

## Lesson 3 – The Word: The Foundation of Revival

January 17, 2021

**Background Passage: I Thessalonians 2**

**Lesson Passage: I Thessalonians 2:1-13 (NKJV)**

**Background:** In Philippi, Paul and Silas had been beaten and severely flogged; they had been put in prison with their feet in stocks (Acts 16:22-24) and cruelly mistreated because they had rescued a slave girl in the Name of Jesus Christ. They had also been insulted by being arrested unjustly, stripped of their clothes, and treated like dangerous fugitives. Their Roman citizenship had been violated, and for this Paul demanded restitution (Acts 16:37). Paul would have to walk 100 miles to Thessalonica before finding adequate “fertile” soil to continue preaching the Gospel. In Thessalonica they again encountered “strong opposition”, a word that pictures an athlete’s struggle to gain first place in a race or contest. Paul’s conflict came from outward persecutions and dangers originated by his Jewish opponents (Philippians 1:30). In spite of it, however, Paul’s inner help from God produced a continuing proclamation of the Gospel.

**Introduction:** The Word of God is of supreme importance to the spiritual well-being of every believer; not merely as a collection of beautiful and heart-warming thoughts, but as the revelation of God’s program for the ages, and especially for us today, to be studied, understood and obeyed. As food and medicine, it must be wisely administered to the weak and ill. So must the Word be “rightly divided” to provide the necessary benefit to those who need spiritual restoration. How may we enjoy true spiritual revival? Can it be gained by more prayer or self-denial or confession of sin? No, these things are the products, not the results of true spiritual revival, which begins with God, not with man. In spiritual revival as in regeneration, the Spirit uses the Word. There you will find food and medicine which God has given to restore us to vigorous spiritual health. The understanding of God’s Word always revives His people spiritually (Nehemiah 8; Luke 24:32). If we desire to be spiritually revived and enjoy vigorous spiritual health; to walk worthy of the Lord; to be fruitful in every good work, and to increase in the knowledge of God, then we can be satisfied with nothing less than a clear understanding of His will and a thorough knowledge of “the mystery” as it is presented in His Word. The writers believe that the people will find grace, strength and hope in His Word. And that the Holy Spirit will be poured out beyond measure as the gospel is carried to the ends of the earth! As we grasp the vital and wonderful truths associated with His Word, the whole world will prove to be richer and more nourishing to us spiritually.

**Scripture Reference: I Thessalonians 2:1-13 (NKJV)**

*1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, 2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. 3 For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. 5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness— 6 nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. 7 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. 8 Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. 9 For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10 You*

are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; **11** just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, **12** so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. **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.

**Memory Verse:** “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”. I Thessalonians 2:13 (NASB)

**Topic Explored:** “*The Word: The Foundation of Revival*” It is a critical time in the world’s history and much is being said and written about revival. Many Christians are praying for revival; popular evangelists are doing their best to bring it about; leading periodicals, secular as well as religious, and even the daily newspapers are discussing it, generally using such phraseology as a “revival of religion” “a revival of religious feeling” or “a revival of religious faith.” In these days of spiritual decline may God give us an appetite for the Word! May it be our desire to know God’s Word so that we may obey it, for there is probably no joy like that which comes to the believer from the knowledge that he is in the will of God! This is why Paul wrote to Timothy to “hold fast the form of sound words. . .” (II Timothy 1:13). God’s Word is essential in revival and/or restoration. This week we will study the role of the Word in revival and how God’s Word can make a life-changing difference in us if we surrender ourselves in faith and obedience to its precepts and truths!

**Lesson Focus: I Thessalonians 2:1-13 (NKJV)**

**Verses 1-2** ~ The Apostle Paul had no worldly design in his preaching. His suffering was for a good cause and had only sharpened his holy resolution. He had met with opposition. A circumstance which would have deterred mere natural, unspiritual men from further preaching; however, the gospel of Christ was preached with power and conviction; with truth and without cleverness or deceit. The fear of man should never keep us from speaking out for Christ. The gospel is a powerful message, and the indwelling Holy Spirit will impart power to our words (2 Timothy 1:7).

**Verses 3-6** ~ Wrong motives can slip into our service for the Lord. Paul wrote to the believers at Thessalonica: “*You remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you*” (1 Thessalonians 2:9). He had the right to receive financial help from them, but he didn’t want to be accused of unworthy motives. What motivates us? Let’s learn from Paul’s example, remembering that God tests our hearts. The apostle Paul recognized the sin of insincere praise and was careful to avoid it. He wouldn’t stoop so low as to “doctor up” the facts just to gain the support of his listeners. Paul’s aim was to please God, not man. Yet he didn’t hesitate to express his approval when he could do it honestly. For example, he let the Thessalonians know how much he valued and loved them (1 Thessalonians 2:17-20). Paul was not against praise—just insincere praise. Are we so committed to pleasing God that we would never give false praise to gain the approval of others?

**Verse 7** ~ In raising their children, wise parents exercise their authority with lots of tender loving care. Paul and his co-workers, Silvanus and Timothy, were spiritual parents to God’s family in the Thessalonian church. The great encourager, the apostle Paul, described how he and

his associates treated the new believers in Thessalonica: *“We were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children”* (1Thessalonians 2:7). And he spoke of exhorting, comforting, and admonishing them “as a father does his own children” (1 Thessalonians 2:11). Like all Christian mothers and fathers, Paul desired that his spiritual children would grow up to reflect God’s glory. Bible commentator Albert Barnes wrote, *“Those who minister the gospel should be gentle, tender, and affectionate. . . . What is wrong we should indeed oppose—but it should be in the kindest manner toward those who do wrong.”* In other words, we are to hate the sin but love the sinner. That’s not easy, especially among those we know best. However, there is a need for special care of new Christians. Do you know a new Christian who needs encouragement and help? God’s Word is the foundation on which their lives can be rebuilt. Do you know someone who needs to be reminded/encouraged that God is a God of revival and restoration?

**Verse 8** ~ All of us have received a gift we can share with others. Although it might not be money, it’s something that has enhanced our lives. What has been given to you that you need to pass along in the Name of Christ? The gift of listening when someone needs to talk? Sharing in a Bible-study group where people learn to nourish themselves from the Word? Sending a thoughtful card to someone with a heavy heart? How can you use the Word to enhance another’s life?

**Verse 9** ~ Sometimes it’s good to compare our situation with that of others. This is especially true when we think we are too tired to put forth that extra effort in serving the Lord. Consider the apostle Paul, for example. He worked “night and day” at tentmaking to support himself so he could preach the gospel to the Thessalonians. Today, missionaries undergo hardships to evangelize the world. Busy mothers sacrifice to help in church programs and ministries. Of course, we must maintain a balance between work and rest. But when we put forth that extra effort for God, we will at times become very tired; but we can rest assured that God is pleased with our labor(s) of love.

**Verse 10, 12** ~ Exhorted is *“to call near.”* It is easy for (earthly) fathers to think that all that’s required of them is to bring home a paycheck. But children need their close encouragement. The word comforted is “to console.” Nothing is more valuable to a child than the time given by a father to listen and talk. Without constant relating, relationships turn cold. Christian Fathers challenge their children by affirming the truth of God’s Word as they live it out in front of them. And even in failings, they affirm what is right through the asking of forgiveness. How thankful we can be for fathers who help their children “walk worthy of God” (1 Thessalonians 2:12). Our (heavenly) Father stands before us with outstretched arms, encouraging us toward holiness, eager to catch us when we stumble. He picks us up when we fall. He is never discouraged with our progress, nor will He ever give up. The more difficult we find the process, the more care and kindness He expends.

**Verse 13** ~ Each day, you and I write the story of our lives by what we say and do. Are we using the great, but often neglected, wealth of the Bible? When Paul entered Thessalonica to spread the Gospel, he was spreading God’s Word of truth. Having experienced and witnessed the persecution that comes upon those who trust in God, Paul could have turned away from the task. He could have simply given in to the demands of the “terrorists” of his day. By doing so he could have saved those to whom he preached the consequences of taking a stand for God. Of course, to do so would not be possible, any more than we, even today, would surrender our faith to avoid conflict with evil. Even amidst the inevitable conflict with this world, the people of Thessalonica

received God's Word and recognized that it was truly from God and not simply another of the many philosophies debated in Greece and Macedonia at that time. God's Word is the only truth that brings Christianity into conflict with the world's philosophy. Paul complimented the faithfulness of the Thessalonians amid the persecution that their faith brought down on them. They were persecuted from all sides in conflict with Jewish religious leaders who wanted to destroy the Christian movement, and by the Greek philosophy that was so much a part of their culture, a philosophy that demanded tolerance and "open" minds. The Greeks saw Christianity as being intolerant and closed-minded when it declared that God's Word is truth.

This is no different from the conflict with our world views today. The outward call of God is by the gospel; and this is rendered effectual by the inward working of the Spirit. The belief of the truth brings the sinner to rely on Christ, and so to love and obey Him. It is sealed by the Holy Spirit upon his heart. We have no certain proof of anything having been delivered by the apostles more than what we find contained in the Holy Scriptures. Let us then stand fast in the doctrines taught by the apostles, and reject all additions, and vain traditions.

#### **Life Application/Let's Talk:**

- 1. How can we learn to draw hope, strength, assurance and light from the Word of God? How can we have a deeper experience with Him through coming to know Him as He is revealed in the Bible?**
- 2. How are the functions of the Word of God and the Spirit of God similar? (John 5:39; 16:14-15).**
- 3. What is the purpose of The Holy Spirit in Revival?**

**Closing Prayer:** *“Heavenly Father, start revival in us first. We are Your servants and we place ourselves in position to receive revival. Your words are life to us. Your revival brings life and nourishment, preservation and restoration. Thank You for sending Jesus to give us Your abundant life. We feed on Your Word as sheep feed in green pastures because Your Word is life to us. We pray this in the Name above all Names, Jesus Christ! Amen!*