

The True Servant of Christ - Part 4

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes the importance of truly receiving the Word of God as transformative and essential for genuine faith and thanksgiving.

Duration: 1:01:07

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 10:17, 1 Corinthians 1:21, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Timothy 4:2, 2 Peter 1:20-21

Topics: "Servanthood"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the power and importance of the word of God. He quotes Hebrews 4:12, which describes the word of God as living, active, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart. The preacher acknowledges that it is easier for us to see faults in others than in ourselves, but encourages the audience to examine their own hearts and seek the truth of God's word. He highlights four ways in which the Scriptures effectively work in believers: it brings new life, feeds and nourishes, renews the mind, and is transmitted through preaching. The preacher urges the audience to commit their lives to knowing and understanding the Bible as the word of God.

Transcript

Open up our Bibles again to 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2. This week I've been studying chapter 2, verse 13 through 19, but I want to focus this evening on just the first verse, verse 13. There is so much in this text that is so important for every one of us, for those who are new believers, for those who are older in the faith, for those who do not know the Lord, and for those who may think they know the Lord, and yet their assurance is not a biblical assurance. So we need to look at this.

We need to look at it closely. We need to read it, and we need to pray that God will open up our ears, that we will hear His Word proclaimed to our heart, that we'll see the importance of it, that it'll move us to greater piety, to greater devotion to Christ. Now let's read verse 13 of chapter 2. 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.

Let's pray. Father, I ask You that this not be a night of only words, but that Your Word will be proclaimed, and that Your Spirit would manifest Himself in not only teaching us, but moving us. Is He not the one that when He comes into the world will convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment? Lord, that He

might work among us tonight, even those of us who are Your children, Lord, that the Spirit might work and show us truth, and show us areas of our lives where the truth is not being applied.

Lord, that You would expose, that You would reprove, that You would correct, that You would heal and train. Lord, we need Your Spirit, Your power working through Your Word tonight to continue transforming our lives. So, Lord, multiply grace to us.

That we might hear, understand, and be transformed in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, let's look back at our text.

It says, For this reason we also constantly thank God. Now, I know this seems like just a statement that Paul is using as an introduction to what he really wants to say. But if you think that, you don't know Paul.

One of the characteristics of his life was thanksgiving unto God. And I want to show you something. Look in chapter 1 verses 2 and 3. We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers, constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of our God and Father.

Now, here's what I want you to see. In the first chapter, in the opening verses, what does Paul do? He thanks God. He is thanking God.

He is showing us that it's a characteristic of his life. Now, what is he thanking God about? He's thanking God for the radical, radical faith and transformation that God has worked in the heart and lives of these Thessalonians. And when we read the rest of chapter 1, what do we see? It's absolutely amazing.

It's amazing what God has done to these pagan Gentiles, these idol worshipers. God has so revealed himself to them and so worked in their lives that what? They turned to him from idols. They became imitators of the Lord and the apostles.

They became an example to everyone that heard about them. Even unbelievers, it seems, were carrying reports of the magnificent transformation in the lives of these people. Now, you say, oh, I wish that I was them.

I wish I was like them. I don't see that same transformation in my own life. I know that's what you're thinking, because sometimes when I read these things, I think the same thing.

But now, in order to understand that transformation, what do we need to do? We need to go back to chapter 2 and look at verse 13, because Paul is giving thanks for something. Look what he says. 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 as the word of God. Now, remember, in the first chapter, Paul is given thanks to God for what? The great transformation that God has worked in the lives of these people. In chapter two, he gives God thanks for the reason, the source, the fountain of their transformation.

And what was it? The reception of the word of God. Do you see that? Now, let's just stop here for a moment. You hear about these great things in the lives of the Thessalonians and you say to yourself, I want the same thing.

Oh, how I long for the same thing. The flesh and the devil can enter in and even make this an accusation against God. Why did God do that to them? And he doesn't do that to me.

Could it be that the key is found in chapter two, verse 13, they received the word of God as it truly was the word of God and not as the word of a man? And I just realized we're talking about an oral transmission of the gospel here. And even though Paul disciplined them, you cannot say that they had the full counsel of God's word sitting in their hands every day. But we do.

The problem is it's not sitting in our hands, sitting on the table on the shelf. I've heard people in counseling tell me, why did God change them and not change me? Well, let's look. Here's the word of God.

They received it as the word of God. Now, let's go back to looking at Paul for just a moment. He says, first of all, that he gives thanks to God.

I think this is very important. Notice he doesn't thank the Thessalonians for their response. That's very important.

Notice also, he doesn't take credit for their response. But whom does he thank? He thanks God. Why? Anytime anyone receives the word of God it is a result of the work of God.

Do you see that we are entirely destitute without him? We need him. So if the word is going to be received into our hearts, it must be a word of God, but it must be a work of God. But we must not use that as an excuse for being passive.

If you read the word and it doesn't seem to be entering into your heart, you should cry out to God that he would do a greater work in you. And if we're preaching and we do not feel like the word of God is entering into people's hearts, what must we do? Not take away from our time of study, but take away from our time of all other busy activities and hit our knees and pray, because if people are to receive the word of God, it is a work of God. And again, I admonish you, do not take this truth as an excuse for you being passive.

Well, if something's going to happen in my life, God's going to do it. No, you cry out to God, Lord, I'm reading this Bible, but nothing seems to be entering in. Cry out to God, cry out to God, he's faithful, he's faithful.

And always remember, these people didn't even have probably a Greek version of the Old Testament, yet you have the full counsel of God. They received the word and Paul was thankful for that. Now, with regard to Thanksgiving, let me get back to that.

Paul is using the present tense here, which indicates continuation or style of life. He was always giving thanks, T.C. Hammond said it this way, and I love the way he says it. He said Paul gave thanks and there were no gaps.

What he means, there was no gaps in his thanksgiving. He didn't go long periods of time without giving thanks to God for the believers that he was remembering. Now, I want to say something I said in the first sermon, I believe on First Thessalonians, and it's this.

One of the characteristics that I have seen in my own prayer that I'm really trying to improve is the lack of thanksgiving unto God. For his work in the life of other believers, and I've come to recognize something. That the lack of thanksgiving for God's work and other believers shows me a couple of things.

One, it shows me my own self-centeredness, how much of my prayer life and how much of my thanksgiving revolves around me. Another thing that I have learned that is a strong rebuke, and it's this. Our lack of thanksgiving for God's work in other believers is not so much a reflection of our lack of appreciation for other believers as it is a lack of appreciation for the God who is working in believers.

Remember what I said, you meet the smallest, most immature, most fragile believer on the planet. And that is enough for you to hit your knees and to give thanks unto God. A miracle has happened in this person.

I mean, you're looking at a person who doesn't hate God by nature. That person should hate God. You're looking at a person that should suppress all truth about God.

And if they accept the Word of God rather than suppress it, that's a miracle. And you and I need to give thanks for such things. Paul was the type of person that was always giving thanks.

He not only loved God's people. He loved. To watch God working in God's people, do you ever sit back and do that? Brothers, now, listen to me, we're a body, we're members one to another.

Have you ever looked in the mirror and thought you were getting better looking? Well, I'll let you continue with that delusion. But have you ever looked at others and thought, man, wow, they're growing. This is pleasing.

This brings me joy. Not just your own children, not just your own group around you, but noticing people growing. Oh, how important that is and how freeing it is, because the more we're looking at others and thanking God for others, the more we become free from this tyrant called self that's always saying, look at me, look at me, look at me.

You turn those eyes inward and you obey the voice of that tyrant, you'll be the most miserable human being on the planet. You turn those eyes away from yourself and you look to Jesus and you look at what he's doing in the life of his church and specifically that part of church that you're a part of. You'll find joy, you'll find joy.

Now, look, he says for this reason, we also constantly thank God. Now, look, we we again, this is important. These men prayed together.

Paul is not speaking in a majestic plurality here. He is really talking about his fellowship with the other workers. There were times when the workers just got down on their knees.

Paul, Silas and Timothy and said, let's have a prayer meeting and we're not going to ask for anything. We're just going to worship and thank God for what he's done in the life of his people. You know, that's it's a good thing to think about.

It's a good thing to do, it's a better thing to do, but he says for this reason, we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God now, the word received Paralambano, it means to to receive alongside or to take to oneself. If there is any word in the New Testament that has been sorely abused by contemporary evangelicalism, it is the word received. Because we have taken this magnificent concept.

Of opening our arms to Christ and turned it into nothing more than walking down an aisle, praying a prayer, raising a hand, getting baptized and especially going back to praying a prayer, the idea of the

sinner's prayer, I asked him, he came in enough said. We need to return to an understanding of what it means to receive the word of God, to take it into ourselves. And just for a moment, I want you to hold your place in First Thessalonians and I want you to go to Matthew 13, Matthew 13, verse 18.

Here, then, the parable of the sower, when anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. And this is the one whom the seed was sown beside the road. Now, what is this referring to? A person who sits under the hearing of the gospel and it just glances off the moment it hits their forehead, the moment it hits their chest, it doesn't enter in, it glances off.

They do not understand. Now, don't get the scriptures wrong. So many people say, well, if they don't understand, it's not their fault.

They rejected it. No, they don't understand because they don't want to understand. They suppress the truth and unrighteousness, they could care less.

They don't want God, they don't want his truth. And then we go on, verse 20, the one on whom the seed was sown on the rocky places. This is a man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.

Now, look at this. It even uses the word receives and with joy. This is not just I pray to parents done, OK, can I go home? This person apparently showed outward joy.

And yet what do we see? The one who received really did not receive. And how do we know that he did not receive? It says in verse 21, yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary when affliction or persecution arises because of the word immediately falls away. Whenever there's persecution, affliction, he's gone.

He's gone now, notice that the Thessalonians received the word in the midst of much affliction, and they continued in the word in the midst of much affliction. Now, here's the problem in the modern day evangelical church, what is it? There's not a whole lot of persecution, at least in the West. And from the pulpit, there's not many demands.

There's no radical call to discipleship and there's no church discipline. So what can you do? You can receive the word and yet not receive the word, be totally superficial, just like this person, and yet sit in church every Sunday and every Wednesday. Do you realize that? This person would have looked saved if there had been no persecution, if there had been no tribulation, they'd be sitting right there on the front row every time the doors were open.

And see, that's the problem in the evangelical church. There's not much persecution. There's not much preaching about sin, about righteousness, about the call to discipleship.

So what happens? You just sit there and you think you've received the word when, in fact, you have not received the word. It is a superficial faith and it will be proven one day. Either when persecution arises and you flee or just simply back off or on judgment day.

Now, let's go to the next one quickly, verse 22, and the one on whom the seed was sown among the thorns. This is the man who hears the word and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word and it becomes unfruitful. Here's the problem in evangelicalism today.

This guy can stay in the church. Because so many people who call themselves Christians and sit in church, they're filled with the world, the world is wrapped around them, their whole life is strangled by the world, but they're still Christian. Why? Because one time they prayed a prayer.

Do you see how we've lost the idea of what it means to receive the word of God? Now we go on, verse 23, and the one on whom the seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and brings forth some a hundredfold, some 60 and some 30 hundredfold, 60 fold, 30 fold. Now, I want you to look at something. First of all, of the four people who heard the word from Christ, three of them, one of them rejected it outright, three of them are said to have received it either directly or by context, and only one of them actually did.

And how do we know that one that did? He bore fruit. Now, I want you to look at this by saying 30, 60 and a hundred, he's saying that some believers will bear more fruit than others. But notice this, the smallest of the number is 30 fold.

Christians will be marked by fruit bearing. Now, I don't want anyone here, especially the fragile saints, to fall into any sort of condemnation. Don't walk out of here saying, well, I'm looking at my life, there's not 30 fold fruit, I must be lost.

The idea here is fruitfulness. Fruitfulness. Not necessarily a percentage or multiplication, but fruitfulness and not just looking at your life at one point in time, because that can be deceiving, but looking at the full course of your life, is there any fruit? Because if there has been reception, there will be fruit, there will be changes.

Another way of saying this is if we put you beside a worldly person who denies Christ, will we see anything different in you? Now, let's go back to our text, I just wanted to hit on that now. Let me say this again, because it's so important, the evidence. That this one in the parable of the sower received the word is fruitfulness, the evidence that these Thessalonians had received the word, what is it? Fruit again, we see that in chapter one.

Now, let me ask you a question, I want everyone to listen to me, especially the youngsters who claim to know Christ. What is the evidence of your conversion? What is the evidence that you're truly Christian? Think about this. Preaching is not entertainment, it's to go into your heart.

What is the evidence there? Think of this. It's very important. Now, he says, for this reason, we also we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us now.

I want you to look at a few things here that are very, very important. First of all, he calls in this specific context, the gospel, the word of God. But we have to also realize that Paul was also teaching them many things of discipleship and all sorts of things about the Christian life.

So he calls it the word of God. Now, if you look in verse eight of chapter one, he calls it the word of the Lord. If you look at chapter two, verse two, he calls it the gospel of God.

If you look in verse eight, again, the gospel of God. If you look in verse nine, again, the gospel of God. And what are we talking about here? We're talking about the gospel and we can apply this in a greater context to the full counsel of God's word, all of the scriptures that these people had recognized that it wasn't the word of a man, but it was the word of God.

And they responded appropriately. Now, I want to put this in our context tonight. We have the scriptures, church, and you must make a decision if you believe they are the word of God, you must act on it.

You can't ignore something like this. You can't set it aside for a week or two. You can't just get what you need from a preacher.

You must tonight, I plead with you with urgency, make a commitment in your own heart to renew your devotion to the study of God's words. I'm calling you out and asking for you to marvel at some truth here tonight. I'm asking you to recognize something.

You know, this is the Bible. It is the word of God that recommits your life to knowing this book, to knowing the God of this book, to knowing his will for your life, recognize that it's the word of God. Now, I want us to go on.

He says you receive the word of God, which you heard from us, oral transmission. The oral transmission of the gospel and in a wider context, the oral transmission of the full counsel of God's word, Paul is talking about preaching. We have already seen in chapter one and chapter two, we have seen the prominence, the important place that Paul gives the preaching.

And so as the other side of the coin, the first side of the coin was you personal discipleship. You need to be reading the words, meditating upon the word, feeding from the word. But the other side of that coin, you need to sit under preaching, biblical preaching.

Spirit filled preaching and God help us, those of us who are preaching to do our part to not make this church something that you visit on Sunday morning and not any other time. Do not make this church something you come on Wednesday and not on Sunday. You need the proclamation of the word.

You need it. And so do I. It's absolutely necessary, it's one of the ways in which God moves among his people corporately is through biblical preaching. Now, I want you to notice something else.

When God wanted to take the greatest message that has ever been spoken to man, to man, he did not have an angel write it in the sky and he did not send out books and tracts or even videos on YouTube. He sent out living, breathing preachers. I want to read a quote right here from Stevens and he writes this, it's very, very interesting.

During 30 years or more after Christ's ascension, the teaching of all nations was done by the living preacher, not by the circulation of apostolic books among the heathen. Now, of course, Stevens wrote that in a book, so he's not saying that books aren't important. Books have always been involved in revivals and reformations and everything, but they do not eclipse preaching.

And for some of you who want to be in the ministry, some of you young men who are studying, look what the world needs today are not strategists, it's not facilitators, it's not movers and shakers. What the world needs today are preachers. And they don't need preachers, but preachers who are going to spend time alone with God that are going to study.

So when they open up their mouth, they can honestly say with full conviction, thus saith the Lord. We don't need your fancy illustrations. We don't need your brilliance.

We need to hear word for word and line by line what this book says, don't come to me with clever social ideas on how to transmit the world in the 21st century. I don't care. We need preachers.

We need preachers, we need preachers. Now, he goes on and he said, the word of God, which you heard from us now, here's another thing for preachers, for me, for Anthony, Mark, anyone else. By saying you heard it from us, he's connecting the message to the messenger, and that's what he did all throughout chapter one, is it not true? He said, you know what kind of men we were.

It is better if you're not going to take seriously the requirements of integrity and godliness and holiness and the seriousness of your calling, it is better that you not open your mouth. Because the preacher and the Christian has the great opportunity to adorn the gospel or. Be a cause for blaspheme among the unbelievers and ridicule at the weakness of the gospel because of the weakness of the people who claim to know it.

Do you see that now? Don't get me wrong, the gospel has its own virtue and does not depend upon the virtue of the messenger. It stands alone on its own. That is true, but also it is equally true.

That people become more open to the gospel when they see the power of it manifested in the life of the preacher or the life of the church or the life of the individual Christian. These two things go hand in hand. Now, let's go on.

For this reason, we also constantly thank God that when you receive the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it. Now, why do I bring this this next word into it? We've already talked about receiving. Well, it's because Paul does it.

And Paul uses two different words in the first one. It's paralambano, which means to just kind of take alongside or to receive alongside. But this one is dekamite.

And it carries with it the idea of reception, but also the idea of approval, of welcoming, of embracing. Now, let's say that you were dying of cancer. And you had a few days to live.

And a doctor walked in with a bona fide 100 percent cure and announced that cure to you. What would you do? You would approve it. You would welcome it.

You would embrace it with the greatest joy. You would call your family and your friends and you would tell them of the great deliverance that has been wrought. It would be the best news.

And yet this is far greater. It's the reception, not of some news that you can add to your already good life to make it a little better. It's the reception.

Of pardon to a man condemned to die in the gallows. It is the greatest of news when we receive the gospel or when we sit under preaching or when we're studying the word of God or even hearing the word of God from a friend. We should not, our reception should not be impersonal and detached and sluggish and unconcerned.

There should be a hunger, a real reception, and my dear friend, you need to cultivate that. You say, Brother Paul, how do I cultivate it? Well, have you ever taken an art appreciation class? Do you know what they're for? They're to teach you how to appreciate things. It's to cultivate appreciation for fine things in your life.

We can cultivate the same thing in our own lives with regard to the word of God. The more we wear ourselves away from the garbage of this world and the more we give ourselves to the study of God's word as the spirit of God illuminates our minds and shows us more and more beauty, we'll begin to appreciate more and more what God has said in his word and we will welcome it. Also, the more you give yourself to studying the God's word, the more.

You'll be privy to special insights that he will give you some time, I'd like to preach on Job 28, I've preached on it before about how the miners go down into the rocks, swinging dangerously, precariously in dark places, trying to mine one tiny jewel. That's the way we should be in our study of the scriptures, knowing that what is found here is greater than gold. It is greater than silver.

To accept the word of God, and then he says you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God. Now, the word but here is the strongest adversative that we have in the Greek. And Paul is drawing a gigantic contrast between the word of men and the word of God.

The two things don't meet. They are mutually exclusive. They are not two sides of the same coin, they are in two different polar, they're different worlds, different universes, and this is seen throughout all of scripture in the scripture in the Old Testament.

We're going to look at a few passages where we see this mighty contrast between the word of man. And the word of God now look with me, I'll just read them to you, because we don't have a lot of time. Numbers 23, 19.

Listen to this text. God is not a man that he should lie. Nor a son of man that he should repent.

So what do we know about men? Two things that they lie and even those who tell the truth at times must change their story. They don't have all the information, even the most sincere man. And he says, God is not a man that he should lie nor the son of man that he should repent.

Has he said and will he not do it or has he spoken and will he not make it good? Everything he said he'll do, he'll do everything he has spoken, he'll make it good. And then in 1st Samuel 15, 29, also the glory of Israel will not lie or change his mind, for he is not a man that he should change his mind. Most of the women here just right now are saying amen.

But this is generic, man, it includes all of us, including you, that even the best change their mind. But God does not. Now, why is this important? God in his character is absolutely, pristinely, perfectly, infinitely faithful, higher than the heavens, deeper than the seas.

So is his word. Now, if his word is this faithful. Should it not be believed, should it not be believed? You say, well, I believe, no, no, the whole thing.

Everything it says about what's right and what's wrong, what's good, what's bad, what is healthy, what will kill you. The end of the righteous, the way of the wicked, everything it says, is it not true? It is, then it should be followed. It should be believed, correctly interpreted.

Voiding fanaticism, avoiding legalism, avoiding absurdities and all the other things that come from exegetical fallacies. But still holding on to the word of God, believing it, living according to it, but if it is faithful, should it not also be obeyed? Obeyed, that's where faith puts on shoes and walks on the road. That's where it gets real.

As a matter of fact, the greatest expression of faith is obeying what God has said. He believed God and because he believed God, he did this, he did what God commanded. Now, to bring this part to a close, I just want to say this to you, not only should he be believed, not only should he be obeyed, but he should be feared.

Why? Because if his promises are true, then so are his warnings. Do you see that? Do not take them lightly. So often, let me put it this way, I don't want to say that we've exaggerated grace, that's impossible, but I can say this.

We've neglected personal righteousness, that grace is not a license for sin. Grace is not a pass card for you so that you can just be careless and neglectful in what God has commanded. Our personal, our righteousness before God is not dependent upon our personal righteousness or our obedience, we praise God for that every Sunday, every Wednesday, hopefully every day and every hour.

Yes, we are saved by grace. But those who have tasted grace should take obedience seriously, should they not? And take his warnings seriously. There are warnings.

Yes, believer, even for you, there are warnings. Do not trespass them. Do not skip over them, go under them, work your way around them or ignore that they are there.

Charles Leiter says this, that even in the Grand Canyon, he says the great majority of the people, if not almost all of them who go there, have no intention of jumping off. Yet there's signs everywhere that says, stop, you've gotten too close. Even those who have no intention of destroying themselves can destroy themselves through neglect and through ignorance.

You need to know that. And there needs to be a healthy fear in your life with regard to God's word. There needs to be.

And again, that needs to be cultivated. How's it cultivated? By studying the word of God and by sitting under biblical preaching and by fellowshiping with saints who are also doing the same thing. Now, let's go on here, we come to the end, he says, well, there's one part here that I want to show you, he says, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is.

Now, this is real important. Why? This is not just some superficial statement Paul is throwing out in order to connect some ideas together. Here's what's going on.

First of all, I want you to I want you to know who Paul was. Paul was a scholar. In the Jewish context, he was a scholar studied in the best school under the best teacher.

Even after years, the kings knew of his learning and said, all your learning has made you mad. They knew he was a scholar. Now, he also could have stood toe to toe with any Greek philosopher out there.

And many times he did. What I'm trying to say is this. This is important, especially for you university students who are under being bombarded constantly.

And it's this Paul understood legend. He understood myth. He understood that he understood wives tales, even warned against wives tales, myths and empty philosophies of men.

All right. This is a scholar speaking who could stand toe to toe with the best of them today. So when someone comes around and says, yeah, Paul was just preaching myth.

No, Paul knew what a myth was. Paul was preaching something he believed with all his life, I don't say his heart, I say his life. Why? Because he gave it and so did the other apostles.

And the whole point is Paul saw Jesus not as a myth, but a historical reality, a real man from Nazareth. Who is the incarnate God who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, was raised again on the third day, ascended into heaven and is now seated at the right hand of God and is king of kings and lord of lords. That was not a myth for Paul.

Say what you want, but don't ever. Ever bring in that nonsense that Paul was proclaiming a myth. He said, no, it really is the word of God.

He based his life on it. Men don't die for myths. They don't.

Men die for what they know to be historic realities. You say, well, lunatics can die for myth. If you make that accusation, then I challenge you to stand toe to toe intellectually with Paul, the apostle, and then tell me he's a lunatic.

Now, let's go on. Oh, one other thing about the word of God and its reception that is extremely important, and I overlooked it, but I want I want you to hear this. Just listen in James one twenty one, just listen to what James tells us, therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness in humility, receive decamites, the same word as except receive the word planted, which is able to save your souls.

Now, notice there's two things here. One is putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness. Don't expect to hear from God if most of the time you have your ear to the world.

Don't expect to hear from God if there are sins you refuse to let go of. Now, I'm not talking about hidden things. I don't mean go home tonight and try to figure out what's wrong with, you know, I'm talking about things in which, you know, this is not pleasing to God.

Let go of that. Repent of it, let go of it and open yourself to the word to receive it humbly, humbly. Humbly.

No arguments with God. No explaining away what he said. Humbly, Lord, you said it.

And I believe it, I'll do it and realize that in this commitment, we all struggle. But it is it is the struggle in which we are participating. What do I mean by that? I'm struggling to do this.

Not 100 percent there. I fail many times. That's not the point.

The point is there's so many calling themselves Christian that aren't even involved in the struggle. They don't care. They don't even think about impurities in their life, hidden sins in their life or any other thing.

But you're different. You've been born again. Now, lay aside wickedness, lay aside these things.

And receive the word implanted in your heart. Now, let's go on. He says, but for what it really is, the word of God is the last phrase, which also performs its work in you who believe.

It performs its work in you who believe. Now, this is extremely important. Performs its work actually comes from one single Greek word.

And you're going to kind of get an idea of what that word is the moment I say it. Energeo, energeo. It means to operate, to work, to perform, to to manifest power.

The Greek scholar Mounts says that above all things, it denotes. Now, listen, *energeo*, it denotes energy. And efficiency, a word theologians will use, it's efficacious.

It does what it sets out to do. Remember what God said in Isaiah, my word won't return to me void. Now, every believer has that word abiding in them.

Now, this is an encouragement. This word is in us and it is performing, it is doing, it is completing God's will, and that is a great encouragement. But it does not lead us to being passive.

It leads us to feed upon the word. Now, I want to say some things about this, first of all, he says, which also performs its work in you who believe. This is, again, present tense.

It's just ongoing, continually performing its work. You see, that's why the believer is going to be fruitful. Yes, we can pass through times of slothfulness.

Yes, the true believer can pass through times of fruitlessness. Yes, that can happen. But overall, you're going to see fruit in the life.

Why? Because this supernatural, this powerful word is constantly working, the gospel working, working, taking ground. Yes. Taking ground.

Making you into something you were not before, taking ground. Now, in whom does the word of God effectually work? OK, in whom does it do this? He says, which also performs its work in you who believe. Again, I'm sorry, but present tense, continuous action.

What does he talk to those of you who go on believing the Christian life begins by faith, it continues on by faith, it ends in faith. You say it ends in faith. Yes.

When you step over and you see him as he is, faith is no longer faith, it's sight. And that's our glorious hope, the *parousia*, one day when he returns or one day when we go to him. But right now, in the course of our entire life, it is faith, not the kind of faith that these word of faith people are talking about.

Not the kind of faith that you hear these TV evangelists, many of them speak of no faith in the word of God that he has spoken faith in the gospel specifically of God and its power to work in you. You must believe. I encourage you.

I exhort you. I urge you. I beseech you.

Has he ever given you reason not to believe ever? Then go on believing, abound in believing, believe more. Believe more, but you can't do that. You can't do that if you're going to neglect the foundation of faith, which is the word of God, not some prophecy from a self-proclaimed prophet, not some dream or vision that you had faith in the written word of God, the inspired, inerrant word of God, faith in the word of God.

Now, how does the scriptures. Effectively, effectually work in the ones believing, you know, here we could we could sit for. We could sit for days and not even come close to exhausting this.

But I want to give you four things, four things that will be helpful for you, I believe, because they were helpful for me. I want us to just go quickly, we're going to go to four different places and we're going to do it quickly. I want you to go to first Peter, chapter one, verse twenty three, first Peter, chapter one, verse

twenty three.

For you have been born again, not of seed, which is perishable, but imperishable, that is through the living and enduring word of God. Now, what does this say? If you are Christian, if you have been born again, the word has been implanted into you supernaturally by the spirit of the living God, the word of the gospel. And it is it is the same idea of the father implanting a seed into the womb of the mother.

Conception and the breaking forth of real life, that's what happened to you. You see that. I mean, this was not of you born, not of men, not of the will of man, but of the will of God.

He implanted this seed, his seed in you and he made it conceive and bring forth life. You see that if you had a part in this, I would be frightened for you and me. The fact he did it and it was a super natural work.

And that's why you're here. This is why you believe. Now, I want you to look also at first Peter two to.

Like newborn babes long for the pure milk of the word so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, then he says, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. God did it, didn't he? He made life in you spiritual life. But again, I'm so tired of these great truths being used as an argument for being passive.

If he's done this in you, then what are you and I to do? We're to continue to feed upon the word. Our nutrition, our strength, people tell me, well, brother Paul, I just feel so weak spiritually now is my first question is, well, talk to me about your time in the word. Talk to me about your genuine fellowship with other believers.

I don't mean sitting around talking about football and talking about Christ and tell me about the preaching you're hearing. And almost every every time those are lacking at least one of them, usually all three, you see that. Well, why are they so much stronger than me? Why do they seem so much more healthy? Maybe they're more desperate and they recognize their weakness and they're feeding upon the word, feeding upon the word.

Oh, I know, I know, I know your lives are busy. I know that some of us in God's providence have been given the privilege of spending a great deal of our time every day studying the word of God, and I know that many of you have a different calling. But my dear friend, make a priority, make a priority, sit down, what is most important? You know, you must eat, you know that, don't you? You wouldn't think of going days without eating.

Don't think of going days without the word of God. I plead with you, don't, don't. Now, another thing that the word of God does, it not only births life in us, it not only feeds us, but Romans 12 to just quickly run over there.

I do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you will so that you may prove what the will of God is that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Now, the word of God is not mentioned here, but in the context it is understood, it is the chief way in which our mind is renewed, the spirit of God, using the word of God to change our thinking and to conform our thinking to the thinking or the mind of Christ, this renewal is necessary for what? I could say transformation, but I'm not, I'm going to say metamorphosis, because this Greek word is actually where we get that word to show you the power of the change. How is a person changed by the renewing of their mind? What is the great instrument of that renewal, the spirit of God, using the word of God transformation, isn't that isn't the greatest pain of your heart? It's not affliction.

It's not trials. It's not things like that. Isn't the greatest pain of your heart the same as mine, a lack of transformation, a wanting to be more like him? Well, it begins here.

I'm sorry. You can't go to some meeting somewhere and get touched by somebody and get jumped up 10 notches. You can't just sit around and put your Bible, as I said, under your pillow and hope it seep through your head.

No, and you can't just listen to sermons, you, you, you must take the word of God to heart. And lastly, and maybe most importantly, just Hebrews four, just quickly Hebrews 4:12, for the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two edged sword and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit of both joints and marrow and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. You know, it is a common maxim among men.

It is a it is a wisdom that everyone agrees with, that we can see so many faults in other people and we can't see them in ourselves. Is that not true? Then we can spot it, we can spot parents doing wrong, other kids doing wrong, other people doing it, we can just spot it. And yet it is also a common maxim that we are blind so often to our own maladies, to our own errors.

Jesus, remember, get the log out of your own eye. Now, how can we ever see hidden sins? How can we see intentions that at this moment we are blind to them as we study the word of God? What does the word of God do? Remember, when the spirit of God comes, he'll convict the world of sin. He used the word of God to do that in the life of his people.

And as we're reading the word of God, what does it do? It cuts through our veneer. It goes down into the deepest part of our heart and it exposes, it exposes, it exposes. And you have to be brave because you're going to see things when you study the word of God that you do not want to see.

He will cut you to the quick. He'll show you things about yourself, but it is out of love that he does this. Hidden things that no one can see, not even you.

The word of God is faithful to expose those things, not to lead us to some repentance unto death or condemnation. No, but to lead us where? To freedom through repentance. Through confession, through crying out to God, oh, dear people.

It is no mystery, is it? Why we struggle so much, are we neglecting the word of God? Are we neglecting? Not the word of men. But the word of God, let's pray. Father, in the quiet of this moment, I pray, I think of all the times in my own life, the busyness that I have neglected the word.

I pray for my brothers and sisters in Christ here. Lord, just tear down. Just tear down any veneer.

Show us if we've neglected your word. And Lord, by your good spirit. Woo us back to you.

I don't really know how to pray, Lord, except grant grace. That that I, my brothers and sisters in Christ would not neglect your word. In Jesus name.

Saints be encouraged. Now, don't you don't you take this word. Home with you and allow it to twist, allow the devil to twist it.

So that you're sitting in a corner somewhere. Know that grace, grace has been given to you in Christ. To start again in the word and if you fail again, start again.

And if or when. You neglected again, repent and start again. Please, I beg you for your own sake, for my sake and encourage one another, encourage one another, encourage me, encourage Anthony, encourage Mark, encourage all.

Now, with some pharisaical critical spirit, hoping to find that someone's doing worse than you, just lovingly and gently, it's be about encouraging one another to be in the word, God bless you.

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