

Theme: God's holy people receive the Gospel as the Word of God rather than a human teaching, but those who reject it remain under God's wrath.

I. Intro - My Conversion & the Word of God

- A. This past week AfterHours I talked about my conversion
- B. One of the major changes - I hungered for God's Word
- C. Suddenly Gospel, Scripture, teachings filled my mind
- D. This is the effect of being called by God into His people
- E. The Thessalonians had a similar experience

II. A Holy Response to the Word of God

A. The Thessalonians 'received' God's Word

And we also thank God constantly for this, 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. 1 Thessalonians 2:13

- 1. The Thessalonians received the Word - not reject it
- 2. Evidence to Paul that they had been born again
For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5
 - a. Saw God's Hand as Spirit & Word worked powerfully
 - b. This is seen as the Thessalonians receive the Word
- B. Thessalonians accepted Gospel preaching as God's Word

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- 1. Paul was not talking about OT Scripture directly
- 2. He was speaking of their preaching of the Word
- 3. They received the apostolic words as God's words
- 4. This is stressed in the Reformation 2nd Helvetic Confession , Chapter 1
"THE PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD IS THE WORD OF GOD. Wherefore when this Word of God is now preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very Word of God is proclaimed, and received by the faithful; and that neither any other Word of God is to be invented nor is to be expected from heaven: and that now the Word itself which is preached is to be regarded, not the minister that preaches; for even if he be evil and a sinner, nevertheless the Word of God remains still true and good."
- 5. We are still called to test all preaching by Scripture
Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Acts 17:11 NIV
 - a. This contrasts Bereans and Thessalonians
 - b. There were two key differences
 - 1. Bereans eagerly received the preaching, Thessalonians did not

2. Bereans checked teaching against Scripture, the Thessalonians did not

6. Christians are called to eagerly receive the preached Word of God, and to examine the Scriptures to verify its truth.

C. The Word powerfully works in those receiving it by faith

And we also thank God constantly for this, 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.** 1 Thessalonians 2:13

1. The Word has a powerful effect on those who receive it in faith
2. This powerful effect does not stop with our justification, but includes the ongoing work of sanctification
3. The verbs 'work' and 'believe' are present tense - this is an ongoing work in those who moment by moment receive the Word in faith

D. God's holy people are those who eagerly receive God's Word in faith, and who are continually changed by that powerful, living Word.

III. An Unholy Response to the Word of God

A. Some rejected and opposed God's Word

For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, ¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind ¹⁶ by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last! 1 Thessalonians 2:14–16

1. Some persecuted Jewish & Gentile believers (v14)
2. Part of a pattern of rejecting God & His Word (v15)
 - a. Judean Jews had killed Jesus their Lord & Messiah!
 - b. They claimed to love and serve God - but killed Him!
 - c. This was the culmination of centuries of rejecting God, His Word, and His messengers
Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰ saying, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' ³¹ Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. Matthew 23:29–32
 1. Their fathers had rejected God, His, Word, His prophets - and had even killed the prophets
 2. The current generation would live down to this!
 3. They ultimately killed Jesus - God Himself!
 - d. They even killed the prophets Jesus sent out (v15)
 1. Prophets could refer to OT prophets
 2. But probably NT prophets
Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, ³⁵ so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. ³⁶ Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. Matthew 23:34–36
 - a) Paul seems to be alluding to this saying

- b) Jesus spoke of prophets they would kill and drive out
 - c) Not sure if prophets were linked with Jesus or 'us' in Greek - and drove out is same root word
 - d) This was a final chance - and they continued to reject God's Word
 - e. They drove out the apostles (v15)
 - 1. Could be Acts persecutions
 - 2. But probably unknown persecutions as in 2 Corinthians 11:22-25
3. All of this was displeasing to God (v15)
- a. The very people doing this thought they were serving God!
 - b. But they and their actions were displeasing to God
 - c. Religious zealots can be among the most displeasing people to God - and there is often less hope of their conversion for they think they know and serve God!
4. Opposed mankind by opposing the Gospel (v15-16)
- a. This was a common charge against Jews
 - b. Paul says this group does - by opposing the Gospel
 - c. They try to stop the only message that can save
 - d. Their opposition is actually trying to condemn people to hell!
 - e. There is no more hateful action you can do to your fellow humans than opposing God's Word of salvation

B. The outcome of rejecting God's Word - hardened in sin

For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, ¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind ¹⁶ by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—**so as always to fill up the measure of their sins**. But wrath has come upon them at last! 1 Thessalonians 2:14–16

- 1. They are filling their cup of sin to overflowing
- 2. Same phrase used of Amorites in Genesis 15:16 - but now of God's people Israel!
- 3. A consistent pattern of rejecting God and His Word hardens us in sin
- 4. One can not remain neutral to the Word of God - you either embrace it in faith or reject it and are hardened in your own sin
- 5. The same sun that softens the wax, hardens the clay. The same Word of God softens one in faith & love to God, and hardens another in sin.
- 6. This pattern is evidence of the wrath of God (v16)
 - a. Similar to Romans 1:18-32 - wrath of God seen in hardening in their sin after continued rejection of God's Word
 - b. This is the final Day of wrath breaking into the current time - and it is a fearful thing
 - c. Paul probably foresaw the destruction of Jerusalem from Jesus' words in Matthew 23-24 and current events

C. We should never think we can toy with the Word of God. We are either growing in faith and obedience or being hardened in sin - there is no neutral ground.

IV. Applying the Word

A. Am I actively believing and embracing God's Word?

1. We have such great access to God's Word
2. We have many translations, Bibles available in print and on our phones, it is easy to gather each Sunday
3. But it is possible to let this ease of access breed complacency - we can respond tomorrow, next week, next year
4. The Spirit calls us out of such complacency to a bold, active, consistent reception and application of God's Word to our lives
5. Have you ever responded to the Word of the Gospel in faith - looking to Christ alone as the one who can rescue you from the coming wrath? Do so today!
6. Noah warned them in words; and he preached to them. He warned them also in his actions. His building the ark, which took him so long a time, and in which he employed so many hands, was a standing warning to them. All the blows of the hammer and axe, during the progress of that building, were so many calls and warnings to the old world, to take care for their preservation from the approaching destruction. Every knock of the workmen was a knock of Jesus Christ at the door of their hearts: but they would not hearken. All these warnings, though repeated every day, and continued for so long a time, availed nothing. Now, is it not much so with you, as it was with them? How often have you been warned! How have you heard the warning knocks of the gospel, Sabbath after Sabbath, for these many years! Yet how have some of you no more regarded them than the inhabitants

of the old world regarded the noise of the workmen's tools in Noah's ark! (Jonathan Edwards, The Manner in Which the Salvation of the Soul is To Be Sought)

7. Am I positively responding to God's Word each Sunday?
8. Am I growing in obedience - or just knowledge?

B. The Table of the Lord - A Time of Recommitment

A Holy Response to the Word of God

1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

May 21, 2017

Communion

Acts 20:32

Teaching keywords: Word of God; gospel; salvation and deliverance; holiness; persecution; judgment

Now I commit you to God and the Word of His grace which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all the holy ones - those He has set apart for Himself. Acts 20:32

And we also thank God constantly for this, 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. ¹⁴ For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, ¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind ¹⁶ by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last!

1 Thessalonians 2:13–16