of Christ. We did not do that either. We did not push our status around. We did not try to flatter people. We did not try to covet people's things. We did not want your possessions. We did not want to seek glory from men. And we didn't want to push our weight around.

But we became gentle. The care of Paul as a mother. **But we became gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother might warm her own children.** And so, he is talking about the

gentleness that is expressed in a nursing mother taking care of her children. **In this way longing for you**, the word *longing* is another word having to do with parenting, parents longing for their children. **We are pleased to give to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own souls, on account of that you have become beloved to us.** So he is talking about parenting here. We did not come in and just preach and teach. It was more than that. It was family. We nursed you like in the gentleness of a mother nursing her child and we longed for you as my own children.

For brothers, you remember our labor and toil, working night and day for not to burden any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. So he says just like a parent would go out and work to support their kids Paul did not come into town saying, "You need to support me." That is for the more mature people. But for these new babes in Christ, he worked during the daytime and he taught at nighttime in people's homes and in the temple there in Thessalonica. So that they would not have to stumble over the fact of support and the giving the money, just like a parent would.

I gave you the example last week of my own mother who raised me as a single mom. She worked during the day as an optometrist receptionist. And would come home, and she would cook dinner, and then she would go off to her night job working on a switchboard, a switchboard operator. And even though I was without a home life per se, the sacrifice that she made to make sure that I had a nice place to live, make sure that I had all the necessities that I needed for a young person. Sacrifice. The sacrifice that parents make for children. He says, "You remember I sacrificed for you night and day so I would not be a burden to you, so that money is not an issue."

Also, the Care of Paul as a Father. **You and God are witnesses, how each one of you as a father to his own children, encouraging you and consoling you and testifying to you. Testifying for you to walk worthily of God, the One calling you into his own kingdom and glory.** So encouraging you like a father. Consoling you, comforting you, and testifying to you to walk worthily of God. The word *worthily* means *balanced*. It is the name of the balance scales down in the marketplace. And how they would find the value of something is they would put something - the object you wanted to buy on one side of the balances, and you would put money on the other side until the balances were equal. When the balances were equal that is what the object was worth. Its worth by its weight. So he says, **To walk worthily of God.** If you belong to the Lord walk a walk that is worthy of that, equal to that. That is what I testify to you and encourage you as a father.

Then we have verses 13 through 16 for today, The Confirmation of Salvation. **On account of this also**, so in addition to everything I just told you here in this chapter, **we ourselves give thanks to God without ceasing.** This is the second time he is giving thanks to God. Back in chapter 1 verse 2 was the first time he said *we give thanks*. He is now giving thanks again *without ceasing*, it does not mean that he never stops. It means that it does not fade out - he is always thankful for them.

Because having received the word of hearing of God from us - notice the literal translation, I kept it in the literal. **Because having received the word of hearing of God from us, you accepted it not as a word of men, but according as it is truly the word of God.** It is

called *the word of hearing* both here and in Hebrews chapter 4 verse 2 that we will take in a moment. So he is actually tagging, and describing, and modifying the Word of God. It is the Word of hearing. He has ordained it to be that way as far as our approach to the word. It is the Word of hearing. Believers are to gather together and hear the Word of God. It is God's Spirit by faith and persuasion among the believers as God's Word is heard.

Paul also said in Romans chapter 10 verse 17, **Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.** It is God's ordained plan that people hear His Word taught and preached and that in hearing faith would come. There is another element in there - the faith would come and minister to the hearts of the people. That is what the ministry is, faith. Faith would come.

We can also listen to the Word of God and not hear it. We can audibly listen to the Word of God being taught and preached and still not hear it. That is what happened back in Hebrews chapter 4 verse 2. Without faith hearing God's word is just listening. But Hebrews 4:2 says, **For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them.** *To them* being the Jews wandering in the wilderness. **But the Word which they heard** - interesting the literal translation is the same set up as in I Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 13 - **but the Word of hearing did not profit them it not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.**

So they heard it. They listened. They audibly heard the gospel being preached but they did not have a heart for the Lord. There was no ministry there for them. It has to be faith and the word. But it is God's ordained way to preach the word and teach the word.

Even the blessing the Scriptures on the public reading and teaching the Scriptures. In Revelation chapter 1 verse 3 it says, **Blessed is the one who reads and the ones who hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written in it, for the time is near.** So there is a blessing pronounced upon the person who reads. Interesting the word *reads* in Revelation chapter 1 verse 3 means public reading of Scripture. Not just sit down on your own and read it, but the person who reads the Scriptures publicly and those who hear the words are blessed.

So we have to understand that it is not just listening to the Scriptures, or listening to Bible studies, or listening to the Bible. Some of the false ministries that are out there, some of the false teachings that are out there, all use the Scriptures. That does not mean that the Scriptures are blessed or that it is by faith. It is just Scripture with no faith, no ministry of God's Spirit there. So as we study the Scripture we understand it is God's designed plan for His people to hear the Word. His Spirit takes His Word and persuades and influences and ministers to His people through the hearing of the Word. That is His design. That is the way God has designed it, the way it is designed to be.

We are giving thanks because having received the Word of hearing of God from us, you accepted it not as a word of men but according as it truly is the Word of God. So you accepted it. You welcomed it, not as the word of men. Even though men were the vessels, human beings were the vessels, it came from us, but you accepted it, welcomed it for what it is, that is the Word of God.

Which also is being energized in you. Notice the word *work effectively* is the word *energized*, ἐνεργέω (energeō) is the Greek word. **Which also is being energized in you, the ones believing.** Two things as far as the technical language about this.

The word *energized* is in the present tense verb form, which means it is constantly energizing. And not just anybody, but it is to the ones who are believing. It is interesting the word *believing* is a present participle, again showing continuous action. It is not that once they did believe and now they do not. You cannot believe and not believe. Once you have been born of the Spirit of God you belong to Christ. It is forever. It is for eternity. So the people who are being energized are the believers. They are energized from the Word of God, the Word of hearing. So that when they hear the word the Holy Spirit takes that and energizes it and by faith applies it to people's lives. But everyone is energized by some influence. Every person is energized by some influence. Even nonbelievers are energized by a spiritual influence, it is just not Christ.

In Ephesians chapter 2 verse 1 through 3, Paul said, **And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.** So he is talking to believers now. **In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince and power of the air, the spirit that now works -** and there is our word *energy* again. **The spirit that now energizes in the sons of the disobedience. Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature children of wrath just as the others.** So before we were saved, before Christ came to live within, before we were born of the Spirit of God, we were energized by Satan to fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind. That is what he does. He appeals to the flesh and whatever a person's mind wants Satan energizes the person to go after it, to go for it. Even the ideas itself, the lusts of the flesh. So once a person is saved then we are energized by Christ. He energizes us through the hearing of His Word. It is what the text tells us. The word of God is that powerful.

In Hebrews chapter 4 verse 12 it says, **For the word of God is living and energizing,** there is our word again, **and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and motivations of the heart.** The Word of God goes so deep it brings conviction. It is a critic. A *discerner* (that is the word for *critic*) **of the thoughts and motivations of the heart** just by being around the Word. It is a dangerous thing to be around the Word, because it convicts. Many people look for places where there is no conviction, where you feel good when you leave, but there are times for that.

But God has a purpose for sending His word. In Isaiah chapter 55 verse 11 God says, **So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth: it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.** So God's word will always accomplish its purpose for sending it.

The importance of hearing the word for spiritual growth. It is important to understand. In Hebrews chapter 5 verses 11 through 14 it talks about the writer of Hebrews ministering to the Jewish people about the priesthood of Melchizedek. He was explaining the priesthood of

Melchizedek to them but he realized that while he was teaching them, they did not understand. They were dull of hearing **Of whom**, that is Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:11). **Of whom, Melchizedek, we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.** There is our word *become*. Very important. They were not dull of hearing before. They had become dull of hearing, we will see in a moment, because they have left off from the Word. Hearing the Word exercises the senses.

For though by this the time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk, and not solid food. And again, you have *become* in a need. You used to be feeding on solid food but now you are feeding on milk because you have become dull of hearing, you have left off from the Word. **For everyone who partakes of milk is inexperienced in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are mature that is those who by reason of use (that is the Scriptures) by reason of use of the word of God have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.** The word *exercise* is the word **γυμνάζω** (*gumnadzō*) where we get our word *gymnasium* from. That is in Hebrews chapter 5 verse 14. So those who are mature feed on solid food, not milk. They are mature because of the use, they have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil. So by hearing the word of God a person becomes sensitive to spiritual things, especially to the things of Christ.

Interesting that the Scriptures use athletic terms throughout the Scriptures to be an example of spiritual maturity and spiritual growth. It is not measured by numbers of years that one is a Christian. It is measured by - in fact the word *mature* and some of these other texts make reference to plant growth, the maturity of a plant in its growth, in its development. So it is making reference to maturity based on development. Is you can know the Lord for ten, twenty, thirty years and become able to eat solid food, able to understand what the Scripture says, be very solid in respect to the Scriptures, but then leave off from the Word. You leave off from the Word, you become dull of hearing, you lapse back into babyhood, which is a tragic thing to have happen. So that is the importance of hearing the Word of God. It is called *the word of hearing of God*.

He goes on to say in verse 14 of our text, **For brothers, you yourselves became imitators of the assemblies of God the ones being in Judea in Christ Jesus, because you yourself also suffered these things by your own countrymen, according as they did by the Jews.** So you became. Whenever he uses that phrase *became*, he is making reference to something that they were not normally, but they became that by the Spirit of God. You yourselves became imitators of the assemblies of God. *Assemblies* is the literal translation for the word *church*, the churches of God.

Imitators - we have studied this word before. It comes from the word **μίμηται** (*mimētai*) where we get our English word *mimic* or *mime* from. And it is used for the actors who would act out plays on stage in front of people. And they would put on costumes, and they would put on masks, and they would act it out without speaking a word. Sometimes it would be multiple actors, sometimes one actor would play all the roles, all the parts. He would go behind the screen, put a different mask on, and come out and do his different expression. And that is what this word *imitator* means: expression. You have become the expression of all the churches

of God. Paul said in I Corinthians chapter 11 verse 1, "Become mimics (imitators) of me as I also am of Christ." So let the expression of my life be the same as the expression of Christ in your life.

I think it is kind of interesting and most people think the apostle Paul is way up there in status. He is talking about things we can never become, or never be like. But the reality of it is Paul is always sharing what is the normal Christian life. He presents himself as living the normal Christian life, which other people are to mimic, are to allow the expression of Christ in them to be the same as the expression of Christ in Paul. Paul had a different ministry. He was an apostle and wrote most of the New Testament, but he is ministering to people who have the same Jesus Christ in them as in himself. And he says, "You see the expression of Christ in me? Let that be the expression of Christ in you."

But you yourselves became imitators of the assemblies of God the ones being in Judea in Christ Jesus: because you yourself also suffered these things by your own countrymen, according as they did also abide by the Jews. So these are the ones being in Judea, the churches that are in Judea. That is a geographical location, physical location where the Jews are. And who are in Christ Jesus, but you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as also they also did by the Jews. So you suffered the same suffering, just different people, and became the same expression. The same expression given to Christ by the world, the same expression given to these in Thessalonica, the same expression given to those who were believing Jews in Judea.

These Jews the ones also having killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and having persecuted us; and not pleasing to God, and opposing to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles in order that they might be saved, to the filling up of their own sins always: and the wrath came upon them unto the end. So wrath came upon them. Interesting. I kept the literal translation in there because it is a past tense verb. It already came. It is still there and it will be to the end upon those who persecute God's people from following Christ and from the ministry of Christ, like Paul did.

Next week we will get more into the persecutions of Paul. I find it a fascinating study, where Paul said, "I know you are saved because you are suffering the same sufferings we are." So he says, "You have the same expression of Christ. You have the same sufferings coming upon you, and it is all because you heard the Word of hearing of God from us and you accepted it as being the Word of God not the word of men." This Word of God, which is energizing in the ones who are believing.

Let's close with prayer.