

## 1 Thessalonians 2 – Belgic Confession Articles 4, 5, 6

### Restraining a Loose Canon

**Introduction:** Because God’s words demonstrate their genuineness, his people receive and accept them.

#### 1) The Word Received by the Church

- The Thessalonian church is fairly unique among the New Testament churches because they were exemplary in their relationships with one another. (See 1 Thess 4:9-10) Their real conflict was with the outside world that was persecuting them.
- Paul is thankful that the Thessalonians “received” the Word of God which he brought to them. This is the posture of the church to the word. The church does not approve or create the word, but receives it. This is intended to be contrary to the Roman Catholics, who believe that the church gives authority to the word.
- The word is our canon, meaning our ‘rule’ or ‘standard.’ It is the yardstick by which we measure our faith and life. The fact that it is a ‘rule’ does not make it just a book of ‘rules’ to live by. It governs what must be believed in order to be saved by grace.
- In contrast to the church, which receives the word as given in 66 books, liberal Christians and scholars constantly try to take away from them, while the Roman Catholics attempt to add to them.

#### 2) The Word at Work in God’s People

- God’s word is never powerless, but always accomplishes things, creating new realities. Particularly visible here is the work of God by his Spirit, through his word.
- We receive the scriptures that have been given because they demonstrate the divine qualities shown in the Belgic Confession.
- First, the Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts to the truth of these words. This is not a ‘special feeling’ but is a description of the faith he creates in us. The Holy Spirit opens our eyes to believe the words that he has given us.
- Second, and in an external way, we see that the prophecies given in scripture, far in advance of the actual events, actually took place. This is especially true of the prophecies of the Messiah to come, a prophecy thousands of years old, which were fulfilled in Christ.

**Conclusion:** While we may not ‘quarrel’ with the books openly, how often do we add our own traditions to the word, or mentally remove those things which we find unpalatable or difficult?