

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Second Coming Letters of Paul – Part 6

First Thessalonians

I. Exposition of Chapter Two (Continued).

A. **Verse 13** – “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”

1. “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing...” – Paul is about to give another reason why he’s thankful to God concerning these believers. (**Compare this with 1:2-3**).
2. “...when you received the word of God...you welcomed it not as the word of men...” – This is a powerful statement of truth. Even though the message of the Bible came through men, men received it by the Spirit of God. God has communicated to humanity by sending His Word through the minds, hearts and mouths of human beings.

“[Yet] first [you must] understand this, that no prophecy of Scripture is [a matter] of any personal *or* private *or* special interpretation (loosening, solving). For no prophecy ever originated because some man willed it [to do so—it never came by human impulse], but men spoke from God who were borne along (moved and impelled) by the Holy Spirit.”

II Peter 1:19-20 – Amplified Bible

“Every Scripture has been written by the Holy Spirit, the breath of God. It will empower you by its instruction and correction, giving you the strength to take the right direction and lead you deeper into the path of godliness.”

II Timothy 3:16 – The Passion Translation

3. “...which also effectively works in you who believe.” – The words “effectively works” means; “to be engaged in some activity or function, with possible focus upon the energy or force involved.”¹ From this we understand that the Word of God has an energy, a force to make a transformation in a person’s life. Paul states in **Romans 1:16** that “...the gospel of Christ...is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes...”. Dr. Thomas Constable writes:

“The Word of God has the creative power of God behind it and in it (Gen. 1:3). Paul credited the changes in the Thessalonians to this spoken Word of God. Not only had it effected changes in them in the past, but also it was continuing to change them since they continued to believe it.”²

4. The Word of God has Power to:

- a. Produce Faith in Us – **Romans 10:17**.
- b. Bring Healing to our Bodies – **Proverbs 4:20-22; Psalm 107:20**.
- c. Make us Free as we Continue in it – **John 8:31-32**.
- d. Cleanse our lives from sin - **Ephesians 5:26; John 15:3; Psalm 119:9,11**.

B. **Verse 14** – “For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans,”

1. Paul is saying that the Thessalonians became “imitators” of the churches in Judea, in that they had suffered persecution for their faith, just as the believers in Judea had. The Bible makes it clear that there is a “suffering” as a believer which is in the form of persecution (**II Timothy 3:12; I Peter 4:12-19**).

C. **Verses 15-16** – “...who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up *the measure* of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.”

1. Paul seems to be telling the Thessalonians not to be surprised by the persecution they’re experiencing. We also should not be surprised when people come against us due to our Christianity.

¹Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 510.

²Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 695.

- a. They killed the Lord Jesus (**Acts 2:22-23; 3:14-15, 7:51-52**).
- b. They killed their own Prophets

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." - Matthew 5:11-12.

- c. They persecuted the Apostles – (**Acts 4:1-17; 12:1-4; 14:1-5, 19-21; John 15:18; 16:1-3**).
- d. They were not God-pleasers, they pleased themselves. (**cf. Galatians 1:10**). Paul comforted the Thessalonian Christians by encouraging them that *they* were right, that *they* are the ones pleasing God. With all the opposition they were enduring, they may have wondered if they were on the wrong side.
- e. They forbid us to speak to Gentiles to be saved – (**e.g. Acts 4:18**)
- f. They **"...fill up measure of their sins..."** (**Genesis 15:16, Matthew 23:32**). Dr. Robert Utley writes: **"To fill up the measure of their sins' is an Old Testament concept (Gen. 15:16) that was also cited by Jesus (Matt. 23:32). It suggests that God will only allow sin to go so far before certain judgment comes."**³

- g. They come under wrath to the uttermost (**I Thessalonians 5:9, 1:10**). Believers in Christ are delivered from the wrath to come. Those who reject Christ will come under the wrath of God. (**John 3:36, Romans 2:5-8, Revelation 6:16-17**.)

D. Verses 17-18 – "But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us."

- 1. Paul's love and care for these new believers is expressed strongly again. He felt it necessary to let them know that, and to give them a reason for his long time away from them. Dr. Constable writes:

"Paul and his companions had to leave Thessalonica prematurely, and for Paul the separation was an especially sorrowful one. He compared it to being bereft (lit. orphaned). He felt torn from them. However, even though absent in body his readers were very present in his affections. Moreover, Paul eagerly anticipated the opportunity to return to Thessalonica to see them again. He had attempted such a visit more than once, but Satan, the adversary who had interfered and had made the apostle's ministry in person impossible for the present, had hindered him."⁴

- 2. **"...but Satan hindered us."** – The word **"hinder"** means; **"to use strong measures in causing someone not to do something—to prevent"**⁵ The name **"Satan"** means; **"an adversary, opponent, enemy."**⁶

a. Some activities of Satan against Believers:

- 1) Deception. This is Satan's greatest weapon against the believer. **Colossians 2:8; Ephesians 4:22; Hebrews 3:12-13.**
- 2) Temptation to Sin. **Matthew 4:1-10; Galatians 6:1; I Thessalonians 3:5; James 1:13-14.**
- 3) Inciting Persecution. **Matthew 13:21; Galatians 6:12; II Timothy 3:12.**
- 4) Promoting Divisions. **I Corinthians 1:10; II Corinthians 2:10-11.** Taking offense has been called **"The Bait of Satan."**

E. Verses 19-20 – "For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy."

- 1. **"our hope"** – **"confident expectation."**
- 2. **"joy"** – **"gladness", not based upon our circumstances.**
- 3. **"crown of rejoicing"** – **"that which one boasts about"**⁷

"Just to see these believers stand in the presence of the Lord at His coming would fulfill the apostles' hope and would be all the glory and joy they wanted. They were like parents who rejoice to see their children have good success. They were like teachers who feel rewarded when their students go on to live a worthwhile life."⁸

³The Blackaby Study Bible, Richard Blackaby, Gen. Ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 1429.

⁴Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Thessalonians* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2022), 32.

⁵Louw and Nida, 164.

⁶*Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary*, William D. Mounce and Rick D. Bennett, Jr. (e-sword version 1993).

⁷Louw and Nida, 430.

⁸*The Complete Biblical Library: Acts – Revelation, Volume 2*, (Empowered Life, Tulsa, OK, 2016.) 845.