

Thankful for the Effect of Living Under
The Authority of Scripture
1 Thessalonians 1:1-2:16

KSBC 11/29/09

Introduction -

How many of you remember Y2K?

For those of you who don't, let me tell you about it.... in 1998 and 1999 there was a lot of talk about the disasters that were going to happen when the new millennia arrived. According to many of the pundits, the coming of the year 2000, because of computer glitches in a variety of sectors, was going to bring about widespread disaster and frustration for the human race. As a result, people bought and stockpiled food, space heaters, kerosene, water so they would be ready when these difficulties arrived. I stumbled across an interesting website recently as I was thinking about this called "Ironic Y2K predictions". The site compares the prediction to what actually happened. Doing a cursory reading of the content of the site shows that the dire predictions made and proliferated by many never came true!

For those of you who are familiar with the buzz the Y2K problem caused, do you remember how authoritatively we were told about shortages of water, fuel, and food? Do you remember the warnings about the inevitable social upheaval which was looming on the horizon?

You don't have to raise your hands, but how many of you stocked up on food, water and the like in the event the pundits who were predicting the Y2K catastrophe were right? Maybe some of you have Y2K food still on hand....nearly ten years later!

The fact that I am telling you about this is revealing in itself. The catastrophe which was promised never came. It is estimated that somewhere between \$200 billion and \$500 billion dollars was spent preparing for something about which we had been authoritatively warned, and which never happened.

Stanley Bing, in the February 7, 2000 edition of Fortune magazine writes:

It is clear by now that the nations, companies, and individuals that did nothing because they were too stupid to prepare for the Y2K global disaster fared exactly as well as AT&T, which reportedly spent more than \$500 million on the problem.

In short, we were had. Our fear of numbers and cosmic occurrences was played masterfully by nuts of all varieties...And now? Now, I'm afraid, I am not amused....

They made us spend a ton of money. The total price tag seems to be upwards of half a trillion dollars....

Y2K?! They spoke with such authority...how could it have happened?

Why do I bring that up this morning after reading 1 Thessalonians 1 and most of chapter 2? Because it serves as a fine and recent example of how authoritatively humans can speak and still be wrong. Those who in 1998 and 1999 spoke with such voice and authority were wrong...making them, effectively not very authoritative sources of information.

As we come to 1 Thessalonians, we find a very different story...an authoritative story...recognizing the word of God for what it is...the word of God and not the word of men: In addition, we see the tremendous effects that living under the authority of Word of God produces in the lives of the Proclaimer and the Hearer. As the Y2K example shows us, the word of men is fallible, often misleading, and unsure.

The word of God, on the other hand, possesses the unwavering characteristics of being (Psalm 19):

- Perfect or blameless
- Sure
- Right
- True
- Eternal
- Life-changing

As we come to our text this morning, we see clearly that the decision of faith to place ourselves under the Word of God has a tremendous effect in the life of the believer who day-by-day submits himself/herself to the authority of God's word.

What is authority?

au · thor · i · ty

—noun, plural -ties.

the power to determine, adjudicate, or otherwise settle

1. **issues or disputes; jurisdiction; the right to control, command, or determine.**

Our text for this morning comes from 1 Thessalonians 2:13....

1 Thessalonians 2:13: And 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.

The Baptist Confession of Faith – The 1689 Confession states:

The Scripture is self-authenticating (it establishes itself as being authentic or genuine). Its authority does not depend upon the testimony of any man or church, but entirely upon God, its author, who is truth itself. It is to be received because it is the Word of God.

As we look back over the chapter which precedes our text for this morning, before seeing the effect of living under the authority of Scripture, we'll examine first what NOT living under the authority of Scripture looks like. From the earliest days of human history when Adam and Eve succumbed to the devil's entrapment, the disastrous consequences of not living under the authority of Scripture have been seen:

- A. The Opposite Effect of living under the Authority of Scripture
 1. Kill the Lord Jesus and the prophets and those who followed **(2:15)**
 2. Displease God **(2:15)**
 3. Oppose all mankind **(2:15)**;
 4. Filling up the measure of their sins **(2:16)**
 5. God's wrath has come upon them at last **(2:16)**

This is a very dire picture...and though none of us wants to admit that this was the condition of our own lives, on the Authority of Scripture, we must agree with the evaluation of our Holy Creator regarding the condition of our own hearts. Our hearts are deceitful, above all things and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). We are born enemies of God...we do not seek after Him...there is NONE righteous (or acceptable in God's sight...NO, NOT ONE! (Romans 3). On the authority of Scripture, this is what we MUST believe, before we will EVER come to God for His solution which is found in the One and Only Sufficient Savior, Jesus Christ. This is the necessary first step to becoming a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ...otherwise, we will seek to discount our true condition, thereby attempting, in some way, to assist in our own salvation...which is both impossible and insulting to God, who alone can provide salvation for His people!

So how then does a person who begins as an enemy of God; one who displeases God, one who is targeted as a recipient of God's just wrath; how does this sort of person get turned around...to become a friend and follower of God...who seeks to please God in all he does...who is a child of God...an heir to the salvation only God can offer? How does this happen? The short answer...ONLY through the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Have you trusted in Jesus Christ ALONE to save you from your sin? If not, today is the acceptable time, today is the day of salvation...don't leave this place without trusting in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord!

- B. The Effect of Living Under the Authority of Scripture comes from a Powerful and Effective Message **(1:5)**
 1. A Powerful Gospel...it produces change of heart and life! It has great authority, the right to control command and determine.
 2. An Empowered Gospel...it is the Holy Spirit who takes the Gospel message and uses it to produce fruit in the life of the one hearing it....
 3. A Convicting Gospel....but what is the hearer of the Gospel convicted of? The Gospel shows us:
 - The truth about God we have not yet believed;
 - The truth about our sin we have not yet perceived;

- The truth about God’s one and only sufficient Savior, Jesus we have not yet received;
 - The truth about the need for faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance of sin.
- C. The Effect of Living Under the Authority of Scripture is seen in the life of an Approved and Authority-invested messenger **(2:4)**
- a. **(1:5)** – Men of character - You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake;
 - b. **(2:4)** – Men approved by God to please God...we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so to speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts;
- D. The Effect of Living Under the Authority of Scripture
1. Causes God’s people to rejoice **(1:2a)**;
 2. Causes God’s people to pray for other believers **(1:2b)**;
 3. Causes change in the behavior of once unbelieving people **(1:6-7, 9-10)**;
 4. Causes the message of the Gospel to be spread **(1:8)**
 5. Causes change in motive **(2:4)**;
 6. Causes change in outlook...even in suffering **(2:13-14)**

Conclusion:

Much like the Y2K example with which we began this morning, in the Garden of Eden the devil came along authoritatively questioning the Authority and Truthfulness of God’s Word. The serpent’s questioning was both misleading and false. The havoc wreaked in human history since that day has been devastating. On the other hand, the harmony which grows out of submission to the Authority of Scripture is both tried and proven.

Application:

- The Scripture is authoritative, one day you will be judged by it:
- Resolve today to reap the benefits of living under the Authority of Scripture by Asking the Spirit of God to make you aware of ways you have been ignoring it.
- Ask the Lord today to probe your life with the powerful message of the Gospel so that you might faithfully live in God-honoring ways.
- React to the authority of Scripture so that you might have the privilege of being a faithful messenger of God’s mercy and grace.
 - This involves:
 1. Reading God’s Word
 2. Praying over God’s Word
 3. Studying God’s Word
 4. Living God’s Word
 5. Announcing God’s Word

Study Questions

1. Read **1 Thessalonians 1:1-2:16**. What are your observations about the link between hearing God's word and living it?
2. How does the theme of thankfulness emerge in this passage? What are the things specifically listed for which the apostle Paul is particularly thankful? How do those things carry over into our day?
3. Read and evaluate the statement from the Baptist Confession of Faith regarding the authority of the Scripture. What about this statement do you find helpful? What, in your thinking, needs further clarification? How will you go about seeking that clarification?
4. As you read this opening section of 1 Thessalonians, what attitudes in your own life do you find lacking as you compare them to those of the apostle Paul and the Thessalonian believers? What solution will you seek for this?
5. What effects has the Powerful Gospel (1:5) brought about in your life? What are the on-going effects of the Gospel in your daily life? How do you need to grow in your understanding of your daily need for the Gospel?
6. How has the Lord used the people who brought you the message of the Gospel to impact your thinking and living? Have you given thanks to the Lord recently for the people He has used in your life to impact it with the message of the Gospel?
7. What are the effects of living under the authority of God's word which you have personally experienced? What are some of the consequences you have experienced in your life from not having submitted to the authority of God's word in your life? What are some areas of your life which presently need attention?
8. What is the relationship between receiving the Word of God as such and not as the word of men (1 Thessalonians 2:13) and turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God (1:9)? What are the idols which remain in your life and how will you deal with them?
9. What do you want to do, use or remember from today's study?