



Thoughts from First Thessalonians ...

The Word of God Works

One of the great themes of the Bible is that the scriptures are composed of living words. "For the word of God is living and active," penned the author of Hebrews, "and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). "You have been born again," affirmed Peter, "not of the seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). "The words that I have spoken to you," asseverated the Lord Jesus Himself, "are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). Dead words lie there on the page and do nothing, but the words of God — while distributed on printed page or in some form of digital transmission — are endowed with a life in themselves, and able to beget life in the process of

regenerating man. This power and this life are to be pondered, and not dismissed or diminished in any way by the hearer.

- **Receiving the message** — The apostle Paul came into Thessalonica and first delivered the message of God's truth in the synagogue. Some of the Jews and a number of Gentiles who hung around the synagogue believed the message about Jesus and were immersed into Christ. These converts were the beginning of the congregation at Thessalonica, and formed the core to which others could be added. The goal of the apostle, then, in teaching these brethren following their immersions into Christ, was to help them to "walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." Building off that statement, the apostle continues. "And for this reason," he begins, as he recalls his first encounter with these saints, "we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God ..." (1 Thessalonians 2:13). This is a point to ponder: the apostle himself, even with his ability to perform miracles, was apparently often challenged with the idea that his message was fabricated by men — himself and others. Even today, the foundational issue is whether the Bible is a collection of manmade teaching, or whether these are the very words of the great God Himself, written by the pen of man but inspired by the Holy Spirit. But, praise the All Wise, He set it up so that the Bible can be proven to be His word by an inductive reasoning process, and modern saints can also receive it as the word of God rather than that of men.

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- **Work in believers** — As noted earlier, the words of God have a life of their own, so to speak, a life given to them by the living God. Therefore the apostle comments that when the Thessalonians received the word as the word of God, he describes it as that "which performs its work in you who believe." They were "born again of the living and abiding word of God" to begin with (1 Peter 1:23). The great principle from the physical realm is that "life begets life"; that is, that life can only come from a previous living organism, a seed (plant or, in a manner of speaking, animal). Life cannot come from something inanimate. Similarly, spiritual life cannot come from a chemistry text or mathematics handbook; it can only come from the living word of God.

Not only does spiritual life come magnificently from the word, but the maintenance and continuing growth of the Christian comes from that word as well. Just as the DNA in the cell has the information for reproduction and also has the instructions for keeping the living cell functioning, the word of God has the instructions for the living saint. The word ultimately performs the work, while the disciple of Christ feeds on and implements those instructions. The message is clear: if the saint will do his part, God and His word will accomplish the transformation.

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