

Confronted  
March 20, 2022  
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1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

*“Hang on let me get my glasses so I can see this!”* Ever say that? That’s a reality for most of us at this point in life. Some of us have been there for years. Without our glasses we can’t see things clearly. Sometimes we can’t see things even if they are right before our eyes. Have you heard the expression: “Hiding in plain sight?” [Illustration: Seeing (or not seeing) deer on our morning walks]

Successful living requires seeing things clearly. This text teaches us that seeing God’s word clearly will put everything else into focus for the follower of Christ. We pick up where we left off in chapter two at verse thirteen.

**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. **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! **17** But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, **18** because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us. **19** For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? **20** For you are our glory and joy.

- Our lesson writers focused on an evangelistic application of this text: *“A person’s response to the gospel defines his or her future.”* That’s a valid and accurate point from this passage, but knowing the makeup of our group (mostly professing Christ-followers) I’m going somewhere else.
- Look at verse thirteen. What does it say made Paul so thankful about how these believers had accepted the message of the gospel?
- If you grew up in a church with a more “liturgical” worship style you are likely familiar with how they ended the reading of scripture. They may have said something like: *“This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God”*
- Pastor Jeremy put into practice another approach BEFORE we read the scripture by quoting **Psalm 119:18 (NIV) — 18** Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. [Asking the Spirit to help us SEE clearly.]
- Paul tells us these baby Christians in this new church recognized the message of the gospel for what it really is: the very word of God.

- Sometimes Christians say, “*I just wish I could hear God’s voice.*” Where is the first place we should go to hear God’s voice? His Holy inspired word!
- In chapter one Paul commended this church for their impact, for how they were imitating Christ, and their growing reputation for faithfulness.
- It strikes me they were having such impact because they believed in their hearts that the message was from God and they put it into practice!
- It’s so exciting to see a new believer that goes “all in” on God’s word.
- The danger is over time becoming casual about the fact the scripture is truly the supernatural word of God addressed to you and me personally.
- We should shutter when someone refers to the Bible as “the good book.”
- When I open my Bible I should remember it’s not just a “good book” it’s the very word of God to me. When I close my Bible I should remember the words: “*Thus saith the Lord.*” These are not man’s words; it’s God’s word!
- What does God’s word say about God’s word? A lot!
  - **Romans 10:17 (ESV) — 17** So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
  - **2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV) — 16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,
  - **Matthew 24:35 (ESV) — 35** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.
  - **Isaiah 55:11 (ESV) — 11** so shall my word be...it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose...
  - **Joshua 1:8 (ESV) — 8** This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.
  - **Psalms 119:105 (ESV) — 105** Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
  - **Hebrews 4:12 (ESV) — 12** For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
- What did Jesus Himself believe about scripture? In **John 17:17 (ESV) —** Jesus prayed for us, **17** Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. Jesus also said in **Matthew 5:18 (ESV) — 18** For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.
- Kevin DeYoung writes, “*Jesus held Scripture in the highest possible esteem. He knew his Bible intimately and loved it deeply. He often spoke with the language of Scripture. He easily alluded to Scripture. And in his moments of greatest trial and weakness—like being tempted by the Devil or being killed on a cross—he quoted Scripture.*”<sup>i</sup>
- The Thessalonian church was imitating Jesus when they accepted scripture as God’s word. We should do the same.

- Verse 14: Paul said they were “imitators” of other Bible-believing churches and that had brought opposition. The same types of people that killed the prophets and crucified Jesus were trying to keep the apostles and early church from sharing the gospel. They ran Paul out of Thessalonica!
- When you see the Bible as God’s word and act on it, expect opposition.
- Verse 18: Paul cited the source of that opposition: Satan.
- Another thing we sometimes become casual about is the work of Satan.
- One of Satan’s great deceptions is to “camouflage” his evil agenda.
- Here’s an illustration: Before the war in Ukraine, what did most average Americans think about Russia? What do we think about them now?
- Before 9/11 what did we think about Bin Laden? After 9/11? A war against us was brewing but we were too distracted to notice. We didn’t see clearly.
- The poet Maya Angelou wrote, *“When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time.”* We shouldn’t be distracted about who Satan is and what he is up to because he’s revealed himself over and over again. One of Satan’s strategies is to have God’s people not take him seriously.
- A follower of Christ must clearly see four things:
  - There is a spiritual battle raging behind the scenes.
  - Satan is real and he is always at work to deceive us.
  - God is more powerful than Satan, and if we've trusted Christ we have access to His power, protection and blessings.
  - Everything we need to know to please God and resist Satan is between the covers of God's word.
- Remember the old joke: *“How can you tell if a politician is lying?”* (Not ALL politicians!) How can you tell if Satan is lying? His lips are moving.
- How can you recognize the lies of Satan? Compare them to the truth of scripture. How can you recognize God’s voice? Read HIS WORD.
- God’s supernatural, inspired, infallible word is the “lens” we need so we can see clearly how to access His power, His blessings, and resist Satan.
- Scripture describes God’s word as a sword. An ancient warrior wouldn’t go into battle with a rusty sword. A dusty Bible is as bad as a rusty sword.
- Satan is doing everything he can to keep us from taking out our sword.
- Even if we ARE reading our Bible, we can still be deceived if we don’t remind ourselves that it isn’t just a “good book” it’s God’s word to us.
- What are some lies Satan might tell us about God’s word? Here’s a good article: <https://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/joe-mckeeever/15-lies-satan-tells-you-about-scripture.html> Satan doesn’t want us to read our Bible much less to believe it’s God’s word.
- Question: How much more seriously would we take the words of scripture if every time we closed our Bible we whispered to ourselves: *“Thus saith the Lord?”* How much more would we trust His promises? How much more would we obey what scripture tells us?
- By the way, that Maya Angelou quote also applies to our Heavenly Father. He has shown us time and again Who He is. We should believe Him.

- I'm reminded of the words of that great old hymn, "Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus:" *"Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, Just to take Him at His Word, Just to rest upon His promise, Just to know, 'Thus saith the Lord!'"*<sup>ii</sup>

#### So, What's the Takeaway?

- Paul said the Thessalonian believers had impact for Christ in the face of opposition and persecution because they had accepted God's word for what it really is, His inspired, infallible, supernatural word to us.
- A follower of Christ must clearly see four things:
  - There is a spiritual battle raging behind the scenes.
  - Satan is real and he is always at work to deceive us.
  - God is more powerful than Satan, and if we've trusted Christ we have access to His power, protection and blessings.
  - Everything we need to know to please God and resist Satan is between the covers of God's word.
- When I open my Bible I should remember it's not just a "good book" it's the very word of God to me. When I close my Bible I should remember the words: *"Thus saith the Lord."* These are not man's words; it's God's word!
- Let's don't go into battle with dusty Bibles or rusty swords!

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<sup>i</sup> Kevin DeYoung, Taking God At His Word: Why the Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me

<sup>ii</sup> [https://hymnary.org/text/tis\\_so\\_sweet\\_to\\_trust\\_in\\_jesus\\_just\\_to](https://hymnary.org/text/tis_so_sweet_to_trust_in_jesus_just_to)