

1 Thessalonians 2:13-20
“The Believer, the Word of God, and Satan”

Introduction

Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus reached Thessalonica on Paul’s 2nd missionary journey. They were there a very short time because of Persecution; 3 weekends, maybe at the most 4 weeks.

After they left, Acts 17-18 tells us they went to Athens, Berea, Greece, and then on to Corinth, and during this time he heard about their struggles and wanted to write a letter to help them.

In Chapter 2:1-12 Paul was taking down the lies that were being said about him, that were stumbling these young Believers.

Now today, in vs. 13-20,

1. Paul lets them know, and helps them understand that most of the problems are just satan and his evil ways.
2. And, that his not coming to them, was not because he wanted it that way.
3. And, that he loves them very much, and they are his joy!

2:13 you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God

1 Thes 2:13

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.

A. For this reason we also thank God without ceasing

Why is Paul rejoicing here in Chapter 2?

- Real ministry has a connection between the people and God’s Word.
- The Thessalonians didn’t view the things that Paul had spoken to them **as common words of a men**,
- but **they recognized that Paul was sharing with them God’s own Word**.

B. When you received the word of God:

Paul earnestly believed and taught others that God had spoken to man, and that we have recorded this **word of God**. Paul believed in a voice that speaks to mankind with the authority of eternity, and speaks above mere human opinion. Since we do have this **word of God**, we have a true voice of authority.

Some people like to say that there is a **word of God**, but that we can’t be sure of what He says. When we appeal to the Bible, they like to reply, “That’s just your interpretation.” There are certainly some places where the **word of God** is hard to precisely interpret, but there are not many such places. If we cannot know what God has spoken, then He may as well not have spoken at all.

2 Tim 3:16-17

16 **All Scripture** is given by **inspiration of God** (literally; “God breathed”) 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.

C. You welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God:

- The Thessalonians received the **word of God** as **it was truth**.
- Paul presented it **not as the word of men**, and the Thessalonians received as Paul presented, “as it is in truth” “**the very Word of God**”.

- Not everyone receives this message as **the word of God**.
- But when they do they see the power of it “in” and “through” their lives.

Note:

- For those of us who teach the Bible, we ought to be trembling in fear when we speak.
- We want to be careful that we’re not just giving our “thoughts” on the subjects we discuss,
- But we want to be careful to be as accurate and as close to what God is saying as possible.

James wrote,

James 3:1

1 My brethren, **let not many of you become teachers**, knowing that we shall receive a **stricter judgment**.

1. Ministry ought to be tied to God’s Word.
2. If we want people connected to God, we want them connected to His Word.

D. Which also effectively works in you who believe:

Effectively works:

The Greek word (energeo) - (From where we get our English word “energize”) – to be operative, be at work, **put forth power**; to work for one, aid one

- Paul’s confidence in the **word of God** wasn’t a matter of wishful thinking or blind faith.
- He could see that it **effectively works in** those **who believe**.
- God’s Word **works**, it doesn’t only bring information or produce feelings.
- There is power in the **word of God** to change lives. (Guzik)

In the Book of Hebrews, in Chapter 4:

1. It talks about how important it is that we be sure that we enter in to all that God has for us.
2. We need to be careful about not getting sidetracked, or letting our hearts grow calloused or hardened.

Heb 4:2

2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; **but the word which they heard DID NOT profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.**

3. Hebrews goes on to say, that we need to be careful that we don't come short like those in the Wilderness from the Old Testament.
4. And we, unlike them, need to keep our lives on track, believing in the Word of God.

Heb 4:12a For the word of God *is living* and **powerful**, ..

Powerful – energies – *active*

Comes from the same root as the word for “effectively works”

The power of God's Word to work in your life will be related to whether you recognize it and trust it.

Note: (I have observed personally through the years of preaching):

1. Some people will come up to me and tell me how much the message impacted them. Sometimes I even get notes about it.
2. I can see some things just bounce off people without affecting them.
3. Other people avoid me like the plague at the end of a service.

2:14-16 For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen

1 Thes 2:14-16

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.

A. For you, brethren

You are fellow Christians and as Fellow Christians you are being persecuted like all the other churches, Welcome to the club, Brethren!

B. For you also suffered the same things:

- When the Thessalonians responded to the Gospel, they became the targets of persecution.
- As they did, they were not alone, because those among **the churches of God** have often suffered persecution. (Guzik)

One of the Promises of God:

2 Tim 3:12

12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Jesus says to all of us, don't be afraid of the days of persecution:

Rev 2:8-11 (Smyrna: The persecuted church)

8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: 9 "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 "**Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer.** Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. **Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.** 11 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death." '

- The Thessalonian Christians became **imitators** of those who had suffered before them.
- Paul is saying, "welcome to the club", all the churches are suffering in the same way.
- The Thessalonians willingly **suffered the same things** because they were convinced that Paul brought them not the word of man, but the Word of God. (Guzik)

The word of man isn't worth suffering for, but a true message from God is worth it.

C. Who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us:

Paul comforted these suffering Christians with the assurance that they were not the first to suffer this way.

This goes back to the History of the Jews.

Stephen in his sermon, before the Jewish leaders said:

Acts 7:51-52

51 "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.

52 "**Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?**

And **they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers,**

The Lord Jesus faced persecution, and the Christians in **Judea** faced it first.

Additionally, Paul and his associates were also persecuted.

In the book of Hebrews it shows that sometimes God allows us to appear to lose, from an earthly advantage.

Heb 11:32-37

32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:

33 **who through faith** subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34 quenched the violence of fire, **escaped the edge of the sword**, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again.

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted (i.e. burned in the fire), **were slain with the sword**. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—

Compare: (vs. 34 to vs. 37) – vs. 33 **who through faith...**

- Vs. 34 **...escaped the edge of the sword,**
- Vs. 37 **... were slain with the sword.**

Heb 11:38-40

38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, [in] dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

D. Who killed... the Lord Jesus:

Here Paul wrote that his **own countrymen** (the Judeans) had **killed... the Lord Jesus**.

1. But Paul knew well that the Jews of Judea were not the *only* ones responsible for the murder of Jesus.

Acts 2:36

36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, **whom you crucified**, both Lord and Christ."

37 Now when they heard this, **they were cut to the heart**, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do (*to be saved*)?"

2. The Romans had their full share of guilt, so *both* Jew and Gentile were guilty.
3. **Note:** (God blames no "Nation or Nationality" for His death on the cross, but all of mankind)

Rom 4:25a **who was delivered up because of our offenses**,

1 Peter 2:24a **who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree**, ...

2 Cor 5:21a **For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us**, ...

Heb 9:28a **so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many**. ...

But the Bible tells us!!

Ezekiel 18:20a **"The soul who sins shall die.** ..

Heb 4:15b (Jesus) was in all points tempted as we are, **yet without sin.**

1 Peter 1:19

19 but with the precious blood of Christ, **as of a lamb without blemish** and **without spot.**

1 Cor 15:3c ... **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures,

Since Jesus never sinned, He could have hypothetically hung on the cross indefinitely, but yet He did die!

- Why or How did Christ die?
- Because our sins that were put on Him, caused His death!
- Who killed Christ?
- All of us, and our sins that were laid upon Him, caused Him to die.

John 1:29

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "**Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**"

Isaiah 53:5

5 But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The **chastisement** (*i.e. **Crucifixion on the Cross***) for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.

2 Cor 5:21

21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

E. And they do not please God and are contrary to all men:

Paul also comforted the Thessalonian Christians with the awareness **that they were right, that they are the ones pleasing God.**

It no doubt messed with these new Believer's minds:

They think we are the trouble makers, "Are we"?

Quote: (Guzik)

"This was necessary assurance because they were persecuted by religious people, and might wonder if these other religious people were in fact right before God in their persecuting".

Let's not forget what Jesus taught us ahead of time:

John 15:18-20a

18 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 "If you were of the world, **the world would love its own.** Yet because you are not of the world, but I

chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20a "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' **If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.**

John 16:1-2

1 "**These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble.**

2 "They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.

Paul also warned them in advance, we will see in the very next chapter 3:4:

1 Thes 3:4

4 **For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you** that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.

F. Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved,

Here Paul revealed what offended the religious persecutors of the Thessalonians so much. They were outraged that Gentiles could be saved without first becoming Jews.

Quote: (Hiebert)

"The Jews' opposition to the work of the missionaries among the Gentiles was not due to the fact that they were seeking to win Gentiles. The Jews themselves were vigorously engaged in this period of their history in actively proselyting Gentiles. Their fierce opposition was due to the fact that Christian missionaries offered salvation to Gentiles without demanding that they first become Jews."

G. so as always to fill up the measure of their sins:

This exclusive attitude filled **up the measure of their sins.**

2 Thes 2:9-12

9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 **that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth** but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

H. But wrath has come upon them to the uttermost:

- Paul comforted the Thessalonians by assuring them that God would indeed take care of their persecutors.
- When Christians forget this, they often disgrace and curse themselves by returning persecution for persecution towards others.

Rev 20:11-15

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was

opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Rev 21:8

8 "But the cowardly, **unbelieving**, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

2:17-20 time and again--but Satan hindered us.

1 Thes 2:17-20

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?

20 For you are our glory and joy.

A. "having been taken away" from you for a short time in presence having been taken away

The Greek word (aporphanizo) - ("from" + "orphan") – literally - to bereave of a parent or parents.

- Do you see the continuation of the "parenting" theme?
- Paul had been grieved because it felt like the Thessalonians had been "**orphaned**", **losing their spiritual father**.

Paul is letting them know how deeply their being apart has been for them.

Either way, Paul wanted them to know that he saw his time in Thessalonica shortened by the demonic work of Satan, through the persecution he stirred up.

B. not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face:

They wondered why he didn't come and bring this comfort to them in person.

Yet Paul assured them that the reason was not a lack of love or desire on his part, but it was simply "Spiritual Warfare" (Eph 6:10-18)

Eph 6:10-12

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

C. We wanted to come to you... but Satan hindered us:

It wasn't that Paul did not *want* to visit the Thessalonians. It was that **Satan hindered** Paul and his associates. Paul assured the Thessalonians that he desired to be with them, but he was hindered by Satan, and that this happened **time and again**. (Guzik)

Note: (Guzik)

The Thessalonians were mostly Gentile converts, yet when Paul mentioned **Satan** here, he gave no further explanation. This shows that in the few weeks he was there, Paul taught the Thessalonians much about Satan and spiritual warfare.

Reminds me of the story in Daniel 10, Gabriel (i.e. Ch. 8, identifies him), that he was hindered by the demonic forces of the coming Persian empire):

Dan 10:10-14

10 Suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and [on] the palms of my hands. 11 And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.

12 Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, **for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.**

13 **"But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.** 14 "Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come."

D. Satan hindered us:

Paul, in all his apostolic ministry and authority, could still be blocked by Satan. But Paul did not just receive this Satanic hindrance in a fatalistic way. He did something about the hindrance.

1. First, Paul understood that this was *Satanic* hindrance.

He knew this was not a random circumstance, but a direct attack from Satan. Paul had the discernment to know.

2. Second, Paul had faith.

For a short time means that Paul knew it would only be a **short time** until the roadblock was overcome.

3. Third, Paul was committed to fight against the roadblock any way he could.

If he couldn't be there in person, his letter will go for him and teach and encourage them in his absence. Many scholars believe that 1 Thessalonians was Paul's earliest letter written as an apostle to a church. If this is the case, then Satan's roadblock got Paul started on writing letters to the churches. When Satan saw the great work God did through these letters, he regretted that he ever **hindered** Paul at all.

Note:

Finally, God brought the victory. In Acts 20 Paul describes his eventual return to Thessalonica and to other churches in the area, and stayed 3 months and then took with him a couple of men/pastors of Thessalonica).

Acts 20:1-5

1 After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to **Macedonia (Thessalonica was the head city of the region of Macedonia)**. 2 Now **when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words**, he came to **Greece (Thessalonica is in the country of Greece)** 3 and **stayed three months**. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, **he decided to return through Macedonia**. 4 And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia--also **Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians**, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. 5 These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas.

E. For what is our 1)HOPE, or 2)JOY, or 3)CROWN of rejoicing?

Paul assured the Thessalonians that he could never forget them because they were his glory and his **joy**.

His inability to visit should never be taken as a lack of love towards the Thessalonians.

Perhaps Paul would say that he didn't need a **crown** in heaven because these precious ones were his **crown of victory**.

Those whom we bring to Jesus, and like **the disciple's are a crown of victory** for us.

F. Is it not even you in the PRESENCE of our Lord Jesus Christ AT HIS COMING?

Mentioning once again, about the "Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Hymn: "When we all get to heaven"

Verse 1

Sing the wondrous love of Jesus
Sing His mercy and His grace;
In the mansion bright and blessed
He'll prepare for us a place.

Chorus

***When we all get to heaven,
What a day of rejoicing that will be!
When we all see Jesus,
We'll sing and shout the victory!***

Verse 2

While we walk the pilgrim pathway
Clouds will overspread the sky,
But when trav'ling days are over
Not a shadow, not a sigh.

Verse 3

Let us then be true and faithful
Trusting, serving every day;
Just one glimpse of Him in glory
Will the toils of life repay.

Verse 4

Onward to the prize before us!
Soon his beauty we'll behold
Soon the pearly gates will open
We shall tread the streets of gold

Conclusion**Ministry is all about people!**

- Paul got much joy from his ministry.
- Ministry is about working with people.
- When Paul got to heaven, he wasn't going to be proud of the buildings he built or the things he owned while on Earth.
- Paul was looking forward to seeing the Thessalonians with Jesus and the pleasure of seeing them in His presence in heaven.

Application:

1. Today we need to, "Receive even this message as what it really is, "The Word of God!"
2. Wake up and realize that we are in a very spiritual world. Like the book title once said, "Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth"!
3. Are you born-again? Today was a warning to all who have heard the truth and haven't yet fully received it by faith. Don't be disrespectful to God by not receiving the "love of the Truth", which is the Gospel. (1 Cor 15:3-4; John 3:16)