

**“Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians –
Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica and Its Wonderful Fruit – Part 2”**

Introduction:

- ***Paul had traveled on his second missionary journey to the city of Philippi. Then, after preaching the risen Christ, he and his companion Silas were treated harshly, beaten, and imprisoned in the local jail. You will remember the salvation of the jailer. Then, due to the miraculous opening of the door of the jail, they were free again. As a consequence of these miracles, the magistrates sent Paul and Silas (and Timothy) away. Their journey then took them to Thessalonica where they ministered a little over three weeks before departing. Some time later Paul wrote this letter to his dear ones in Thessalonica whom he longed to see again, if God would permit.***
- ***But God did not permit that plan to be accomplished allowing Satan to interfere. But as we shall see in our study today, Satan's interference was only the basis for God's blessings in ways that could never be anticipated.***
- ***May these words be a constant encouragement to us all.***

Review:

- ***The Gospel, Its Value and Consequence – Recalling The Beginning Again***
 - ***The second chapter begins with a simple request: “just remember, just remember this, how it was when I came to your city some years ago. Paul had come into town and began preaching even though there was good reason to think that what had occurred in Philippi would be repeated here. As Paul knew so well by now, persecution has a way of following the bold proclamation of the gospel of Christ.***

1 Thess. 2:1-2

1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

- ***So Paul boldly preached Christ in this city and did not consider the possible consequences. For he was bold “in our God”, as he puts it here, even with much contention, and, perhaps, his own martyrdom. Many have suffered the same. I think of Tyndale (burnt at the stake***

in 1536), just to pick one example, but there were many others. The “Martyrs” book by Foxe is filled with their stories. Two of the most moving for me were that of Archbishop Cranmer (burned in 1556) and John Rogers (burned in 1555).

- ***Paul’s Sacred Ministry in Thessalonica***

1 Thess. 2:3-4

3 For our exhortation [was] not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

This speaks so well of Paul’s ministry there in Thessalonica, doesn’t it? He goes on to use several analogies with the key words of “Witness”, “Nurse”, and “Father”. They speak to a shared, common experience. Sadly, they are not widely so shared today but surely they were not then either. Even in broken families those harmed so thoroughly wish they had had what others do. We all know some who still seek, after many years, to know their birth parent or parents. That desire for “completeness” is built into the human heart the way God made each of us.

- ***These analogies in a profound way underscore Paul’s earlier statement in verses 5 & 6. In fact, he is further explaining those earlier words here by the words “also our own souls” in verse 8:***

1 Thess. 2:8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, **but also our own souls**, because ye were dear unto us.

- ***Not only was he so intent to share the gospel boldly, BUT ALSO along with that, also his very life.***
- ***The next verses, 9 - 12, introduce a very compelling, though today often dismissed, Pauline sub-theme, that he supported himself by the hard work of his trade as a tentmaker! In every aspect of his life he was their example, even in this. That they would “walk worthily of God who had called them” was his heart’s desire always:***

1 Thess. 2:9-12

12 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

- ***We need to compare our lives to this high standard as well, do we not? Remember the exhortations in Philipians and in chapter one here that he is our example and type. The Thessalonians surely had come to know that.***

Our Scripture Today: 1 Thess. 2:13-20

Our Outline Today:

- ***Without Ceasing – God Works through Prayer and the Word, Always***
- ***Satan’s Failure but the Lord’s Victory – Glory, Glory, Glory!***

I. Without Ceasing – God Works through Prayer and the Word, Always:

[READ] 1 Thess. 2:13-16

13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received [it] not [as] the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they [have] of the Jews:

15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

Let’s compare this with the previous chapter:

1 Thess. 1:5-8

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

- ***1 Thess. 2:13 [compared with chapter 1]*** For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received [it] not [as] the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Compare this with 1 Thess. 1:5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

- **Gospel / Word of God (twice)**
 - **Our gospel / Which ye heard of us**
 - **In power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance / Which effectually worketh**
- **Then, lets look at 1 Thess. 2:14** For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they [have] of the Jews:

Compare this with 1 Thess. 1:6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

- Ye became followers of us and of the Lord / Ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus
 - Having received the word in much affliction / For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they [have] of the Jews
- **What we see is the very close similarity of chapters one and two in that specific regard.**
- **So chapter one has that outline that is found also in chapter 2 with some small differences:**
- **There are other parallels as well as this:**
 - **1:5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only / 2:8 not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls. These parallels are significant, not only for the repetition they provide, but also because of the foundation they lay for the rest of the letter. Paul's teaching later regarding the return of the Lord (the Rapture of the church which is his body) which had been denied by false teachers that had entered the assembly after Paul had departed.**

- ***Therefore, both chapters end with these powerful examples of the power of God at work and how they consequently were patiently awaiting the return of the Lord. The only difference there is the emphasis in chapter two on Satan's ongoing interference in Paul's ministry and specifically his desire to again visit the believers in Thessalonica. Let's look into that now for the blessings to be discovered there.***
- ***But, before we continue, let's not forget how these verses were introduced: Without ceasing Paul was thankful for the Thessalonians. This means that even when his plans were interrupted, even when Satan himself had interfered, the apostle was still thanking the Lord. May this always be a reminder for us!***

II. Satan's Failure but the Lord's Victory – Glory, Glory, Glory!:

[READ] 1 Thess. 2:17-20

17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

19 For what [is] our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? [Are] not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

20 For ye are our glory and joy.

- ***Our greatest enemy, Satan himself, is defeated but nevertheless has great power over the saints. But the Lord brings victory nevertheless! Remember 1 Cor. 2:***

[READ] 1 Cor. 2:4-8

4 And my speech and my preaching [was] not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, [even] the hidden [wisdom], which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known [it], they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

- **Paul reminds the Thessalonians that his great desire was always for them and revisiting them was in the center of his plans, but God had overruled by allowing Satan to interfere. We do not know the exact details of this and how it was accomplished. You should also recall that God overruled Paul's plans by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6) and that led directly to the vision of the Man of Macedonia calling for Paul to come there. Paul's obedience to that call which required a complete change in his ministry plan was what gave him the trials AND THE BLESSINGS ABUNDANT with the Philippians.**
- **This was impressed upon me as I was preparing for today's study. What I found especially important was this: Paul was so powerfully motivated by his future hope of reunion with these believers in Thessalonica that he would have changed his present plan of ministry for it – if the Lord had allowed. For a visit to Thessalonica would have been no small thing in those days. True, Satan had changed his plans by necessity, but it was the matters of the heart that really made the difference.**

In fact, we would not have this precious letter it seems apart from Satan's interference in Paul's ministry plans. Consider this well, for it is the background message to what is written here.

- **So, in accord with this, the reminder here again underscores the apostle's strong desire for these saints. And, importantly, he is looking forward here and not behind when he writes: "what [is] our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? [Are] not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" *This is important to remember, that at Christ's coming they would be together finally again – and that for all eternity. This is what was on Paul's mind here I believe, the grand reunion in heaven's glory with our Lord Jesus. He looked with great anticipation to being again in their presence as he knew he would be on that day. And that hope governed his life in the present!***
- **Is our hope and expectation the same as Paul's? Who is our "joy and crown of rejoicing"? Our immediate family? Our extended family? Our friends? Of perhaps far more? Are we motivated by our heart response or by our head response? The problem is often in the head without the heart. Is our heart influencing our present course of life? May it be so as it was for Paul. And amen.**

- ***This is all a preparation for the next chapters. Satan might again interfere and this time in the lives of the Thessalonians themselves. Paul is very concerned about that and the next chapter will make that clear in our next meeting. Then, Lord willing, we shall see unfolding this life transforming letter to the Thessalonians, a letter that surely transformed their lives over 1900 years ago and has been transforming lives ever since. Praise God for his unspeakable gift and such abundant grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. Glory, glory, glory!***

[REREAD] 1 Thess. 2:17-20

17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

19 For what [is] our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? [Are] not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

- ***Satan hindered but God blessed! This is the message here and it colors the rest of this letter. Glory, Glory, Glory is God's working his saints, whatever circumstances come us. He is sovereign. He has promised. His will and purpose are always accomplished. Amen and amen.***

Our Conclusions:

- ***We have found here in chapter two what we saw in chapter one in our last meeting, a teaching where the apostle used the historical intersection of God with him and then with his converts to convey a message of great power and glory: It is God to be praised and thanked always for his never failing work in us and through us believers.***
- ***As we apply this teaching, we know that we are examples that God uses to bring countless blessing to others. We may not see our lives that way and so this teaching is so very needful. We constantly need reminding just like the Thessalonian believers did. I wonder what the fruit of this letter was?***
- ***I can only guess. But these believers reached out with gospel and with the courage and encouragement of the Lord through this letter. God worked with them as he had with Paul and the fruit of it would have multiplied as it already had. They themselves became examples for others. So, the fruit trees bore fruit as it were and multiplied as the Lord God worked through***

them. We will see in the next letter how great persecution was their lot – but we can be sure that it was not enough to snuff out their fire for the Lord. Probably just the opposite!

- *May we see the same as we go forth and multiply! May it be so.*

Amen.