

FIVE REASONS TO THANK GOD

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13 • TV161B

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“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

I would like for you to open your Bible with me today to the Book of **1 Thessalonians chapter 2**. I am going to read two verses, **verses 13 and 14**.

Here is the title of this message: **“FIVE REASONS TO THANK GOD.”**

Listen to Paul in **1 Thessalonians the 2nd chapter verse 13**: *“For this cause, we thank God; without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”*

Now, I must confess that when I began working on this message and preparing for this particular telecast; I must confess that the first words which caught and held my attention when I read this verse of Scripture were these: *“We thank God.”*

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The error today is so heavy with criticism, murmuring, and complaints, it is so pleasant and so joyful and so refreshing to hear someone say, “thank God.”

You know of the wrath and judgment of God upon Israel in the wilderness. His judgment and wrath came upon them several times; perhaps, the fiercest judgment was when He sent fiery serpents among the people. They bit the people and the people were dying.

Do you remember the story of the brazen serpent lifted up? Well, what brought this judgment? What brought the wrath of God upon these people? Do you know what brought God’s judgment upon them?

It was murmuring; the people murmured against Moses, they murmured against God, they murmured about the distance they had walked and they murmured about the bread that they were eating. They murmured about all of these things and God sent judgment into the camp.

I wonder what kind of judgment that we would be under today if God sent judgment upon us every time we complained, criticized, and found fault with His providence and murmured against the state in which He has been pleased to put us?

Listen to the Word of God: Paul was a man who praised and thanked God. He said, “*We thank God.*” It says in **1 Thessalonians 5:18** and this would be a good motto; this would be a good motto for all of us. He says, “*In everything give thanks.*” Listen to **Colossians 3:15**: “*Be ye thankful.*” Listen to **Ephesians 5:20**: “*Giving thanks always for all things.*”

And David in that great **100th Psalm** says: “*Come into his presence with thanksgiving; and into his courts with praise.*”

I’ll tell you another word that caught my attention when I read in **1Thessalonians 2: verse 13**; “*For this cause thank we God without ceasing.*”

For Paul, Silas, and Timothy; every day was thanks giving day. It was thanks giving day all the time; “*without ceasing we thank God.*”

Paul said on another occasion; “*I have learned*” (I don’t suppose this lesson is easy to learn; I wish I could learn it and I believe that you do to) “*I have learned that in whatsoever state I am, therewith, to be content.*” Be content with what you have and avoid covetousness.

Here he says, “*Without ceasing we thank God without ceasing and we praise God without ceasing.*” Paul rejoiced in the Lord, he said; “*rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, always rejoice in the Lord.*”

He gave thanks unto God for all things but on this occasion that we are talking about right here in **1 Thessalonians 2**; he lists five reasons for thanking God. Here is the message: “**We Thank God.**”

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There are five reasons he gives us for this ceaseless praise, for their ceaseless attitude and spirit of thanksgiving. Will you follow along in your Bible while I point out these five things, five reasons for which we thank God?

First of all: He says, *“I thank God because you receive the word of God.”*

That which rejoices the heart of God’s true servant the most, what would you say it is? I’ll tell you what it is with Paul; that which rejoices the heart of God’s true servant; I’m not talking about paying preachers and entertainers that call themselves preachers and promoters and this sort of thing.

I am talking about the true servant of God; what rejoices his heart the most? Is it the number of people he has? Paul never mentions that. Is it the number of additions or converts? Paul never mentions that.

Is it the amount of money that flows into the storehouse? Paul never mentions that; he never uses how many or how much, never. He says, *“I thank God, without ceasing, that you will receive the Word of God.”*

That which rejoices the heart of God’s true servants the most is for his congregation to receive the Word of God, to receive the Word of God. *“I thank God without ceasing because you receive the word of God.”*

You might say, “Why is he so happy about that?” Men by nature do not receive the Word of God. Men by nature reject the Word of God. That is what Christ said in **John 5:43**: *“I have come in my Father’s name and you receive me not. Let another come in his own name and him you will receive.”*

Paul said, *“I thank God you receive the word of God.”* In receiving the Word you receive Christ; Christ is the Word.

In **John 1:11** it says, *“He came unto his own and his own received him not. He was in the world and the world knew him not: But as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God.”*

1 Corinthians 2:14 says, *“The natural man receiveth not the things of God.”* That’s the reason Paul is rejoicing. That’s the reason that his heart is glad and lifted up. He said, *“I thank God because you receive the word of God.”*

I will tell you this; whether men receive the Word or not, whether they believe it or refuse it, whether they receive it or reject it, we are going to preach it, the Word of God as it is, to men as they are.

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Our message must not; it cannot be determined by what men want to hear or by what men will hear. They say, “They just won’t hear that today.” Preach it anyway. “Men don’t want that kind of message.” Preach it anyway.

We are not preaching what men want to hear or what they will hear. We are preaching “*thus saith the Lord.*” Paul said, “*If I please men I am not the servant of Christ,*” anyway.

Then, my friend; it made Paul’s heart glad that these people had received the Word of God for he knew that when people who received the Word of God, people who receive the Word of God, do not argue with God’s Word.

Did you know that? Let me give you four or five things that I believe are true. I’m just sure that the Lord has revealed this to my heart through his Word. People who receive the Word of God do not question it.

They do not dispute with it and they do not argue, but as newborn babes “*they desire the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby.*”

They do; they don’t argue with the minister. They don’t argue with God’s Word. They don’t dispute. They don’t say, “I just don’t believe that; I believe this but I don’t believe that.” Those who receive the Word receive all the Word without argument, without resistance.

Those who receive the Word welcome it; they delight in it. “*The Bereans searched the scriptures daily to see if these things are so.*” They fed upon the Word; they rejoiced in the Word. They embraced the Word; they received it readily. They welcomed the Word.

David said, “*Thy Word, have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.*” He said again in **Psalm 119**: “*I will delight myself in the word of the Lord.*”

That’s right! Men who receive the Word of God receive it without argument; they receive it willingly, they welcome it, they embrace it, they hunger and thirst for it and they never grow tired of it, they never grow tired of it.

The Word is their foundation of faith and the more they hear the Word the stronger their foundation of faith. Christ is the living foundation but the Word is the foundation of faith; “*faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.*”

They never grow weary of it because it is their bread and drink; the Word of God is the children’s bread. That’s what it is!

When our Lord told Peter to “*feed the sheep,*” what is he talking about? He is talking about feeding them the Word of God. “*He makes me to lie down by green pastures.*” That’s the Word of God. “*He leads me beside the still waters.*” That’s the Word of God.

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The Word of God is the believer's comfort, it is his confidence, it is his consolation; he never grows tired of it. So, that is the reason that Paul said this; *"I thank God that you receive the Word,"* a sincere love; a sincere love for the Word of God is a good evidence of spiritual life.

A man who really loves God's Word, who never wearies of it, who embraces it, who yearns for it, who welcomes it, who receives it willingly without resistance or argument; that is a good evidence of spiritual life.

My friend; a lack of interest in the Word of God, an indifference toward the Word of God is a good evidence of spiritual darkness; I guarantee you that is so, now that's just so!

A man who has a hunger and a thirst for the Word, who loves the Word, who feeds upon it, who rejoices in it, finds his comfort and rest and hope in what God has said. *"Abraham believed God. He believed God was able to do all that he promised."* He rejoiced in the Word of God and *"it was imputed to him for righteousness."*

But, a lack of interest and indifference, a carelessness where the Word of God is concerned, it is a sure evidence of spiritual darkness that a man is in the *"gall of bitterness."* That is so because the Word is the children's bread.

Secondly: Paul said, *"I thank God, you received the word of God; (now watch this), not as the word of men, but as it is, in truth, the word of God."*

My friend, your faith must not stand in the words of men, either written or spoken. Your faith must not stand in the logic and argument of men; it must stand in the power of God." He said, *"I rejoice; I thank God you receive the word."*

You didn't receive it as the words of Paul, the words of Silas, or the words of Timothy; *"you received it as it is, the word of God."*

My friend, *"Man at his best state is all together vanity."* And at best, those who preach to you, yea, preach the Word of God, are still just men, that's all they are. They are not infallible, God's Word is infallible, but the preacher's not, no preacher is!

They are just vessels of clay. We lay no claim to infallibility or perfection. But, I claim infallibility for His Word and perfection for His Word.

Paul said, *"You didn't receive this word as the word of men, (as the logic and argument of men, as the doctrines of men), you received it as it is, the word of God."*

Do you remember the story of the Samaritan woman, how she met Christ at the well, and then she ran down into the town of Samaria and told them about Christ? The men came and heard her. Listen to what they said to her in **John 4:41 and 42:** *"And many believed, because of his own words. And they said to the woman, now we believe, not because of your words."*

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And I think when I read this of all the soul-winners, fast talkers, and decision makers out there who are wrecking the souls of men; they are going out with a little three or four word recipe for redemption, and talking people into professions of faith, and talking them into a decision, by saying, “do you believe this, do you believe that? Shake my hand and you are saved; now you are going to heaven.”

You are resting in the words of men and the arguments and logic of men, into all of these recipes that men put out. These men said to that woman, *“We believe not because of what you said, but because we have heard him for ourselves and we know that this is indeed, the Christ. I have heard his word.”*

There is a lot of difference in going down in front of the church and letting some preacher talk you into a profession of faith.

There is a lot of difference in that and hearing Him speak who speaks through his Word, hearing Him speak who speaks in power, hearing Him speak who speaks in quickening power or awakening power, in regenerating power, in begetting power, in a life-giving power, who convinces you and converts you by His Word, by His power.

It is an inward work; it is a work of regeneration. *“What God doeth it shall be forever.”* Abraham, this is true of Abraham. It says in **Romans 4**: *“He believed God.”* He didn’t believe a man; *“he believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness.”*

I believe God, not because the Baptist said it or the Catholics or the Methodists or the Presbyterians, or anybody else; I believe God.

I believe God told us about man’s fall. God told us about the consequences and results of that fall and the condemnation of that fall. God told us about His judgment against sin, about man’s inability to find righteousness, or to work one out.

God told us about His love, mercy, and grace, in Christ. He told us how that He sent His son into this world to be our Saviour and He died on that cross, was buried, and rose again as our sacrifice, as our atonement.

He ascended to heaven where He is right now, seated at the right hand of God, our great high priest. And because we have such a high priest, *“we can come boldly before God’s throne of grace and find mercy and grace to help in time of need.”*

I believe God! No man convinced me of that or argued me into that profession or that decision. If a man can talk you into religion, another man can talk you out of it. If a man can talk you into a decision or a profession of faith, another man can come along and talk you into another one, into another one and finally, another one can talk you into throwing the whole thing overboard.

Paul said in **1 Corinthians 15**: *“I delivered unto you the gospel by which you are saved, wherein you stand, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was*

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buried and rose again according to the scriptures. I delivered unto you that Gospel.” My friend, it is God that makes the Gospel effectual to the heart.

Then, listen to this; that brings me to the next point:

Thirdly: Paul said, *“I thank God that you received the word.”*

It wasn't just Paul's Word that you received. It wasn't Paul's arguments or logic. I didn't come along and present a little better scheme than the other fellow. You received it as it is, *“the word of God, in truth, the word of God.”*

“That word; (look at the next line), has worked effectually in you.” What does “effectual” mean? It means to get the job done; it got the job done. That is what “effectual” means; it worked effectually, sufficiently; it got the job done.

Now, many people claim to believe the Bible; this is a common statement, “I believe the Bible.” Let me shock you just a moment; will you listen a moment?

A man really doesn't believe anything, believe it spiritually, until he experiences it; now that is so. If you believed the Bible you would be saved.

I say that because if you really believe it is because you experience it. You don't believe anything; you don't actually believe anything spiritually until you experience it.

This is what Paul is saying when he says, *“I thank God that the word of God came to you.”* In **1 Thessalonians 1:4**, *“not in word only but in power, in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance.”* That's how God's Word came to you, not just in Word only; it came as an effectual force and an effectual power, and in an effectual operation in your heart and soul.

This was Paul's own experience; he said, “When the law came I just didn't look at the law and say, well, that's so.” He said, “I died, I experienced the power of the law. I experienced the stripping power of the law. I experienced the killing effect of the law. I believed it. I felt it; I died.”

He said, *“When God, who separated me from my mother's womb, was pleased to call me by his grace, he revealed his son, (not to me), in me.”* Christ was revealed “in me.” He prayed for the church at Galatia; he said, *“I travail until Christ be formed in you.”*

My friends; the presence of sin is not a fact; it is an experience to those who believe. That's right! The sovereignty of God is not a doctrine.

I hear people say, “I believe in the doctrine of God's sovereignty.” I don't; no I don't; it is not a doctrine, it is an experience. I believe in God who is sovereign. When you experience it you enjoy the comfort of it. You enjoy the rest in it and you enjoy the peace of it.

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If you don't enjoy the rest and peace and comfort of God's power and sovereignty, you don't believe He is sovereign; you can say it until you are blue in the face but you have to experience it.

The sufficiency of Christ is not a creed. We have that written in our creeds, our catechisms, and our confessions of faith, the sufficiency of Christ. It is just a statement if you haven't experienced it; now that's the difference.

He says, *"I thank God you received the word, not as it were the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God,"* (the life giving, heart changing, converting Word of God). *"It has worked effectually in you, in power, in the Holy Ghost."*

To the legalist God is a rule; "don't do this; or you will go to hell. Don't do that; God will jump on you. Don't do that; God won't bless you." God is a law to the legalist.

To the ceremonialist, God is a form or a ritual, just like 10 toy soldiers marching along at a given beat. To the emotionalist, God is a "whoopie" feeling. To the theologian, God is a doctrine. To the sectarian, God is a creed; to the believer Christ is his life.

"I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live, yet, not I, but Christ liveth in me. The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

Have you heard God speak through his Word effectually? Have you experienced the depths of sin? Have you experienced the inability of man's merit? Have you experienced the grace of God? Have you experienced the presence of God's Spirit?

Have you experienced the power of God's Word? Have you experienced the assurance of God's sovereignty? Have you experienced the rest and comfort of God's providence? Have you experienced it, entered into it?

If not, you have missed it; I don't care what you profess. You don't believe anything until you experience it. That's absolutely so! The more forcefully you experience it, the more you believe it. That's exactly right!

If my voice is the only voice you hear; then nothing of any eternal value or good will be accomplished; you have to hear God who speaks effectually. When He speaks the dead, dry, bones live. When He speaks the Spirit breathes upon them and they live when He speaks. The prophet Ezekiel can preach all day but when God speaks men live.

Fourthly: Paul says, *"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing."* Now look at **verse 14:** *For you brethren, that you became followers of the churches of God in Jesus Christ."*

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You can't separate faith and conduct; you became followers. "*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*" Men who believe and receive Christ follow Christ. That's just so!

Paul said, "*I thank God that you receive the word of God. You received it as the word of God. You received it effectually in your heart. That Word had an effect upon you; you began following the Lord.*" That's exactly right!

Christ said, "*My sheep, hear my voice and they follow me.*" It's a clear indication that if you cry, "the building is on fire," and a fellow keeps sitting there, he didn't hear you. If a man is walking toward a cliff and you are back several paces and you holler, "Hey; you are going to fall over" and he goes on off, he didn't hear you.

"*My sheep hear my voice and they follow me.*" Find a true believer; I don't care in what country and I don't care what denomination; a true believer will demonstrate the same characteristics and the same fruit wherever you find them; they are a tribe of people; they are a family.

They all look like the Father. That's right; they all look like the Father. They all bear the image of the heavenly Father. They love Christ and they love one another.

It doesn't matter how they spell their name. It doesn't matter what accent they speak. It doesn't matter how old or young; it doesn't matter. They love Christ and they love one another.

They mourn over sin; they long to be holy. They love God's Word and they believe it. They enjoy peace with God in their hearts. They trust in Christ and Christ alone for salvation. They walk in honesty and truth. They are generous, they are kind, and they are thankful. They long for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. They follow Him.

He said, "*I thank God that when the word of God worked effectual in you that you became followers, followers of the churches of God in Christ Jesus.*" You became like those other folks that know Christ.

You became like those folks over there in Mexico or Canada, or over there in England, in Ireland, Spain, France, Germany or America, or wherever they are found; they are all just alike.

Most of them are babes in Christ and some are mature and some are young men but they all bear the same characteristics; they all bear the image of the heavenly Father.

Last of all: Paul said, "*I thank God.*" Now; this is strange here but he gave thanks for four things and he brought this last one in and he said, "*I thank God that you suffered like things of your own countrymen.*"

What Paul is saying here; now he rejoiced in afflictions. He thanked God that he was counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake; that's right! He gave thanks for his afflictions. He gave

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thanks for persecution and he also rejoiced that these people were suffering the same afflictions and the same persecutions.

Why should he be thankful for this? Let me give you two or three reasons:

First of all: It was clear proof that they were preaching the Gospel!

I'm telling you; if you preach the truth of God's Word, Christ said; *"If they hated me they will hate you. If they despise me they will despise you. If they will hear my word they will hear your word. If they don't hear my word they won't hear your word."*

So, this was clear proof. When word came to Paul that those people were being persecuted, he said; *"well, they are preaching the truth,"* not only that, but they believe it; not only that but God said Himself, *"all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."*

I thank God even for the afflictions. David said, *"It's good for me that I have been afflicted; thereby, I learned his statutes!"*