**The Church That Echoed (2)**

Rev. Carl Haak in the *Standard Bearer*, vol. 91, issue 14

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing” ([I Thess. 1:8](https://ref.ly/1%20Thess.%201.8;kjv1900?t=biblia)).

From this chapter we learn that there were a number of things that characterized the life of the church in Thessalonica that are given for our example.

First of all, they genuinely received the Word of God as it was preached to them … As Paul preached to them, the Holy Spirit of God worked in their hearts, and that Word possessed them and brought them assurance and conviction and joy of their salvation.

And they had received that Word, says Paul, in much affliction and joy. That is, that Word came at a cost to their families and to their business …

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How did Paul preach to them? He tells us in Acts 17 that he reasoned out of the Scriptures. Still more, he says to us in [Acts 20:27](https://ref.ly/Acts%2020.27;kjv1900?t=biblia) that he left out nothing. He spoke the whole counsel of God—all of the truth of the Word of God—as the truths of the Word of God are all arranged around one centre, all hanging upon one line. That one centre and line is the glory of God—the absolute sovereignty of God! That means that God is almighty, that all things are of God and by God and unto God, as we read in [Romans 11:36](https://ref.ly/Rom%2011.36;kjv1900?t=biblia).

That Word the Thessalonians eagerly received as the Holy Spirit worked in their hearts. Not only did they receive the Word preached to them but they also lived it with a reverent, vibrant faith.

That sounds very strange today. That is the missing element so often today, the element of reverence. Many in the Christian church feel put off by reverence for God. But the Thessalonian faith was, above all things, reverent. They stood in awe of God. Their faith was not a giddy, superficial, flippant, surface faith, but a reverential fear and knowledge of God. Their faith was genuine because they had been brought before God in His majesty and in His grace. They saw that they were dead sinners and that they had no claims upon God, and that they could not lift themselves up by their own will out of their debt. They saw that all of their salvation was of God’s grace working in their hearts. And they embraced that not as a mere doctrine, not with stiff formalism, but with a reverence and a godly awe of the Almighty.

What was the nature of that church? This was the nature of the church that echoed out the Word of God: there was a loving reception of the Word preached to them, and there was a faith that breathed out a reverence for the majesty of God. When those two are in the congregation of the Lord—a reverence for God and a love for His Word preached—then the results will be that the congregation echoes the Word of God. “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord,” says the apostle, “not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.”

“Echoed,” is literally “sounded out, reverberated, resounded.” The picture is this: Through the life and witness of the Thessalonians, the Word of the Lord was resounding throughout the region. As sound waves or as an echo goes out over and over again, being heard everywhere, extending ever broader and farther, so the Thessalonians, in their life as they went forth upon the roads, upon the sea-lanes, in the shops, with their friends and as they traversed the Mediterranean world, echoed forth the Word of God. So much so, Paul says, that we need not say anything. The apostle is not saying that his work as an apostle and preacher of the gospel was no longer needed, no longer necessary, that he could just as well be quiet. No, but he means that, as far as reporting, giving an explanation of the faith and zeal of the Thessalonians, he did not need to report or explain to other Christians what had happened in Thessalonica because it became evident from the Thessalonians themselves. It was very plain to all that Christ’s church was established in Thessalonica because the believers echoed the Word.

The Word of the Lord that the Thessalonians (and we) speak did not originate with them or with us. An echo does not create the sound. It repeats the sound. They had received the Word. They spoke that which they had seen and heard.

Still more. An echo reinforces. It passes the sound on with power. An echo is not a muffler. The power of the Word went on. The Christian, you see, does not simply absorb the sound of the Word of God. Oh, we do absorb it. By the grace of God, we pull it into our hearts. But then the child of God becomes an echo of the Word of God.

If the Word of God does not live within you, it is purely academic and outward. Then you hear it and it sinks into the gray matter and it peters out, and you become absorbed in all of your own things. But when the Word of God is received in the soul, then that Word echoes in your life. It reverberates, going out farther and farther, so that our witness goes on and passes from one to another. You never know where that Word is going to end up. God does. But we never know.

I am reminded of what we read in II Kings 5, during the ministry of Elisha, of how Naaman was told that there was a prophet in Israel who could heal him of his leprosy. That word came to him through a little girl who was carried captive—a little girl of Israel who became a maid to Naaman’s wife who, almost in an off-hand way, said to Naaman’s wife, “Would God, my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria. For he would recover him of his leprosy.” Just the word of a little girl, repeated by a wife to her husband, and Naaman heads off for Israel. That is the power of God’s Word.

Your calling as a member of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is to live a holy life in your neighbourhood, in your school, in your office, in order that your holy life and your words may be as an echo of the truth that God is God.

From you, says the apostle, echoed forth the Word of the Lord. Are you one who has received the Word of God? Have you been brought to know the truth of your salvation, that it was founded in God’s eternal election, not in you, not in your will, not in your choice, but that it was God alone who, from all eternity, chose and determined who would be saved and, by grace, rescued you out of death so that your salvation is not built upon something you did or you decided but upon what God has done? As a result of that election, has God, then, continued to work in you so that you receive and love the Word of God? Then the Word of God will also echo from you—wherever you go, wherever you are. Your life will be as an echo of the living Word of God. And it will be said of you, “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord.”

May God so graciously grant this to you and to me.