

## WALKING OUT HIS WORD EACH DAY THE 1 THESSALONIANS SERIES

### COMMENTARY ON MESSAGE #6

February 11th, 2018

Words are very powerful. While it would be accurate to say that God is omnipotent (all-powerful: *omni* means *all*, *potent* means *power*, *omni/potent* = all-powerful), His power or omnipotence finds its greatest expression through the words He speaks.

*And God said, "Let there be light,"  
and there was light.  
Genesis 1:3*

Isn't it wondrous to read the creation account of Genesis 1, the very first chapter in the Bible, and see the power of God in the words that He speaks? A universe leaps into existence because God speaks. Wow! In this week's commentary we will consider the power of words. As we dig deeper into I Thessalonians there is much for us to discover about the role and the power of words.

Remember, the words in I Thessalonians are Paul's words to the Thessalonians, but in a deeper sense they are God's words.

**Q1:** Please read II Peter 3:15-16. On what level (in verse 16) does Peter place Paul's letters?

In the first three chapters of I Thessalonians it is obvious that Paul was very fond of the believers there. Not only did he repeatedly give thanks to God for them, he **complimented** them for the quality of their devotion to Christ and how it showed clearly in the way they **WALKED OUT THE WORD EACH DAY**. Paul's words should not be taken as flattery (see 2:5). He was being sincere and truthful in his assessment of them. But Paul had a special goal in mind, a deeper meaning and purpose behind his words.

**Q2:** Take time to reflect back upon your life. Can you think of an occasion when someone you admired (a parent, a teacher, a coach, etc...) gave you a compliment or spoke words of affirmation that you can still remember?

**Q3:** Why is it that you can still recall these words?

The fact that you can still remember those words shows the power of a compliment or words of praise directed to you. They can be a tremendous source of encouragement.

*“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”*

Jesus spoke these words while He was on earth. Do you know which of the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) records these words of Jesus? Don't spend too much time thinking about that, it is a bit of a trick question. The truth of the matter is that those words are found in Acts 20:35. Paul quoted Jesus in this verse. This indicates that these words of Jesus, though not recorded in any of the four gospels, were well known among the early Christians. Now think of how this truth, that *it is more blessed to give than to receive*, should motivate us to speak words of compliment, praise and affirmation into the lives of others. What an endless opportunity to bless others, and in blessing others we are blessed too.

**Q4:** Do you think this good habit is one that you already have, or is it something you need to start doing more frequently? Can you think of a recent occasion when, by the grace of God and for His glory, you complimented someone for the purpose of building them up?

In the sermon that is the basis of this week's commentary, we considered the meaning of the word encourage. To encourage someone literally means to inspire courage within them. There is no doubt that one of Paul's central purposes in writing this letter was to encourage the Thessalonians Christians (to inspire courage within them).

**Q5:** What do you recall about the founding of the church in Thessalonica and the background of I Thessalonians? Why did these Christians need encouragement (to be inspired to courage)? Hint: This would be a good time to review Acts 17:1-10.

Life in this sinful fallen world brings with it difficult circumstances that can, if not handled biblically, weaken one's faith, discourage, disillusion or cause fear and worry. The Apostle Peter was a great man and he was the original leader of Christianity in the first 12 chapters of Acts. There were many times he showed great courage. Unfortunately, there were two times in his life when he gave into fear and cowardice. The more well-known of his failures took place on the night of Jesus' arrest and trial. Each of the four gospel writers makes mention of Peter denying three times that he knew Jesus. The majority of Jesus's three years of ministry had taken place outside of the city of Jerusalem and Peter was not from Jerusalem, so most residents there would not automatically recognize him.

*After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said,  
“Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away.”  
Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them,  
“I do not know the man!” Immediately a rooster crowed.  
Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken:  
“Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.”  
And he went outside and wept bitterly.  
Matthew 26:73-75*

The second great failure of Peter, when he gave into fear, is recorded in Galatians 2:11-14. This took place in Antioch, many years after Jesus’s resurrection and ascension to Heaven. Once again, Peter allowed his fear of man and his fear of criticism to cause him to shirk from his duty to be truthful. \* If this could happen to Peter, it can happen to anyone.

**Q6:** Can you think of a time in your life when, because of fear, you chose not to speak up for Jesus Christ, for the gospel and for biblical truth? Of what were you afraid?

Paul knew the Thessalonians Christians faced strong opposition (again, if you have not reviewed Acts 17:1-10, please do so now). As much as Paul wanted to be physically present with them, he recognized that his being in Thessalonica would only intensify the persecution against the church. What could he do to help them? He could encourage them (inspire them to courage) with his words in the letter he wrote to them.

*“We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith,  
your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”  
I Thessalonians 1:3*

To be told these things about themselves by the Apostle Paul, and to know that he was being sincere, must have been a tremendous encouragement to the Thessalonians.

**Q7:** This will take you a few minutes but it will be time well spent. Read carefully through chapters 1-3 of I Thessalonians, looking for the instances when Paul praised or commended the Thessalonians for the way they were following Christ. According to his prayer in 3:13, what was Paul’s ultimate hope for the Thessalonians and how could his words of encouragement to them have led up to this prayer?

\* It could also be said that Peter showed fear, along with the other disciples, when they were caught in the storm in Mark 4:35-41 and when Jesus walked on water in Mark 6:45-50. But on these occasions it was not the fear of man that weakened Peter’s resolve.

Never underestimate the power of your praise in someone else's life.  
Look for opportunities to encourage others (to inspire to courage).  
We have an enemy, Satan, who is always looking for ways to  
**DISCOURAGE** God's people.  
Fight back!

**Q8:** Can you think of a Christian who could use some encouragement right now? Why not put the power of praise to work on their behalf?

*"We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and **encourage** you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials."*  
I Thessalonians 3:2-3

While it is true that a major part of Paul's concern for the Thessalonians was the persecution they faced (and to make things worse, they knew he was being persecuted), they were people just like us. They experienced the same challenges and difficulties we face. Damaged or broken relationships ... financial pressure ... illness ... the sorrowful loss of a loved one ... emotional distress and depression ... worry and anxiety even though we know we are supposed to trust God. We all need encouragement, don't we?

Finally, consider Paul's words in I Thessalonians 3:7-8 ...

*"Therefore brothers, in all our distress and persecution **we were encouraged** about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord."*

**KEY:** Those who seek to encourage others will themselves be encouraged to see God use their words to inspire others to courage.

May Grace Community Church be a place where the power of praise and encouragement is always abundantly displayed. May our love for Jesus Christ and our gratitude to our God and Father motivate us to be those who use the power of words to glorify God and to build up His people.

This is what it means to be  
**WALKING OUT HIS WORD EACH DAY.**