

Theme: God's holy people are continually formed by an eager, faith-filled reception of His Word, while those who reject it find themselves increasingly hardened against God Himself — to their own ultimate destruction.

I. Intro - My Conversion & the Word of God

- A. I recently talked about my conversion and the Word
- 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 as the Word of God – they did 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. This was part of Paul's opening prayer of thanks.
 - b. Saw God's Hand as Spirit & Word worked powerfully
 - c. This is seen as the Thessalonians receive the Word
- B. They accepted the apostolic preaching as 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. 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 also evident in Acts 2:42 – devoted to the apostle's teaching.
- 5. 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...”
- 6. We are still called to test all preaching by Scripture

Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Acts 17:11 (also see Jeremiah 23:25, 28; Isaiah 8:20)

 - 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
- 7. Christians are called to eagerly receive the preached Word of God, but also to examine the Scriptures to verify the truth of what is being taught.

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 includes the written Word of God and also the accurate teaching of the Word of God.
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. Hebrews 4:12
3. This powerful effect does not stop with our justification but includes the ongoing work of sanctification.
4. The verbs 'work' and 'believe' are present tense - this is an ongoing work in those who moment by moment receive the Word in faith (1 Thess. 2:13)

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... 1 Thess 2:14–16

1. Some persecuted these new believers (v14) and drove out the apostles (v15) and pursued them to Berea (Acts 17)

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

The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. ¹⁶ But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy. 2 Chr 36:15-16

1. Israel had persistently rejected God, His, Word, His prophets (and had even killed the prophets)
2. The current generation would live down to this!

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, Acts 7:52

3. They ultimately killed Jesus - God Himself!

- d. This was a long-term rejection of God, His Word, His messengers, and His will!

3. All of this was displeasing to God (v15)

who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and **displease God** and oppose all mankind 1 Thessalonians 2:15

- 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) 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 wrath has come upon them at last! 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16

- a. Jews were often accused of opposing all mankind.
- 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 trying to condemn people to hell!
- e. No matter what you claim your motives are, 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 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 wrath has come upon them at last! 1 Th. 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. Paul is alluding to the words of Jesus' seven woes
Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.³² Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. Matt 23:31-32
 - a. They persistently rejected God's messengers – and now killed His Son!
 - b. Their sins had filled the cup and were now overflowing.

4. As a result of their sin reaching full measure, the day of wrath was coming upon them (v16) 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 2:16

- a. Scholars debate many potential referents to this – famine in Judea, expulsion from Rome, etc.
- b. I think Paul is still alluding to Jesus' words in Matthew 23 – their sin reached its measure and judgement was pronounced on the Temple and Jerusalem, and the Old Covenant was done away with forever!

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. This generation was the end of millennia of rejecting and killing God's messengers – as they did to Paul.
- b. The blood of every Old Testament saint, from Abel, the first killed, to Zechariah, the last one killed in the Hebrew ordering of Scripture (2 Chr 24:20-22), will come upon the heads of this generation.
- c. Jesus then says the Temple is left desolate as the Spirit departs (Matthew 23:38) and declares the Temple will be destroyed (Matthew 24) – which happened in 70 AD!

- d. Paul says these people are part of this generation, as is evidenced by their opposition and rejection of the Gospel – and their fate has been sealed!

C. Thus, we see two responses to the Word of God – a believing embrace and obedience, or a willful rejection of God's messengers, His Gospel and Word, and ultimately God Himself.

IV. Applying the Word

A. Have I been suppressing God's Word?

1. We see two very different responses in this passage
2. The difference was not that one had access to God's Word and one did not – it was their response!
3. 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.
4. One cannot remain neutral to the Word of God - you either embrace it in faith or reject it and are hardened in your own sin.
5. These people heard the Word – but they did not want to embrace God's will, so they rejected the messengers and the Word.
6. 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!

B. Believers – have we embraced God's Word?

1. We have many translations, Bibles available in print and on our phones, it is easy to gather each Sunday
2. But it is possible to let this ease of access breed complacency - we think we can respond tomorrow, next week, next year.

3. The Spirit calls us out of such complacency to a bold, active, consistent reception and application of God's Word to our lives.
4. This is the Word of God – it can blow away the fog and renew my mind to see the truth clearly!
5. This is the Word of God - our life, our hope, our joy!
6. Am I positively responding to God's Word each Sunday as it comes to me during our worship?
7. Do I open and respond to God's Word each day?
8. Am I growing in obedience - or just knowledge?

C. Fed By Word and Sacrament

1. We do not live by bread alone but by the Word!
2. We do not live by bread alone but by being fed at the Table of the Lord by the Sacrament
3. But we must come in faith to receive here as well
4. Come and be fed by Your God!

A Holy Response to the Word of God

1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

June 28, 2026

Communion

Acts 20:32

Teaching keywords: Word of God; gospel; salvation and deliverance; holiness; persecuted church; 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