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1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

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English Standard Version

“The Gospel Received”

This is the 3rd sermon in the series on 1 & 2 Thessalonians entitled,
“Life for the Long Haul.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

“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 God’s wrath has come upon them at last!”

Heavenly Father, we have come to Your Word again this morning and we find that we need to know about Your Word and how and why it’s so much more important than our own words. Father, in the confusion of so many voices telling us what is right and what is wrong, may we look to your word for truth. So Lord, once again open our eyes and ears to truly hear and understand and apply this Word to our lives. Do this for each of us, this morning, in His name, and for His glory, Amen.

INTRODUCTION: *There were Four Preachers*¹

Once there were four preachers who had a series of theological arguments, and three

¹ The Introduction is adapted from the email newsletter *Thought for the Day*, by Alan Smith, 3/5/02.

were always in agreement against the fourth. One day, the odd preacher out, after the usual "3 to 1, majority rules" statement that signified that he had lost again, decided to appeal to a higher authority.

"Oh, God!" he cried. "I know in my heart that I am right and they are wrong! Please give me a sign to prove it to them!"

It was a beautiful, sunny day. As soon as the preacher finished his prayer, a storm cloud moved across the sky above the four. It rumbled once and dissolved. "A sign from God! See, I'm right, I knew it!" But the other three disagreed, pointing out that storm clouds form on hot days.

So the preacher prayed again: "Oh, God, I need a bigger sign to show that I am right and they are wrong. So please, God, a bigger sign!" This time four storm clouds appeared, rushed toward each other to form one big cloud, and a bolt of lightning slammed into a tree on a nearby hill.

"I told you I was right!" cried the preacher, but his friends insisted that nothing had happened that could not be explained by natural causes.

The preacher was getting ready to ask for a **"very big" sign**, but just as he said, "Oh God...", the sky turned pitch black, the earth shook, and a deep, booming voice said, **"HEEEEEEEEE'S RIIGHT!"**

The preacher put his hands on his hips, turned to the other three, and said, "Well?"

"So," shrugged one of the other preachers, "now it's 3 to 2."

That goofy story illustrates a serious problem. And that's the problem of putting God's words on an equal level with man's words. But spiritual truth is not determined by taking a vote. In fact, even if 1,000 people agree with us, it makes no difference unless we agree with God. As Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, **John 17:17**, "*Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.*" That's why Paul was so determined that the Thessalonians know the source of his teaching. He says that at the beginning of our passage today, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "*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.*" And that's what today's passage is about ... the Word of God.

Paul starts by telling us about ...

v. 13: **RECEIVING THE WORD**²

It is well known that the most common New Testament word for preaching is *kerysso*, to act like a herald (*keryx*) and make a public proclamation. The verb occurs back in **1 Thessalonians 2:9**, "*For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you [ekeruxamen] the gospel of God.*" This idea of being a herald, preaching and proclaiming the gospel, is the concept that lies behind verse 13, "*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*

² The Exposition of the text are adapted from *The Gospel & The End of Time: The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians* by Dr. John R. W. Stott, pages 54-60; *The Communicator's Commentary: 1, 2 Thessalonians / 1, 2 Timothy / Titus* by Dr. Gary Demarest, pages 60-64; the sermon "What Does It Mean to Believe the Bible?" by Rev. Ray Pritchard, Calvary Memorial Church, Oak Park, IL, 9/8/96, www.keepbelieving.com; the sermon, "How to Receive the Word of Man as the Word of God" by Dr. John Piper, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN, 1/5/03, www.desiringGod.org; *The ESV Study Bible*, notes on 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Dr. Colin Nicholl.

as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.”

There is a deliberate interplay in this important statement between 'God', 'us' and 'you'. What you received (the technical term for receiving a tradition which is being handed on), namely what you heard *from us* (the apostle), you accepted as the word *of God*, which is effectively at work *in you*. The message came from God through the apostle to the Thessalonians and was changing them.

This is an unmistakable assertion by Paul **that the gospel he preached ... was the Word of God**. We're familiar with the claims of the Old Testament Prophets that they were heralds of the word of God, for they introduced their prophecies with the sayings like *“the word of the Lord came to me”* and they often ended them with ... *“Thus Sayeth the Lord.”*

And now here in verse 13 we have a comparable claim by a New Testament Apostle. Paul doesn't rebuke the Thessalonians for regarding his message too highly. On the contrary, he **commends** them for having recognized it as what it truly is — *the word of God* — and for having accepted it as such. More than that, he actually **thanks God constantly** that they have done so, and adds that the gospel authenticates its divine origin by its **transforming power** in their lives. This is a clear indication of Paul's apostolic authority. He knew who he was (an apostle of Christ) and he knew what his message was (the word of God). And now the Thessalonians knew these things as well.

Paul uses two words in verse 13 to explain what he means:

First, he says that you **received** the word of God. That's the hearing of the ear. It's **objective**. It's like signing a receipt at the post office so you can accept a package. Paul means that the Thessalonians listened intently to the message he preached because they knew it came from God. The words for *“received”* and *“accepted”* are not the same. They *“received”* the word of God means that it came to them in objective form. It was handed on to them like a tradition. Paul preached it objectively. It would have been the word of God whether they accepted it or not. There is an objective word of God.

Second, he says that you **accepted** it as the word of God. This word means to welcome a visitor into your home. This is the hearing of the heart. It's **subjective**. Paul says that his preaching was *“really”* the word of God and *“you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God.”* The word of man does not **become** the word of God because it is accepted as the word of God. We accept it because **it is** the word of God. The apostolic word really is the word of God, **objectively**, apart from our **subjective attitude** toward it.

That's a key difference because it's very possible to **listen** to preaching, but **not** really hear it, and **not** be changed by it. It's something else to welcome God's message into your heart and let it **transform your life**. The focus here is crucial. You heard the message from man but you recognized that it came from God. You heard from us (the human side) God's message (the divine side). So you responded not as if it were the opinion of man, but as God's word.

The word *“accepted”* means "welcome." We can see this use in **1 Corinthians 2:14**. Right after Paul says that he teaches in words taught by the Holy Spirit he adds, *“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”*

And that's why the debate over the nature of the Bible is so crucial. If it's only the word of man, then it is changeable, fickle and unreliable. But if the Bible's the word of God, then it is utterly and completely authoritative. If God has spoken in the Bible, then what He says has final claim on my life.

So the point of verse 13 is that there is a right way to accept or welcome the teachings of the Bible when we receive it. And the right way is to accept it for what it really is ... **the very word of God**. We should embrace it and welcome it as the word of God, **because it is the word of God**. It's God's truth and has God's authority. It's the rule for all other claims to truth and the rule over all other authority. We should embrace it that way.

And if it were only that easy. But Paul wants us to know that it's not always that easy ... that sometimes there's suffering and persecution when the church is ...

v. 14: RESPONDING TO THE 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,”

Genuine offspring bear the traits of their parents. The Judean churches were the first, indisputably authentic churches, and the mother churches of all those other churches planted by Paul. They established a standard by which all other churches might measure themselves. Like them, the Thessalonian Christians suffered persecution for Jesus.

If you believe the Bible, you're going to have some strong enemies. Here's the bad news. When Paul uses the word “countrymen” he uses a word that is absolutely unique. It's not found anywhere else in the New Testament. It means the people closest to you. If you decide to believe the Bible is the word of God, many people who are close to you will not share your faith at all. In our case, that usually means family and friends. In Paul's case, it meant his Jewish countrymen. But in both cases, we'll have to face the truth that we know people who will spend their lives ...

v. 14b-16: REJECTING THE WORD

“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 mankind¹⁶ 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 God's wrath has come upon them at last!”

Because I preach through the Bible in an expository manner, that is, I preach book-by-book, paragraph-by-paragraph, and verse-by-verse ... you can't skip anything. You have to preach on the really hard verses. You have to preach on those passages you would **never choose** to preach on. And **this** is one of those passages. These are some of the most disputed verses in the whole Bible, with some scholars arguing that they were added later on and shouldn't even be included. However, there's no manuscript evidence that they were added later.

Furthermore, the evidence that they weren't original is very scant and we simply can't use that as an excuse to skip over them, though I discovered that there are quite a number of preachers who've done just that.

John Stott deals with these verses the most directly and so much of what I'm about to say comes from him. It's going to take a little bit to get through this and do it justice, so please listen carefully, and don't jump to conclusions. These two verses, sometimes called ‘the Pauline polemic against the Jews’, have been described as ‘violent’, ‘vehement’, ‘vindictive’, ‘passionate’, ‘intemperate’, ‘bitter’ and ‘harsh.’ And so we must begin our evaluation of these verses by studying what Paul **actually** wrote and by setting it against the background of the most recent Jewish persecution which he had experienced.

Paul's statement about God's wrath could mean either that it ‘has fallen on them and they now experience it’, or that it ‘hangs over them and is just about to fall upon them.’ If the former is right, then Paul may be seeing the arrival of God's judgment in such events as the

unprecedented famine in Judea of AD 45–47 (which he mentions in Acts 11), and in the brutal massacre of Jews in the temple at Passover in AD 49 (which is described by the ancient historian Josephus), and in the same year the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by the emperor Claudius (which Paul mentions in Acts 18). Since 1 Thessalonians was probably written in AD 50, at the time these were all recent, vivid events.

The other translation seems to me more likely, however, namely that the wrath of God ‘hangs over them and is just about to fall upon them,’ though it has not yet engulfed them. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 was still twenty years away. If the tradition of such predictions of judgment was part of Paul’s thinking, then the Jews’ continuing rejection of the gospel would surely make him think this judgment to be imminent, which indeed it was.

Either way, Luke makes it clear in Acts 17 and 18 that it was Jewish opponents of the gospel who pursued Paul from Thessalonica to Berea and from Berea to Athens. Then after his arrival in Corinth (from which he wrote 1 Thessalonians) it was Jewish opposition which led him to take the drastic step of turning to the Gentiles.

Paul sees what happened to the missionaries in Thessalonica as the latest in a long series of examples of hostility to the word of God. The Thessalonians’ Gentile compatriots were stirred up against them by Jewish opponents of the gospel. We see that in **Acts 17:5-7**, “*But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.*”⁶ *And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also,”*⁷ *and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.”*

In his indictment of the Jews in these verses, he accuses them of five things, which remind us of Stephen’s speech before the Sanhedrin in Acts 7, at the end of which he said, **Acts 7:51-53**, “*You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.*”⁵² *Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered,*⁵³ *you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”* And of course, upon hearing this, they promptly stoned Stephen to death.

First, they had killed the Lord Jesus. To say such a thing today would be regarded as a reprehensible, anti-Semitic statement. And it’s true that the Romans were also implicated in Jesus’ death. So are all of us for whose sins He died. Indeed, Paul included himself personally in this, and never forgot that he had once been, as he says in **1 Timothy 1:13**, “*a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent.*” Nevertheless, the Jewish people as a whole shared in the blame and said so in **Matthew 27:25**, “*And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!”*” While implicating ourselves, we cannot exonerate them.

Second, they killed ... the prophets, which Jesus himself had accused them of doing, **Matthew 23:29-35**, “*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.*³³ *You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?*³⁴ *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 innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.”

Third, they drove out the Apostles, which seems to put the Apostles on a level with the Prophets. **Fourth, they displease God**, especially by rejecting his Messiah. Here he is also pointing out that in their hard-heartedness they consistently reject God’s Word. **And last, they are hostile to all men.** Paul explains their hostility to the human race in terms of their attempt to stop the Apostles from preaching the gospel and so to stop the Gentiles from being saved.

Paul saw this policy as the appalling thing it was. The Jews had not only killed the Messiah and persecuted the prophets and the apostles. They were also obstructing the spread of the gospel and so the work of salvation. Again Jesus had already confronted the Scribes and Pharisees about this very same thing, **Matthew 23:13**, “*But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.*”

The last point is that one that grips Paul’s mind and heart. You see, it’s one thing to say, “Not for me, but it’s okay for you.” It’s something else entirely to say, “Not for me, and not for you either.” If you prefer to stay in darkness, that’s your privilege. But it is a terrible sin to put out the light so that others cannot see. The sin here is not just in refusing salvation, but in trying to keep others from believing. If you prefer to go to hell, that’s your business. But please don’t try to take others with you. And while it might be easy to after the Jewish leaders of Paul’s day, I’m not convinced things have changed all that much.

There are those who will never attend worship service, but will do anything to stop others from attending. They will never pray in public, and will threaten a lawsuit against anyone who does. They never go to church but use the zoning laws to keep churches out of their neighborhoods. They never attend a Bible study but get irate if a neighbor hosts a small group. They will not accept Christ but mock a co-worker who comes to faith. They will not lift a finger to save the unborn but they ridicule those who work in a pregnancy care center. They create an ungodly atmosphere at work and then attempt to intimidate Christians into compromise or silence. Such people are all around us today. Not all unbelievers fit this pattern ... but some do. They do all they can to actively oppose Christians who are seeking to win others to Christ.

They heap up their sins to the limit. Wrath has come upon them. That word is both present and future. Although our God is patient, His patience has its limits. Eventually the storm clouds roll in and finally break over the heads of unbelievers. Though they may be long delayed, the fires of hell will come at last to those who reject our Lord. Please understand. This is God’s judgment on any society that rejects His revelation. No nation or individual can reject Him with impunity. No nation can sin forever without reaping divine punishment.

However we interpret these verses, they are extremely solemn words. Yet anti-Semitism cannot find **any possible justification in them**. No Christian can read the long history of anti-Semitism in the church without feeling profoundly ashamed. Some of the early Church Fathers, for all their wisdom, still preached bitter sermons against the Jews. In the Middle Ages repressive regulations of the Fourth Lateran Council in A.D. 1215 obliged Jews to live in ghettos and wear distinctive dress, while during the Crusades the church failed to restrain the popular fanaticism which led to pogroms in Jewish communities. More embarrassing still is Luther’s extreme writing about the Jews just before his death, written after he was disillusioned over his hope for the conversion of the Jews.

One clarification helps to lighten our Christian sense of guilt. It is that what some Fathers, medieval churchmen and Reformers were expressing was **anti-Judaism** not anti-Semitism. What that means is that they were contesting a religion, not a culture or a people. They were writing and arguing out of a theological conviction, not a racial prejudice. It would be similar today to saying we were opposed to **Islam**, but **not to the Muslim people**. However, that's a pretty fine line that has often been stepped over throughout history and even today, though thankfully, the persecutors of the Jews are, for the most part, no longer Christians.

Returning now to Paul's statements, we need to remember that he himself was a Jew. He gloried in his Jewish ancestry. He longed for the salvation of his people. He declared that he was willing even to forfeit his own salvation if only thereby they might be saved. Paul so loved his fellow Jews that he would almost be willing to be eternally damned if it would mean that they would come to faith, **Romans 9:1-3**, "*I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*"

He also taught that God had not cast off His people, because His gifts and call are irrevocable, and that He intended to include them again, if they did not persist in unbelief. Metaphorically speaking, he says in Romans 11 that God's plan was to graft back into the olive tree the natural branches which had been temporarily cut off. So we have to balance 1 Thessalonians 2 with everything Paul wrote a few years later in Romans 9–11.

Paul had not come to believe that all Jews could expect nothing but judgment, and that no Jew could be saved. This is plain from the fact that, when he moved on from Corinth to Ephesus, he continued his policy of evangelizing the synagogue first, as we see in **Acts 19:8**, "*And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.*" And even when he reached Rome, he called the leaders of the Jews together (it was his first act) and 'explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets'. Moreover, 'some were convinced'. And he wrote in **Romans 1:15-16**, "*So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*"

Now that's a long way around for just two verses, but since they're among the most misinterpreted verses in history, I felt we just needed to take the time to deal with them thoroughly.

There is such a thing as true moral guilt. You are a sinner by nature, by birth, and by choice. If we deny this, or soften, or shy away from it, then we do not believe the Bible no matter what we say. This truth is badly needed today and we don't help people by hiding it from them.

Only when men and women see they're under the wrath of God are they ready to hear about God's great love for them. To paraphrase Billy Graham, you have to get people lost before you can get them saved. Once a man or a woman acknowledges their personal need, then you can tell them about Jesus and how His death and resurrection provides the full payment for their sins. Once they know that, they are ready to enter into a personal relationship with God.

I suppose you might sum up by saying that there's good news, sad news, and bad news. **Good** news that the Bible is true and when we believe it, God's Spirit will be active in your life. **Sad** news that sometimes those closest to us will often oppose our Christian faith. **Bad** news that

God's wrath comes upon those who reject his Word. And sometimes we just don't understand it. And sometimes we can learn great things and deep truths from things we don't fully understand.

CONCLUSION: *The Strange Cases of Oliver Sacks*³

You might remember the Robin Williams/Robert DeNiro movie *Awakenings*, based on the true story of Dr. Oliver Sacks, a neurologist who in the late 1960s discovered beneficial effects of a new drug called L-Dopa. He applied this drug to patients who had survived the 1920's epidemic of the so-called "sleeping sickness," a terrible disease that attacked the brain, leaving some victims in a catatonic state. Dr. Sacks found that with L-Dopa, some patients could at least temporarily come out of this sleep-like state to resume a fairly normal life.

Dr. Sacks has written a number of books over the years, the most famous of which was a collection of case histories dealing with some of the more difficult neurological challenges he had ever seen. The book was entitled, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*. If you didn't know the background you might think that title was meant to be a joke. But it was no joke.

Neurologist Oliver Sacks, who has a wonderful way with words and a strong desire to understand and appreciate the human being that still exists despite the neurological damage, treats the reader to 22 tales of the bizarre in this very special book. One of the best is a chapter entitled "Rebecca" in which Dr. Sacks shows that a person of defective intelligence is still a person with a sense of beauty and with something to give to the world. He generously (and brilliantly) shows how Rebecca taught him the limitations of a purely clinical approach to diagnosis and treatment. Although the child-like 19-year-old didn't have the intelligence to "find her way around the block" or "open a door with a key," Rebecca had an **emotional** understanding of life superior to many adults.

Rebecca goes on to show Dr. Sacks that they pay "far too much attention to the defects of...patients...and far too little to what...[is] intact or preserved." Rebecca was tired of the meaningless classes and workshops and odd jobs. "What I really love...is the theatre," she said. Sacks writes that the theatre "composed her...she became a complete person, poised, fluent, with style, in each role." This woman, seemingly incomplete and unable to effectively communicate on her own, became a whole person, easily able to communicate, when she was playing the role of someone else. Many people with neurological disorders or deficiencies become whole when engaged in a process such as story, music or drama. The process seems to give them a structure to follow which, for the time being, overcomes their handicap.

The story where the book's title comes from, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, is another amazing tale. This patient's condition did result in some pretty humorous moments, but in the context of a very sad existence. Because of his mental condition, he was unable to attach **meaning** to anything he saw. It is utterly fascinating to know that, as a result of a neurological condition; a man can actually mistake his wife for a hat **and not realize it**. There was nothing wrong with the patient's eyes; it was the brain's processing of the visual information that had gone haywire. There was nothing wrong with that man's eyes, but he couldn't truly see in terms of attaching the proper meaning to the things he saw. They call it **visual agnosia**.

Our text tonight reminds us that far too often people are suffering from a kind of **spiritual agnosia**. They hear the message of the gospel, but it doesn't register with them. They can open the pages of Scripture, or they can come to church and hear a minister preaching the

³ The Conclusion is adapted from the sermon "*Spiritual Agnosia*" by Rev. David Scott, Faith Presbyterian Church, Tacoma, WA, 5/20/07; and the book review by Dennis Littrell of *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* by Dr. Oliver Sacks found at www.Amazon.com.

message of salvation through Jesus Christ, but to them it's just words. The gospel doesn't come in power, it doesn't weigh on them; there's no sense of personal appropriation of the message, no whole-hearted embrace of the Word of God as personally relevant to them.

This is the great dividing line that runs through the human race. It may appear that two people who live in the same town, shop at the same stores, eat the same food, attend the same sporting events, and so on, are no different, but in reality there is a vast, immense, eternal difference between a person who merely **hears** the Word and a person who hears it, **receives** it, and **“accepts it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God.”**

Because ultimately, that's what we need most of all. That's what we need to be giving to each other. Parents for children, children for your friends. Small groups to each other. Students to roommates. What we need from each other is the word of God.

When I am confused ... give me the word of God.

When I am arrogant ... give me the word of God.

When I am frightened ... give me the word of God.

When I am suffering ... give me the word of God.

When I am angry ... give me the word of God.

When I am dying ... give me the word of God. Minister to me. All who have access to me; give me the word of God.

Otherwise, we might as well ask Dr. Sacks to write a book about us ... and call it ***The Man Who Mistook His Bible for a Book***.

Think about that. You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the church in Thessalonica. Thank You for their faithfulness in the face of affliction. Thank You that they received and accepted the Word of God and it changed their lives. May we do the same. We ask that You would do this within us ... in the Name of Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

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1 Corinthians 1:18; 2:4-5

“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ... and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”