



## Heart to Heart 1 Thessaonlians 2:13

### Words Matter

Recently I received an email sharing the following actual church

announcements:

- Thursday night's Potluck Supper will take place this week. Prayer and medication to follow.
- Eight new choir robes are currently needed, due to the addition of several new members and the deterioration of some older ones.
- For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
- Ladies, please don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don't forget to bring your husbands.

As we smile at poorly worded announcements, we realize that whether we are playing sports, learning a musical instrument, or spending time in our daily working environment, words matter. They have meaning and significance. We also know that when we read and study the Bible, the teaching it contains matters. Its words have meaning; they are important.

In recent weeks here at First Presbyterian, we have been exploring the Book of 1 Thessalonians. In chapter 2 we read, "*We also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe*" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Like Christians all over the world, we know that interacting with Scripture feeds our souls, challenges our lifestyles, and enables us to grow in our faith. For others, it is often perceived as little more than an antiquated collection of myths and fables, a kind of moral rulebook, a jumbled collection of religious thoughts. Yet the more time we take to actually read it and seek to understand it, the more impact it has on us.

### You Received...

When we pick up a book, one of our first questions is, "Who wrote it?" In the case of the

Bible, there are two answers to the question. The first is to say that the Bible was written by over 40 authors over a period of about 1,600 years, and is not just one book, but a collection of books, 66 in all. It was written on three continents, Asia, Africa, and Europe; and in three languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. Its writers' vastly differing backgrounds and positions in life include politician, soldier, priest, fisherman, shepherd, tax collector, king, Jewish rabbi, and Gentile doctor.

The Bible includes public records, history, poetry, prophecy, sermons, hymns, letters, and miscellaneous other documents. It also demonstrates remarkable unity. Although its writers deal with the most important questions that have ever occupied men's minds, and write on a great number of subjects, they do so with a harmony and continuity unique in all literature.

The second answer is that the Bible had one divine Author. The inspiration of Scripture reveals to us a harmony of the active mind of the writer and the sovereign direction of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Holy Spirit inspired, led, and directed the writers' thoughts while using their own personalities, educational and cultural backgrounds, and life experiences.

The Apostle Paul sums it up this way: "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Peter gives us additional insight when he writes, "*No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

The Bible's divine authorship guarantees its unity, with each separate part contributing perfectly to all the others. Dr. J. I. Packer's vivid illustration helps us at this point: "The Bible appears like a symphony orchestra with the Holy Ghost leading; each instrument has been brought willingly, spontaneously, creatively to play his notes just as the great conductor desired."

### You Accepted...

In receiving the Scripture as the Word of God, we should then come to it expectantly and joyfully. As Christian people we are meant to

enjoy the Bible. It should be a constant means of enlightenment, enrichment, and encouragement, its dynamic influence bringing a deepening joy into our daily lives. The author of Psalm 119 writes of exactly that experience: "*I find delight in your commandments, which I love... I delight in your law... and I delight in your law as one who finds great spoil*" (Psalm 119:47, 70, 162).

### You Believed...

Paul tells the Thessalonians that the Word of God brings a dynamic and living power into their lives, yet we know from our own experience that we must come to it regularly. Jesus said, "*Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God*" (Matthew 4:4). In order to give our souls the nourishment they need, we must feed on God's Word regularly. Yet sadly we find ourselves treating the Scriptures more like a spiritual medicine cabinet, to be opened only in an emergency or when we need of a spiritual pick-me-up. Scripture is, however, meant to be continual nourishment, part of our daily diet.

If we need to come to it regularly, we also need to come to it diligently. Effective Bible study requires discipline and diligence. We are tempted at times to treat the Bible like a spiritual supermarket, wandering the aisles picking up pieces here and there as they appeal to us. The Bible is rightly described as a gold mine, yet it does not yield its riches to the casual prospector, but rather to the person who is willing to come to it regularly and dig deep, spending time in its pages diligently and regularly listening for the voice of God to speak into their own lives.

Finally we need to come to the Scriptures prayerfully and dependently in order to deepen our relationship with the Lord. It is within the pages of Scripture that intimacy with Him is found; it is there that we grow in faith as we seek to read and understand and then apply it to our daily living. Those who consistently grow in their faith regularly nourish their souls by spending time in God's Word. So examine your own practice of reading, reflecting, and meditating on the Scriptures. It is in the reading and application of the Scriptures that real change begins.