

1 Thess 2:13-20

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. 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, 15 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, 16 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.

17 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. 18 Therefore we wanted to come to you – even I, Paul, time and again – but Satan hindered us. 19 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? (Appearance) 20 For you are our glory and joy.

The life of a Christian is not always smooth,

We have challenges in our life,

- some from the outside
- some from within.

In chapter one we read that the believers received the word in much affliction.

In the body of scripture we just read,

- Paul mentions persecution,
- then in chapter 3 he mentions temptation.

Fortunately God has provided us with resources

- to help us thru the challenges we face in life.

The first resource we have is the word of God, verse 13.

1 Thess 2:13

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The church received Paul's words as being from God.

How do we know it's God's word.

What about internal evidences?

One of those internal evidences is the unity in the bible.

- There are 66 books
- written on three different continents
- 3 different languages over a span of 1500 years
- by more than 40 authors

2 Tim 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

That would explain why there are no contradictions. The word is inspired by God!

Then there is prophecy.

- There are more than 300 prophecies of Jesus in the OT.

There are many historical studies on Jesus,

They all say of Jesus,

- “one thing we can know for sure,
- He died on a cross.”

Another thing we know from history,

- most scholars believe
- that the disciples believed
- they saw Jesus raised from the dead.

Most scholars obviously believe that Christianity would not have gotten started

- had the disciples not believed what they saw.

There were two specific people that believed Jesus had risen,

- one was James His brother
- and the other was Saul of Tarsus.

Why is this important? Because they didn't believe at one time.

Mark 3:21

21 But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind."

John 7:3-5

3 His brothers therefore said to Him (Jesus), "Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. 4 For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." 5 For even His brothers did not believe in Him.

Jesus' mother and brothers:

Matt 12:47-50

47 Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You."

48 But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" 49 And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."

After the resurrection, James the brother of Jesus became a leader of a church.

Then there was Saul of Tarsus, he was destined for power, which he already had.

This same person of Saul

- whose name was changed to Paul,
- was ready to be martyred for Jesus if need be.

There were also eye witness accounts, archaeological evidences and extrabiblical writings.

Lee Stroebel interviewed Bruce Metzger from Princeton Theological Seminary in his book "The Case for Christ."

In the book he says there are about 24,000

- manuscriptal evidences of the bible.

F. F. Bruce, a professor at the University of Manchester, England, and author of *The New Testament Documents: When asked: Are They Reliable?: (speaking of the manuscriptal evidences)* says

- "There is no body of ancient literature in the world
- which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation
- as the New Testament."¹

The Thessalonian church received the word of God with much affliction.

Why! Because they believed the word to be true.

Unfortunately, many people today see Jesus as a fictional character.

- but they struggle to believe in Jesus.

¹ Strobel, L. (2016) *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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Consider 3 things this morning:

- 1) We need to prize the word of God:

In chapter 22 of 2nd kings we read of Josiah who became king at 8 years old.

- He pleased the Lord.
- He entrusted construction supervisors with money
- collected at the temple for the restoration of the temple.

He used the money to hire employees.

During the work, Hilkiah found a scroll and gave it to Shaphan

- who then read it to Josiah.

When king Josiah heard the writings of the scroll

- he realized their ancestors had not kept the words written therein.

He then gave orders to 4 men to go to the temple to speak to the Lord

- on behalf of king Josiah and for all the people of Judah

So these men went to the New Quarter of Jerusalem

- to consult with the prophet Huldah.
- Her words to them were,

the Lord is going to bring disaster on the city and its people because they abandoned God and offered sacrifices to pagan gods.

But king Josiah humbled himself therefore, the Lord said:

2 Kings 22:19

19 because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says the LORD.

Josiah's heart was soft and tender toward the word of God.

After Josiah's death, the kings thereafter went back to their old ways.

What can we learn from this wonderful story?

How was it possible for the people of Judah

- to have lost their way on which their nation was founded.

As a nation we have forsaken God and turned to worthless idols.

When people want to believe lies,

- they have to get rid of the truth.

Have you ever stopped to consider how fortunate we are to have the word of God.

How many souls have been saved,

- how many hearts have been mended
- because of the promises in the book.

Today we're seeing a godless society in action.

People have tried to rid themselves of the bible,

- they've tried to destroy it.

Do you realize we can still lose the bible

- by losing its message
- while we hold it in our hands.

Most people disregard God's message

- about Jesus being the only way to salvation.

Amos 8:11

11 "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord GOD,
That I will send a famine on the land,
Not a famine of bread,
Nor a thirst for water,
But of hearing the words of the LORD.

Secondly, we need to respond appropriately to the Word of God:

Jam 1:21

21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

To receive means to give a warm welcome to the message of God's word.

Luke used the word in the book of Acts when describing the Bereans response to the word.

Acts 17:11

11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

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Abraham in Gen 18 responded to God when three visitors from heaven visited him with a message.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day didn't plead with Him to stay.

Jn 8:40-41

40 But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. 41 You do the deeds of your father."

The religious leaders had no time for God's word.

How are we responding to God's word?

- Do we consider it holy?

There is power in the word of God.

Heb 4:12

12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

2 Tim 4:2-4

2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, (people don't want the truth anymore) and be turned aside to fables.

Fables is the word from which "mythology" is derived. It means to be fabricated by the mind in contrast to reality.

The third thing to consider with God's Word is that we need to trust God has and will preserve His word:

The scroll Judah was left with was a portion of God's word.

- We heard the phrase, "to hang on a string."
- That means that something is barely hanging on.

The string the scroll hung on was unbreakable.

The Roman emperor Diocletian once issued a decree to destroy all scriptures.

- He also ordered that all churches be destroyed.

What became of all of that?

- Twenty-five years later the emperor Constantine
- ordered 50 copies of the scriptures be prepared
- at the expense of the Roman government.

The French skeptic Voltaire,

- once predicted that Christianity
- and the bible would be non-existent within 100 years.
- Only 50 years after the prediction
- the Geneva Bible Society used his press
- to produce bibles and used his house to store them.

Robert Ingersoll once boasted, “Within 15 years I’ll have the Bible lodged in a morgue.”

Sydney Collett said: ‘We might as well put our shoulder to the burning wheel of the sun, and try to stop it on its flaming course, as attempt to stop the circulation of the Bible.

Psa 119:89

89 Forever, O LORD,

Your word is settled in heaven.

1 Thess 2:14

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,

The church of Thessalonica became imitators.

- This meant the church would be under
- constant persecution much like
- the church of Judea was.

It’s often in times of persecution that the Church grows.

In Acts 8 Paul consented to the murder of Stephen,

- then he persecuted the church in Jerusalem.

The life of Paul in itself is a great testimony to God’s grace

- toward anyone who will repent.

Paul who was once persecuted the church

- was now commending the church
- for their willingness to stand for Christ.

The Pharisees were constantly looking for ways to trap Jesus

- in something they might accuse Him of.

Luke 11:54

54 (the Pharisees) lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him.

Luke 12:4-5

4 "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!

14 For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans,

1 Thess 2:15

15 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,

We know what it is to carry guilt.

We know what it is to be in opposition to God.

Paul understood the guilt and pain

- associated with rebellion toward Jesus.

He continually saw the persistent opposition

- to the gospel message.

At the feast of the governor,

- it was customary to release a prisoner
- whom the multitude wished to be released.

So Pilate gave them a choice, Barabbas or Jesus.

Matt 27:19

19 While he (Pilate) was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him."

In the letter to the Thessalonians,

- this is the only place

- Paul charges the Jews with
- Murdering the Messiah.

Paul not only reminded them that the Jews killed their Messiah,

- but they also killed Isaiah by sawing him in two,
- and they killed Jeremiah by stoning him.

So Paul says that the church suffered from their own countrymen who provoked God, they murdered Jesus, the murdered prophets yet they called themselves children of Abraham and God's chosen hence Paul says:

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15 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,

16 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.

This sounds much like today.