

1 THESSALONIANS: VERSE-BY-VERSE THROUGH PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE
SESSION 5 | 1 THESSALONIANS 2:13-20

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13-16 | THE WORD RECEIVED BY THE THESSALONIANS

- Verse 13 –
 - Paul expresses gratitude that the Thessalonians **received the word** and did so **not as the word of men, but...the word of God**.
 - As throughout this letter so far, the word delivered by Paul in Thessalonica was initially the word of the Kingdom, and nothing in the text would cause us to think otherwise here.
 - When they received this word, they were *spiritually minded*, thus able to receive it. To be spiritually minded does not require a supernatural indwelling, but rather simply an openness to things *spiritual* rather than things *natural*. If the mind is closed to the supernatural, no spiritual message will be received.
 - Both the message of the Kingdom and that of grace are spiritual / supernatural messages. Still today, the word **effectually worketh** in those that **believe**. God's word does not come back void!
- Verses 14-15 –
 - This verse is fundamental to the argument we have given; that the Thessalonian church was made up of believing Jews who first heard the Gospel of the Kingdom and, as Jews, received it.
 - The proof lies in this verse, that they were **followers of the churches of God which are in Judaea** (v. 14).
 - The Judean churches were part of the "little flock" that would inherit the Kingdom (Luke 12:32).
 - Paul himself was **unknown by face unto the churches of Judea**, according to his own testimony to the Galatians (Gal. 1:22).
 - As further evidence that this group was following the Kingdom promises, they **suffered like things** (v. 14), that is, like-unto the sufferings of the churches of Judea (which are attested to in the book of Acts).
 - The suffering came from **the Jews** (v. 14), but a specific group of Jews.
 - It is unfortunate that the versification cut this sentence in two, because stopping at verse 14 breeds antisemitism.
 - The **churches of Judea** (v. 14) were themselves Jews. They were maltreated by a specific group of Jews: those **Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their prophets** (v. 15).
 - That is to say that Paul spoke of *unbelieving Jews*, and, even more, Jews with animosity toward the things of God, and especially toward Jesus, the Son of God.
 - Paul concludes that these are Jews who **please not God, and are contrary to all men** (v. 15).
 - In Acts 17:5 there is the Biblical proof that the Thessalonians received "Jew on Jew" persecution, just as in Judea. In 2 Thessalonians 1:5 Paul tells the Thessalonian believer that their suffering is proving them worthy of **the kingdom of God**.
- Verse 16 –
 - The same Jews who **killed the Lord Jesus** (v. 15) were also **Forbidding** Paul and his companions **to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved**. Evidence of this can be found in Acts 13:45, 50 (Pisidian

Antioch), Acts 14:4, 19 (Iconium), Acts 17:5, 13 (Thessalonica), Acts 18:12 (Corinth), Acts 19:33 (Ephesus), Acts 22:21-22 (Jerusalem).

- Note that it is the Jews, whose action of silencing Paul, that were filling up their sins, and to these same Jews **the wrath is come upon them**. Clearly the salvation from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10) was not given to all Jews, regardless of their position on Jesus.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:17-20 | PAUL'S ABSENCE FROM THESSALONICA

- Verse 17 –
 - Assuming that Paul speaks of his original departure from Thessalonica, we are reminded that it was the Thessalonian believers themselves that **sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea** (Acts 17:10). Now we hear Paul's side of the story, briefly, and see that it was not his heart to leave so suddenly.
 - Both here and 1 Thessalonians 3:10 Paul expresses his deep desire to return.
- Verse 18 –
 - Paul tells the Thessalonians that he desired to come **once and again**. This phrase is also used in Philippians 4:16, where we are told that those in neighboring Philippi sent financial aid to Paul when he was in Thessalonica **once and again**.
 - In spite of the attempts, Paul says that **Satan hindered us**.
 - We are not told the circumstances of the work, but we do see Paul's belief that Satan, who is at work in the world today, hindered the labors of the Apostle Paul. He can presumably do so for our Christian labors as well.
 - If Peter's description of Satan as **a roaring lion who walketh about, seeking whom he may devour** (1 Pet. 5:8) is still true today (and why would we believe it is not?), and since we are to **stand against the wiles of the devil** (Eph. 6:11), it stands to reason that Satan hinders Christian work today.
- Verses 19-20 –
 - The reason that Paul wanted to return to Thessalonica is because the Thessalonians were **our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing** (v. 19). In verse 20 Paul adds **our glory** and repeats **joy**.
 - All of these things the Thessalonians would be in the Lord's presence **at his coming**. The word for coming is the common word παρουσία [parousia], but the word itself does not tell *which coming*. If the Thessalonians are saved from the **wrath to come** (1 Thess. 1:10), which is the judgment at the Second Coming, then it would be reasonable to assume that here we are talking about the rapture, where there is a joyful meeting of believers in the air (1 Thess. 4:17).
 - Note: a doctrine of crowns has been developed by theologians. These verses have been used to support a supposed "crown of rejoicing" or "crown of missions." It is my belief that theologians have created this doctrine and that it has little Biblical support. In any estimation, theologians know more about the crowns (to whom they are given, why, when, where) than the Bible speaks.