**Faith in Uncertain Times – Part 3**

**Ministry of the Word - 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16**

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Jan. 17th, 2021

**Intro:**

* Planting a church is no easy task. It requires great courage, commitment, and sacrifice. All of us have benefited from those who have gone before us. In some ways, we owe them a great debt for giving of themselves to communicate the gospel to us and establish a church—even this church to which we now belong.
* In 1880, 140 years ago, a small group of courageous, committed, and sacrificial Swedish immigrants banded together with their pastor Erik Wingren to start a new church called the Scandinavian Baptist Church of Rockford, which then became the First Swedish Baptist Church of Rockford, which then became Temple Baptist Church of Rockford, which then became Crosspoint Church of Rockford. We are benefactors and the result of their courage, commitment, and sacrifice.
* In 2007, a small group of courageous, committed, and half-crazy people banded together with their pastor Dave Spooner to start a new church called Mosaic Rockford, which merged with Gateway Community Church, which has now become Crosspoint Church of Rockford. We are benefactors and fruit of their courage, commitment, and sacrifice.
* In 2012, a small group of courageous, committed, and sacrificial Myanmar immigrants banded together with their pastor Kee Thang to start a new church called Myanmar Christian Fellowship, which has now become Crosspoint Church of Rockford, Myanmar. We are the benefactors and fruit of their courage, commitment, and sacrifice.
* All of these churches have gone through difficult times. All of them, at times, did not know if they were going to make it, and at times I did not know if I was going to make it. Leaders worked multiple jobs and volunteered their time at the church; savings were given, sacrifices were made, there were church splits and hypocrites, there were heartaches and hardships, there were misunderstandings and undeserved criticisms, there were missteps and miscues.
* Jesus said, “**I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it**” (Matt 16:18 ESV) and the gates of hell war against it. Why? Because the church, the bride of Christ, is the most beautiful, and wonderous, and magnificent creature of all creation, and she is worth it. You are worth it. **Every time a church is planted, where faith is grown and love is shown, we ought to thank God and greatly rejoice.**
* Paul starts his letter thanking God for them (1 Thess. 1:2). He again thanks God for them later on in this letter (1 Thess. 3:9), along with thanking God twice for them in his second letter (2 Thess. 1:3,2:13). And again, in our text today, we see Paul thank God for them. In this text, there are three causes of thanksgiving that we want to look for in our own congregation.

**Thank God for the reception of His word**

**1 Thess 2:13 NLT**

**Therefore, we never stop thanking God that when you received his message from us, you didn't think of our words as mere human ideas. You accepted what we said as the very word of God—which, of course, it is.**

* Not everyone believes that the Bible (and the gospel) is indeed the word of God. Some think that this book is mere human words. And if you think this book is just human words, you can dissect it, discredit it, and dismiss it, and many have. However, if you believe the gospel and the Bible are indeed the very words of God, you then receive it, and embrace it and live by it.
* Whenever and wherever the Bible's message is received as the word of God and not as mere human ideas, we have reason to thank God. There is no natural reason for people who do this. Christ crucified is a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. But to those God has called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is both the power of God, the wisdom of God, and the Word of God (I Cor. 1:25-26).

**John 1:12-13 ESV**

**But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**

* We must thank God, when His word is received for what it is. It is a supernatural work which is not just dependent upon the communication but the illumination that brings transformation that results in eternal salvation. We ought to thank God for this and ask Him to give “ears that hear” and “eyes that see” so that people will turn from their sin and be forgiven (Mark 4:12). We ought to thank God that He opens our ears and our eyes to receive His word as it is, the very word of God. God continues to do this among us; we pray, we thank you for the reception of your word.

**Thank God for the working of His word**

**1 Thess 2:13c – 14a NLT**

**And this word continues to work in you who believe. 14 And then, dear brothers and sisters, you suffered persecution from your own countrymen.**

* Not only are we to thank God for the reception of His word, but we also need to thank Him for the continued working of His word. His word only works and continues to work in those who believe. Once you believe it, you receive it, and the word will continue to work in you.
* Illustration of a battery . . . once it is in you, it continues to work, it illuminates through you, it activates you, it moves you, and it motivates you. It transforms you from dead to alive. This word is indeed “living and active” (Heb 4:12). It transforms how you think, so that you will be able to test and approve His good, perfect, and pleasing will (Rom. 12:1-2).
* Knowing God’s will and following God’s will can get you in serious trouble from those who oppose God’s will. When you say that through Jesus is the only way to be saved, it will get you in trouble . . . when you say that God defines marriage as one man and one woman, it will get you in trouble . . . when you say there is such a thing as sin or truth or righteousness or wrath, it will get you in trouble . . . and you will suffer persecution from your own countrymen.
* And if faith, hope, and love continue to thrive and grow and expand in the midst of persecution, we should thank God. And we must ask God to remove the stony places in our hearts and the thickets in our thinking so that we will continue to have the word and will of God work and thrive in the soil of our souls. God, we thank you for the continued working of your word, and we ask that your word would be firmly planted and exhibited in every facet of our thinking and our living.

**Thank God for the finality of His word**

**1 Thess 2:14a-16 NLT**

**In this way, you imitated the believers in God's churches in Judea who, because of their belief in Christ Jesus, suffered from their own people, the Jews. 15 For some of the Jews killed the prophets, and some even killed the Lord Jesus. Now they have persecuted us, too.**

* Suffering and persecution have always come against your family tree of faith. It runs in the family from the very beginning. And when we persist in the word of God and follow the will of God, we will suffer as well. And in this, you can greatly rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of His name (See Acts 5:41, I Peter 1:6-8). When you suffer for the faith, you are identifying with those in the faith, and you are walking in the way of the faithful one, suffering with and as Him. There have been and will be those who oppose the word of God and persecute the people of God. Don’t be surprised by this.

**They fail to please God and work against all humanity 16 as they try to keep us from preaching the Good News of salvation to the Gentiles. By doing this, they continue to pile up their sins. But the anger of God has caught up with them at last.**

* The people who do this fail to please God . . . and they work against all humanity . . . and these people think they are working for the benefit of humanity by opposing the will of God . . . They are working against people being saved, which is the best thing by far for humanity. The worst thing about persecution and opposition to the word of God is not what they do to Christians, but by working to keep people from salvation.
* As they do this, they continue to pile up their sins. And God is patent not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). There comes a point where God says, “enough is enough.” Do not mistake God’s patience as God’s approval. There will come a day where God’s anger against sin will be unleashed.
* God gives space for all of our words, but He will always have the final word. We should thank God that His word is just not words like all other words, but His word is final, and He will have the last word.
* God, we thank you that we are in your word and your word is in us. We thank you that we can trust your word, and we cling to your promises that they are true and prove to be true.

**Conclusion**

* Thank God for the proclamation and reception of His word. Thank God for those who have brought it to us. Thank God that He has built His church, thank God that we have a legacy as the family of faith, thank God that we can trust His word and that His word is indeed final.
* And now we return to remember what God has done for us through Christ, as we renew our faith in Him through the receiving of communion together.

**Communion**